

# Life on the Land with John Lolicato



Aden Bermingham, Fihar Fagiri,  
Shannon King and Hayden Kelvy

Edward Public School



## *Creative Catchment Kids*

**Creative Catchment Kids** is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Local Land Services and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

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## *Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre*

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. [www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)

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## *Murray Darling Association*

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. [www.mda.asn.au](http://www.mda.asn.au)

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Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. [www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

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School: Edward Public School

## *Local Land Heroes*

In 2014, students involved in the **Creative Catchment Kids** program researched and wrote stories about 'Local Land Heroes' - people, businesses or industries who contribute to productive agriculture and healthy environments along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations 2014 International Year of Family Farming.  
[www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/](http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/)



Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.



Local Land  
Services  
Murray



Local Land  
Services  
Riverina



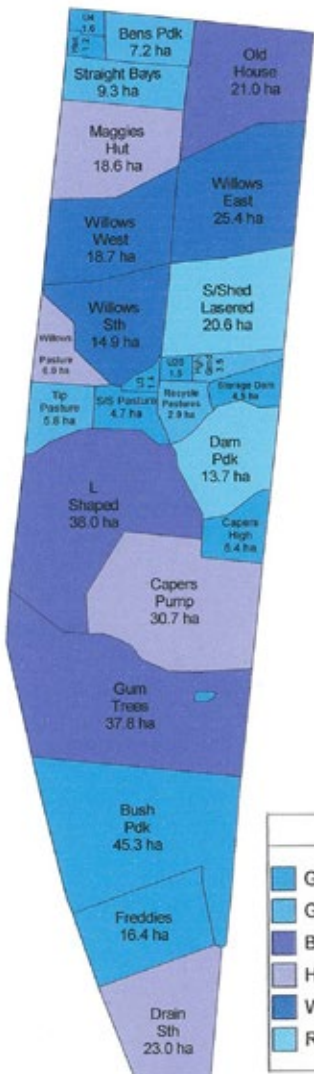
Design by Peekdesigns, [www.peekdesigns.com.au](http://www.peekdesigns.com.au)

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John Lolicato is our 'Land Hero'. He is a well-respected farmer from the Wakool district.

The Lolicato family had its origins in a small village on the island of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea, a very long way from inland Australia. John's grandfather came to Barham in 1930 and leased a small plot of land to grow tomatoes, beans and peas.





KEY	
	Grass
	Grass/Clover
	Barely
	Hay
	Wheat
	Rice

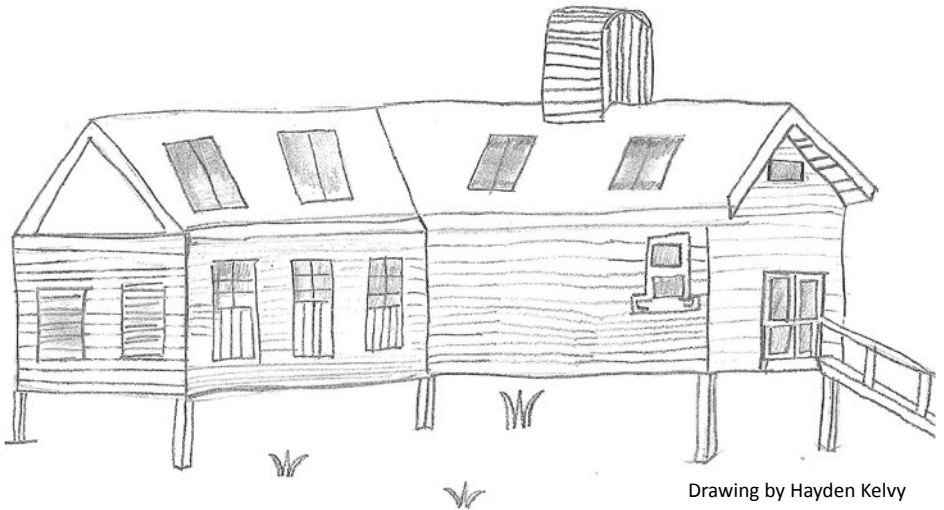
As at 15/12/2003

The property “Whymoul”, located 15 miles north of Barham, was purchased in 1935, one year before the establishment of the Murray Irrigation Scheme. It has remained in the Lolicato family ever since.

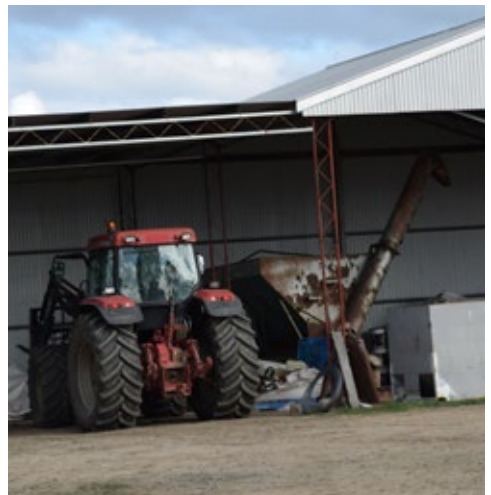
John is a third generation farmer. He and his wife Kerri, and their three grown children, have seen many changes over the decades and continue to farm using sustainable practices.

John went to school in Barham, a small inland town that thrived on the red gum forest industry. John later got an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic and he continues to use these skills on the farm.

John enjoys working with and caring for the land. His parents encouraged him to become a farmer and to use the land's resources to grow produce.



Drawing by Hayden Kelvy



John owns 900 hectares on three farms and he also leases 400 hectares on an adjoining block. His farms produce rice, wheat, barley, prime lambs, beef cattle, hay products and wool.

The seasons, weather patterns, irrigation, water availability and commodity prices are the main factors that determine the mix of cropping and stocking rates on John's farms.



The majority of soils on John's land are heavy black clay/loam. These are ideal for rice and clover production. John rotates his crops for the benefit of the land. He maintains a cycle of 2-3 years of cereal prior to a rice crop, followed by 'sowing down' to clover for the next 2-3 years. This is so that precious nitrogen is put back to the soil to provide nutritious pasture for the sheep and cattle.



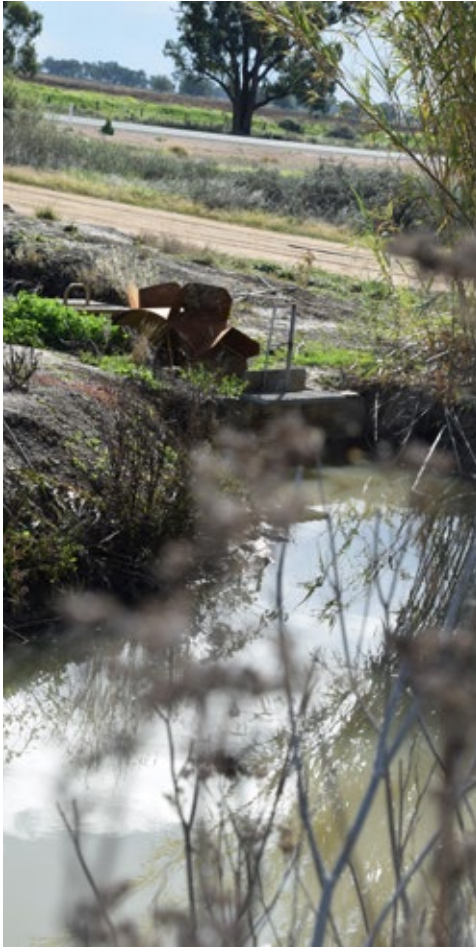




John aims to sow approximately 140 hectares of rice, followed by 400 to 450 hectares of cereal (mainly wheat and barley). He usually has around 100 to 200 head of beef cattle and between 1,000 to 1,500 sheep for both wool and meat production.



New soil management techniques have been developed from the old ploughing and grading of soils so that crops can be directly 'drilled' into the soil. This involves spraying the paddock to remove weeds followed by planting seed directly into the undisturbed soil. This helps to retain moisture and reduce machinery costs.



The farm's water comes from two sources. It is pumped from the Wakool River and Murray Irrigation Limited provides channel water to the boundary of the property. To maintain water efficiency, John laser levels his irrigated paddocks. Gradually, each paddock's set up is improved with high flow outlets so that all drainage ends up in re-cycle storage areas for it to be used over and over again.



Drawing by Hayden Kelvy

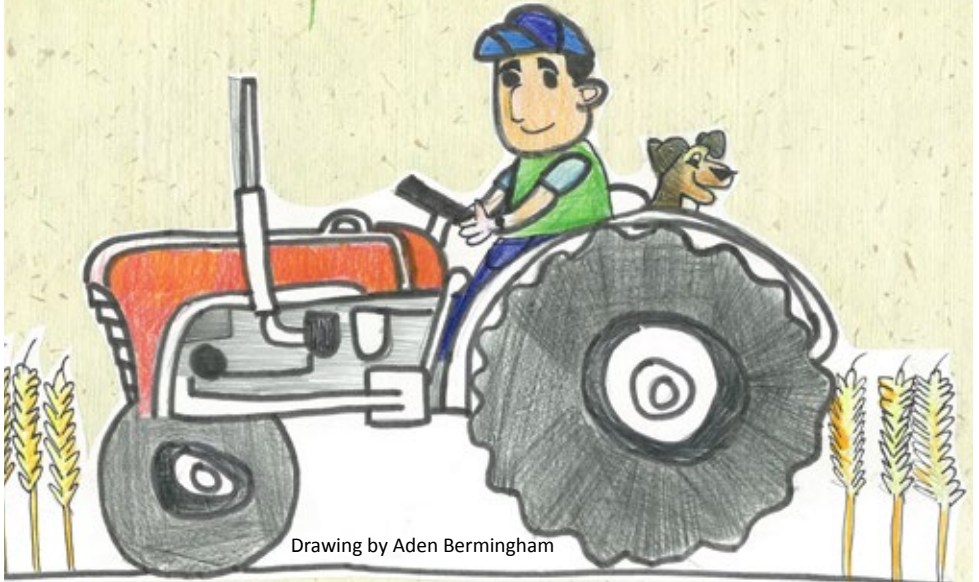
John has been the Chairman of the Wakool River Association for the past eight years. He is an advocate for upholding equity for farming, the environment and for landholders.

John is committed to preserving the quality of the land to make sure there is a bright future for farming generations to come. John states, "It is very important to leave the land in better condition than you've found it."



John believes that good farming management practices, maintaining water and developing interest in agriculture are vital for the future of the farming industry.

In ten years time, John and Kerri wish to be semi-retired and travelling around this big beautiful country called Australia.





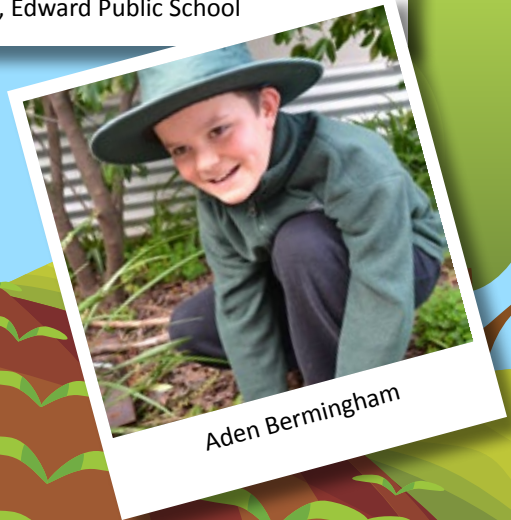
We would sincerely like to thank John and Kerri for allowing us to visit their farm. Many thanks to John for taking time out of his busy schedule to share his knowledge with us.







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2014 Year 5 and 6, Edward Public School



Aden Bermingham

