

# Fish Farm Frenzy



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Pomona 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 Western 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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## *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 in western New South Wales. The program was generously funded by the Western Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations  
2014 International Year of the 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 PeekKdesigns education program.



Local Land  
Services  
Western



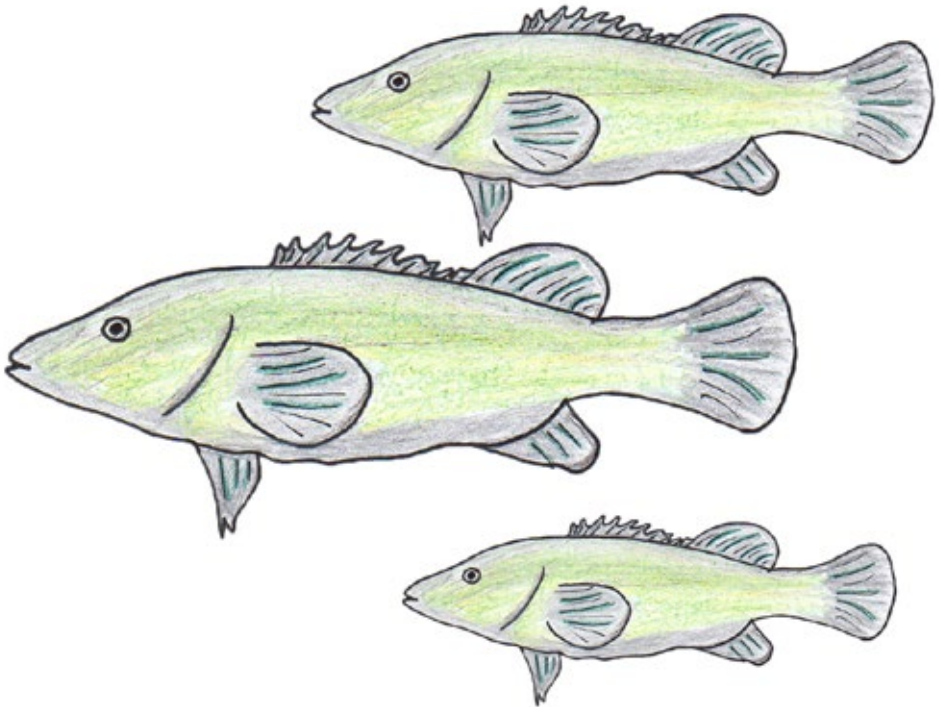
Australian Government

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

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This family-run fish farm is owned by the Dickson family. You will find this beautiful area on the Darling River near Pomona, which is not far from Wentworth at the junction of the Darling and Murray rivers.



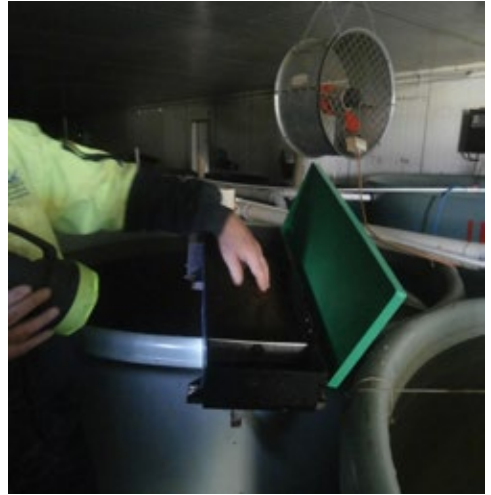


Mr. Colin Dickson decided to build a fish farm about 12 years ago because he always had a fascination for fish. It was also a good time, because the New South Wales Government had stopped commercial fishing licenses and native fish like Murray cod would be in demand.



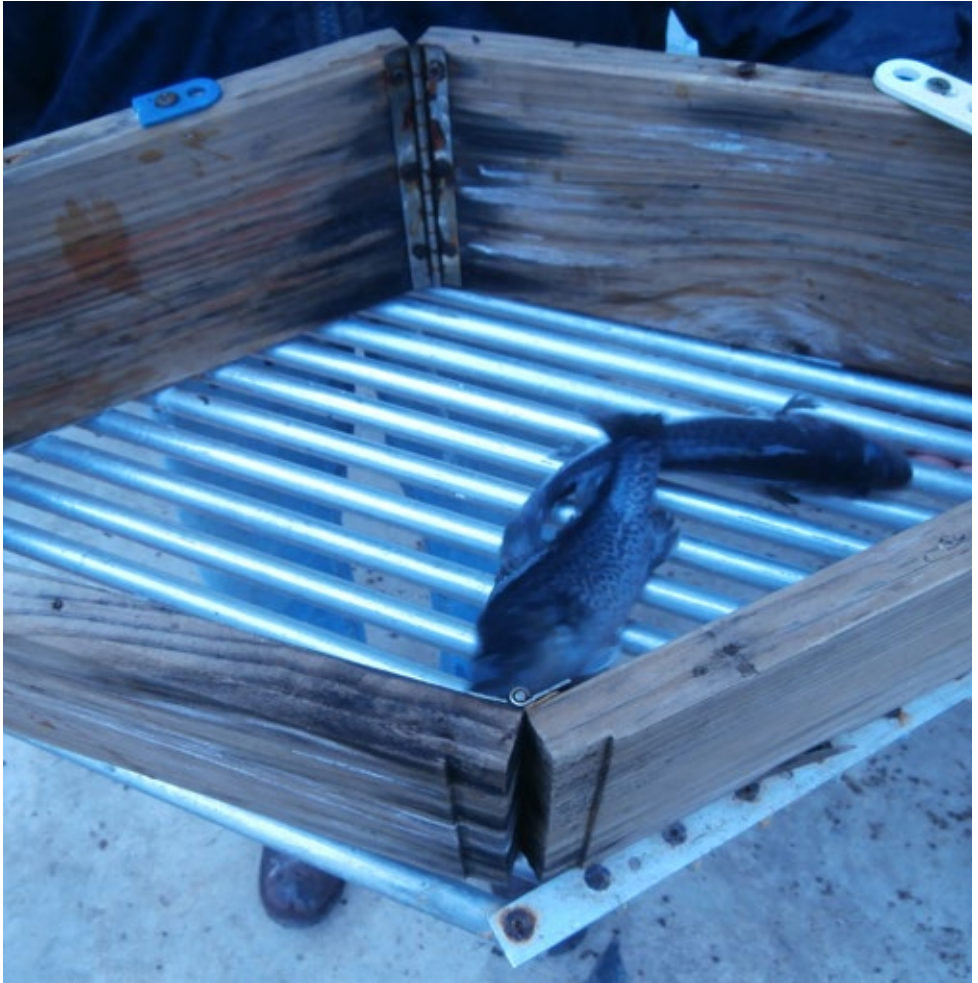
Adult Murray cod are kept in the breeding ponds. During October and November, breeding drums are lowered into the ponds. The female cod swims into the drum and lays about 20,000 eggs, and then the male cod fertilises them. The eggs stick to the black mesh inside and are collected to be put into the tanks.





The young fish are kept in a series of growing tanks. When the fish get bigger, Mr. Dickson has to put them into a larger tank. If this is not done the bigger fish will eat the little fish. The fish are continuously fed protein pellets by automatic feeders.





When Mr. Dickson needs to sort and separate the fish, he uses a special tray. It is like a wooden crate except the bottom has metal bars. The smaller fish fall through and the bigger fish get stuck and are moved to a different tank.

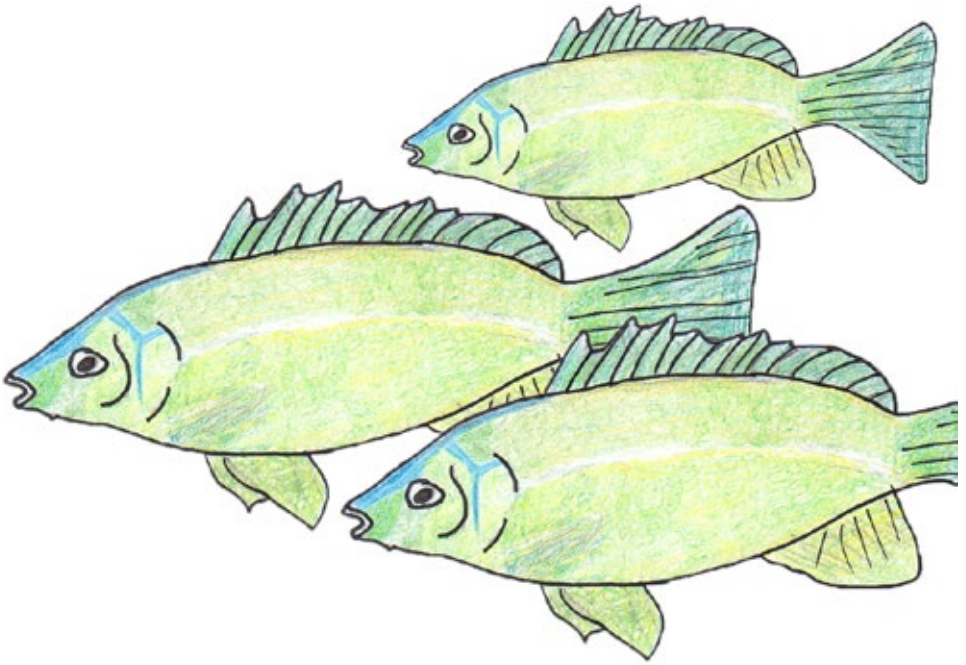




There is a huge oxygen tank near the shed, and many filters inside, because without them the fish would eventually suffocate and die. Mr. Dickson has to have a backup generator in case of a power failure. The water from the tanks is recycled by pumping it out and irrigating vegetables on the neighbour's farm.



The fish ponds hold 1-2 megalitres of water which is pumped from the Darling River. Mr. Dickson has 25 fish ponds, but only 8 are currently active. A lot of water is lost to evaporation. Blue dye is put into the water to stop algae blooms.



The other fish that Mr. Dickson breeds is Silver perch. The perch don't breed in the ponds, but have to be brought to the shed and injected with hormone to release the eggs. They are put to sleep with oil of clove so that they don't get stressed when they move them.

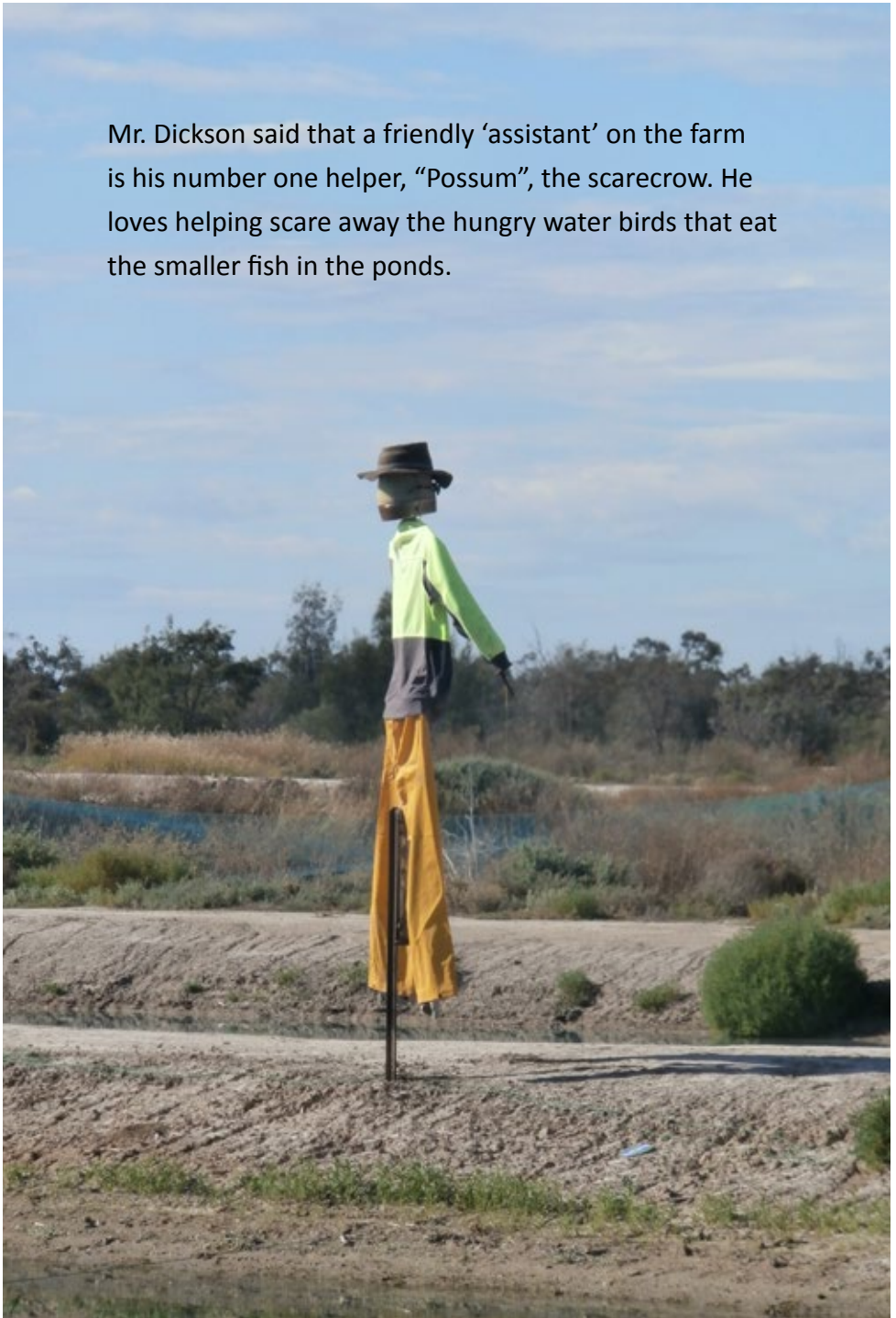
Mr. Dickson also breeds yabbies in one of the dams. They live in the mud. The yabbies are sold locally as bait for fishing. They are collected by putting in nets called drop pots which contain some bait. When the yabbies crawl onto the net it is pulled out.



Some of the fish are sold at the Sydney Markets. The majority of the fish are sold at 8 months old when they are around 100g, to large fish farms nearby who grow them to sell for eating.



Mr. Dickson said that a friendly ‘assistant’ on the farm is his number one helper, “Possum”, the scarecrow. He loves helping scare away the hungry water birds that eat the smaller fish in the ponds.







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2014 Year 5 and 6, Pomona Public School

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