

# Oranges: Developing a Region



Dom Pirrottina, Tom Wylie, Jessica Kelly,  
Laurence Catanzaiti and Jenna Zirilli

Lake Wyangan 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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Authors: Dom Pirrottina, Tom Wylie, Jessica Kelly,  
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Teacher: Alison Jackson

School: Lake Wyangan 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



Australian Government

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*Sumar Produce* is an orange packing shed and farm. Located 500 metres south west of Lake Wyangan Public School. It is run by Johanna and Bart Brighenti, the fourth generation to own and run this family company. In 1914, Joanna's great grandfather was one of the first to grow oranges in the Riverina area. Johanna is proud to be a part of her family's business.



Johanna's great grandfather worked on the farm and in the sheds until he was 99 and a half. Growing up on her parent's farm inspired Johanna to keep working in the orange industry and continue to improve the packing shed and the farms. She learnt all about the business from her mother, who taught her about selling the oranges and running the shed.





One of the biggest problems for this industry is fruit fly. Even though there has never been a fruit fly maggot found in any Australian oranges that have been exported, growers still have to treat all exported fruit, this treatment costs \$250 per tonne. The oranges are treated by bringing the fruit's temperature below 2 degrees for 16 to 18 days depending on which country they are exported to.



*Sumar Produce* uses an Integrated Pest Management program, like that provided by the Wepler Insectary. Rob Wepler inspects the orange farms regularly telling Johanna when to spray or release good bugs to help keep the oranges healthy. Johanna has a low pest prevalence plan to encourage good bugs and healthy crops.



Control of waste fruits also helps to control any pests or fruit fly. Bad fruit or fruit that can't be sold gets removed by the machines and put in separate bins. Some of these oranges are sold to juice companies. But others that are too rotten are given to farmers on the surrounding land for their goats, sheep and cows.

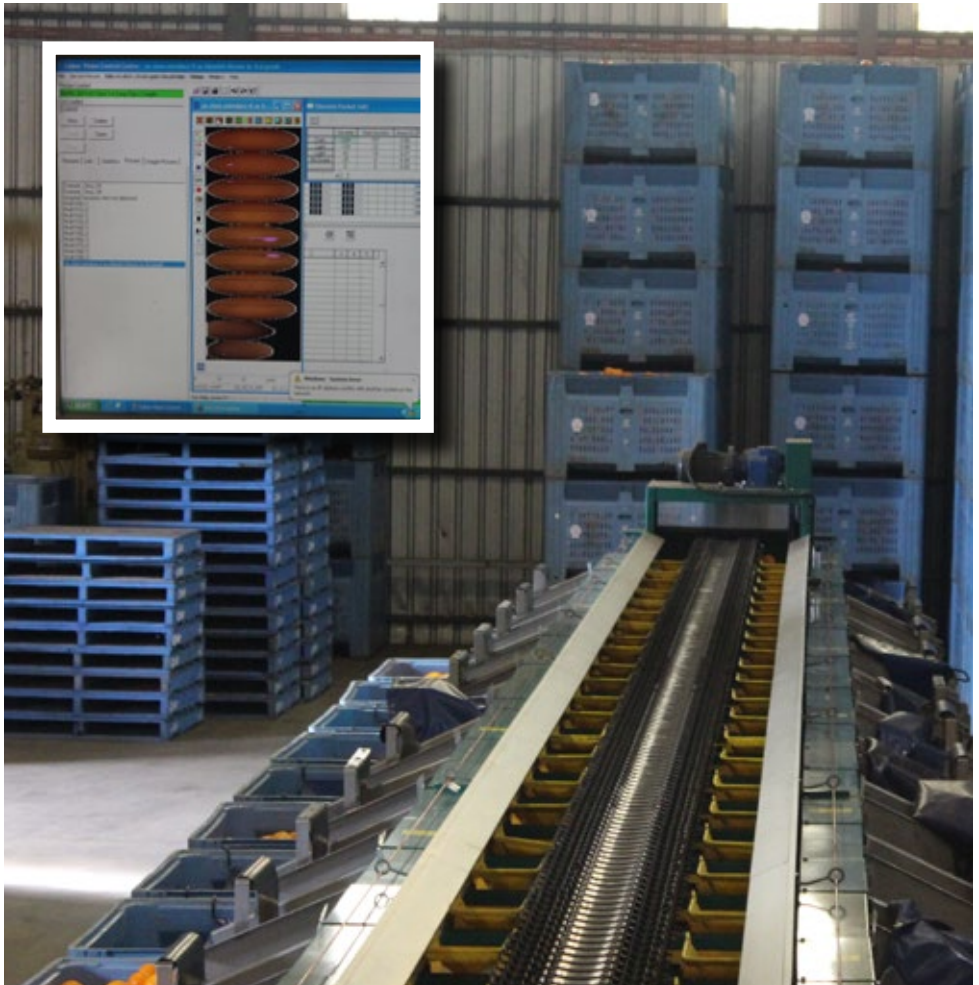


Her great grandfather bought the farm in 1876. Then when Johanna was in year three at school her parents built the packing shed. Every few years after that the family has added to the shed or made improvements.





The oranges come in from the farm and they are sorted so that only the good fruit is packed. A forklift puts crates of oranges onto the machine and a conveyor belt takes them through several stages of cleaning. The oranges are then sprayed with pesticide and dried by huge air dryers. Then the fruit is waxed and dried again.

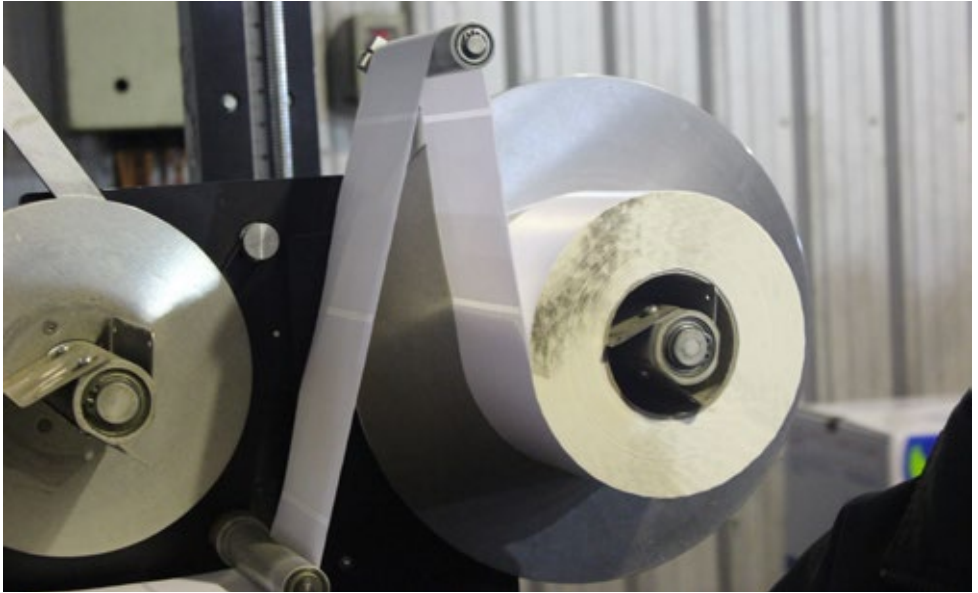


The next part of the process is grading the oranges. To grade oranges means sorting according to colour, size, texture and weight. This grading is done with a special computer program which is followed by a final sort done by people. Workers in the shed come from all over the world. Then the oranges are packed and shipped for sale.



Varieties grown on Sumar farms include Navels, Valencias, Pink and Blood oranges as well as mandarins. Sumar Produce sells both juicing oranges and table fruit to the USA and Japanese markets. They do sell fruit in Australia but not as much as they sell to the export market. The Pink navel is selling really well at the moment.





Johanna is a very hard worker, during the busy season she takes and makes up to 120 phone calls a day. These calls are for organising the sale of the oranges, mostly to the USA and Japan. In the future, Johanna would like the government to decide that at least ten percent of all Australian juice products are Australian fruit. This would mean that Johanna would be able to sell to Australian juice companies as well.





At the moment it's cheaper to import the same product from overseas. Johanna wants the government to help the industry by subsidizing farmers to help make them competitive in overseas markets. She believes that the government needs to help educate other countries about the low impact of fruit fly on Australian oranges. This will encourage other countries to buy Australian fruit.





Jessica Kelly, Jenna Zirilli, Miss Jackson, Tom Wylie,  
Laurence Catanzaiti and Dom Pirrottina  
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