



## Howard Jones-MWWG Executive Member Profile

When it comes to tackling challenging issues, the chair of the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group, Howard Jones doesn't pussyfoot around.

Perhaps it is a legacy of growing up on dairy farm at Quantong, near Horsham in Victoria's Wimmera district, or his years playing and coaching VCFL football.

Either way Howard is a dynamic leader of the Murray Wetlands Working Group and passionate about doing something to help restore our degraded wetlands and floodplains.

Howard was only 15 years of age when he left home to do a traineeship as a technician with PMG in Ballarat. He continued to work for that organisation, at various locations around Victoria, until 1980. During that period he and his wife Jill had two children and Howard played VFA football for Northcote, coached for St Arnaud for a year and when he received a posting to Mildura in 1972, played and coached Irymple FC.

The posting to Mildura was only supposed to be for six months....but the Jones' found they loved the area and stayed on. In 1975 they bought a 4ha 'hobby block' with citrus at Curlwaa and Howard coached the Wentworth football team for two years, and the Juniors for six years (life member).

After leaving PMG he went into farming full-time and he and his wife now have 35ha of wine grapes on irrigation country at Dareton near Wentworth in NSW.

Howard has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the irrigation industry. He was one of the founding members and is currently a director of Western Murray Irrigation, a private irrigation company set up in 1994. The company owns 67 gigalitres of water with one megalitre equalling one share.

Howard has been a board member of the Lower Murray Catchment Management Authority since 2004 and a member of the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group since 1994 and chair since 1996.

Howard says he first became involved in these groups *"because I've wandered around swamps, rivers and creeks all my life as a recreational fisherman and duck shooter and noticed things had gone 'pear-shaped'."*

Concerned about the degradation of our wetlands and floodplain systems, Howard says being involved in the wetlands working group gives him *"an opportunity to do something about it."*

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*"The MWWG is a facilitator and works in very well with the government, communities, and in particular industry," says Howard. "We don't go where we aren't wanted and only work with willing participants."*

*"From the word go we have always been innovative and always applied good science to any area we have gone into."*

Howard, who regards his involvement in the wetlands working group as one of his most rewarding activities, has had a significant role in the planning process for key wetland areas.

Some of these are the Moira Lake project, Thegoa Lagoon, and the Chowilla Floodplain & Anabranch Environmental Flows management programs.

Howard is keen to see a management plan established for the Lower Murrumbidgee.

*"We need to try and water that area to help keep the system healthy," says Howard. "It is a system that has been starved of water since the Dartmouth Dam & subsequent implementation of the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan. The lack of consistent flows are starting to affect the red gums."*

He is concerned that large non-iconic areas like the Lower 'Bidgee *"are falling through the loop because they don't have the support being given to our icon sites."*

It is good to know there are people out there like Howard 'batting' for these equally important wetlands.



*Howard Jones outside the Group's Buronga office.*

*"With our floodplains and rivers in dire trouble, I'm not sure what we will have on the drought's break. However we must retain our focus on what we can achieve to ensure we are better prepared when the break occurs."-Howard Jones*

Chair