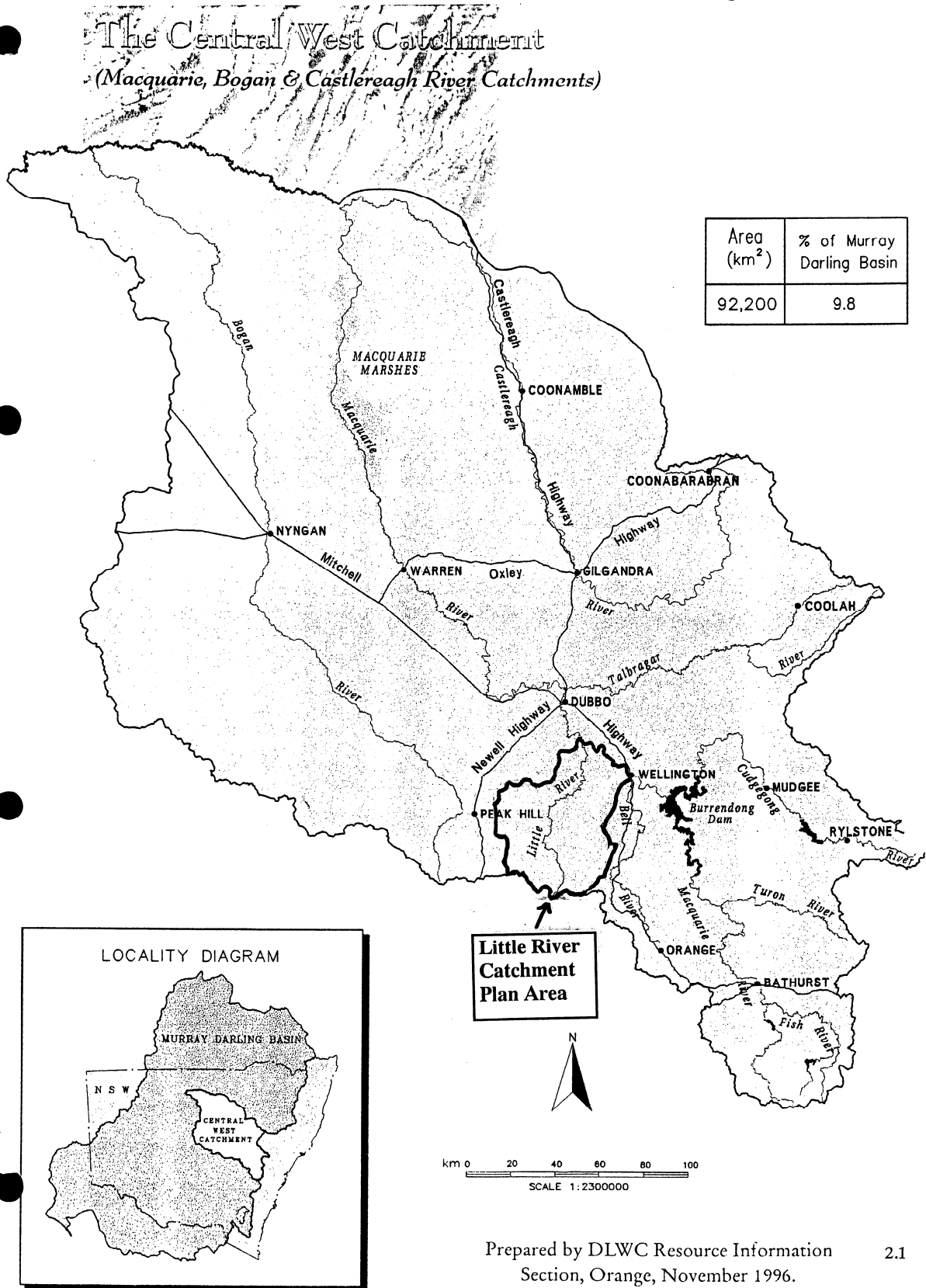


Figure 1. Location of Little River in the Central West and Murray Darling Basin



2.1 LOCATION

The Little River Catchment is located in central western New South Wales. There are no major towns within the catchment; only the small villages of Yeoval and Cumnock. Surrounding towns include Wellington, Molong, Dubbo and Peak Hill. Wellington, the main township near the catchment, is situated approximately 360 kilometres northwest of Sydney between Dubbo and Orange on the Mitchell Highway. The district is a rich cropping and pastoral area. See Figure 1.

The area is bounded by the Goobang National Park in the west (which lies to the east of the Newell Highway), and the western edge of the Catombal Ranges in the east (which lie just to the west of the Mitchell Highway). The southern boundary is also the catchment boundary between the Macquarie and Lachlan valleys (just north of Molong) and the northern boundary follows the Macquarie River from a little west of Wellington to the junction of the Little and Macquarie Rivers, approximately 20 kilometres upstream of Dubbo.

Little River is a tributary of the Macquarie River, which forms part of the Murray-Darling Basin. The Little River Catchment is located upstream of the Macquarie Marshes and downstream of Burrendong Dam. There are a number of small tributaries, which flow into the Little River. These include Buckinbah, Sandy, Myrangle, Hanover, Doughboy, Goodgodery, Loombah, Gundy, Cooks, Rocky Ponds, Benya, Dilga, Middle Arm and Seven Mile Creeks and Barneys Gully. Curra Creek, which is part of the plan area, is a tributary of Bell River. Little River and Bell River are the only major tributaries on the Macquarie between Burrendong Dam and Dubbo.

The area included in the plan includes all of the Little River catchment, as well as two small sections of the Bell River catchment along the eastern boundary of the area. These were included to bring in entire Landcare group areas for groups affiliated with the Little River Landcare Group. The total area is 258,322 ha or 2583 square kilometres. The plan area, drainage system and Local Government Areas are shown in Figure 2, and the area within the catchments is provided in Table 1.

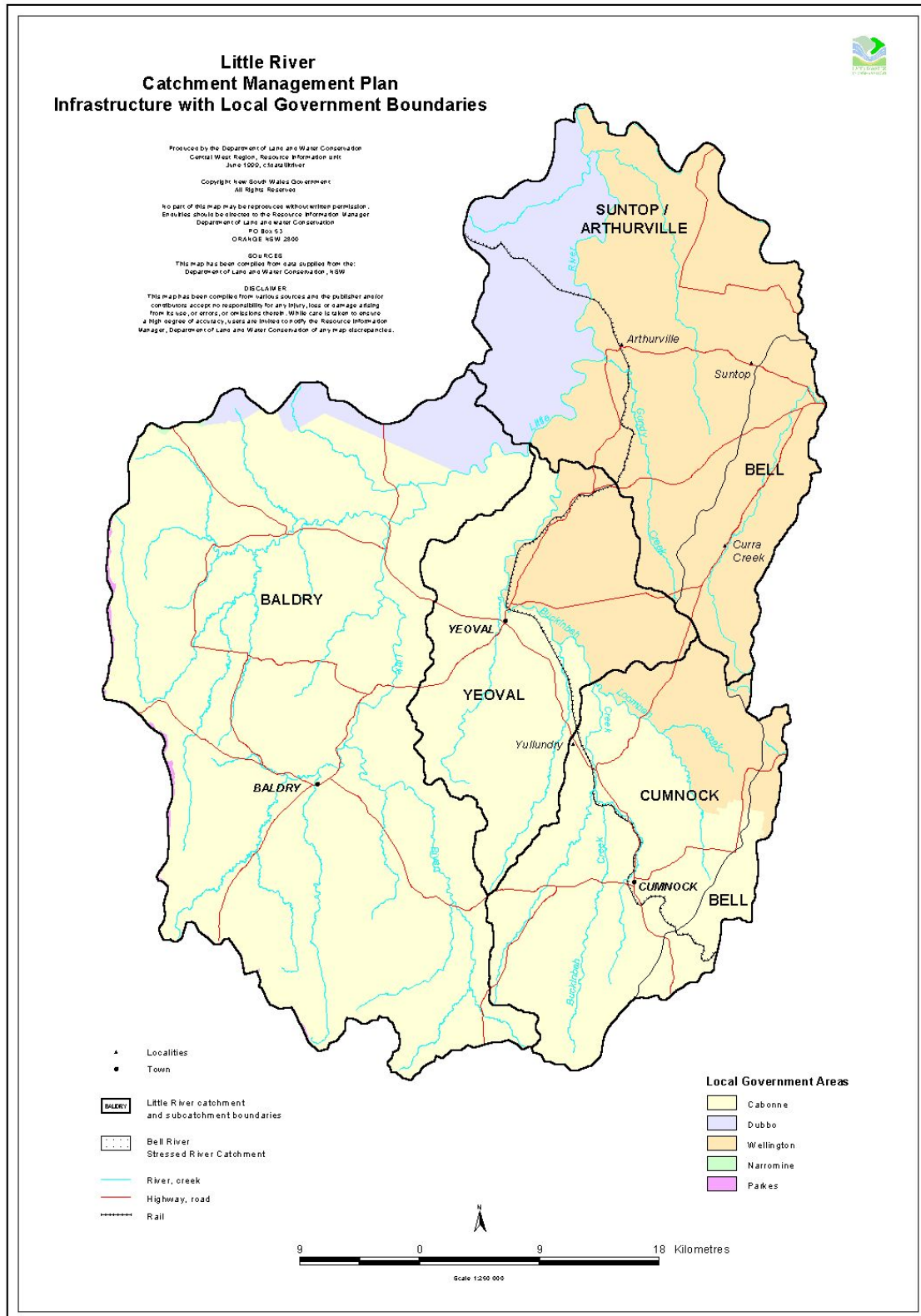
There are four subcatchments within the Little River catchment. These are Baldry, Yeoval, Cumnock and Suntop/Arthurville subcatchments. The subcatchments are based around the villages and creek systems within the catchment.

Table 1: Subcatchment areas of the Little River catchment plan.

Little River -Sub Catchment Areas	Area in Little River (Ha)	Area in Bell River (Ha)	Total Area (Ha)
Baldry	111133.8		111133.8
Cumnock	37721.5	6268.2	43989.7
Suntop / Arthurville	53287.0	13645.6	66932.6
Yeoval	36266.1		36266.1
TOTAL	238408.4	19913.8	258322.2

The Little River Catchment is situated within the Cabonne, Wellington and Dubbo City Council Local Government Areas. The area is represented by two State Government members (Dubbo and Orange) and two Federal Government members (Calare and Parkes). It also straddles the boundary of most state agency administration areas, being the 'grey area' between 'northern' and 'southern' NSW.

Figure 2. Local Government Areas in Little River



2.2 HISTORY

The area was inhabited by the Wiradjuri tribe. Their territory included the Bathurst-Orange-Cumnock-Wellington districts. The tribe was organised into different sections and each section had its own leader. The six sections were Bathurst, Murrylong, Nury, Bendjang, Mudgee and Myawl. All sections spoke the same language.

The first Europeans to cross the Blue Mountains were Wentworth, Blaxland and Lawson. They traveled inland as far as the Cox River. Lieutenant John Oxley, Surveyor-General of New South Wales discovered the Wellington Valley by mistake on 19 August 1817, returning from the Lachlan River to Bathurst. Wellington was named after the then Duke of Wellington.

Lieutenant Percy Simpson established a convict settlement in the area in February 1823. The convicts were removed in 1831 and the settlement was used as a Government Stock Station. Large areas of land were bought and leased for grazing, which was the first major industry into the area. The first crop of wheat was grown in 1823. Farming did not develop for approximately thirty years due to the distance to Sydney, which made farming unprofitable. In 1831, free land grants ceased and settlers were forced to make an annual payment for as much land as they could obtain.

Gold was discovered at Bathurst in 1851 by Edward Hargraves and in 1856 at Wellington. Many farms were neglected as many landholders and workers left to join in the gold rush. Vineyards and orchards were developed in the 1850s and this was the mainstay of the area for many years. Farming was reintroduced in the late 1850s. The main crops were wheat, oats, maize, barley and potatoes. Tobacco was also grown and was very successful until the Government in Sydney ordered it to be discontinued.

The railway was brought to Bathurst in 1876 and extended to Wellington in 1877. Vegetable growing in the area was only on a small scale until the railway reached Wellington. The Chinese began irrigating their market gardens during the 1880s.

In 1861, all the lands of the colony were opened to unrestricted application. There was no form of land classification and land was acquired in any way possible. In 1883, a Commission was set up to inquire into the state of the public lands and the land laws. An Act was introduced in 1884, dividing the runs into two portions, one portion being leased (leasehold area) to the run-holder and the other (resumed area) being available for selection. The colony was divided into three divisions, East, Central and Western. The price of land within all divisions was generally one pound per acre.

The village of Montefiores was established on the northern bank of the Macquarie River in 1840. In 1846, the village of Wellington was gazetted on the southern bank and outgrew Montefiores. The population in Wellington by 1861 was 175. By 1901, the population had grown to 2984. Cumnock was established during the 1860s with the townships of Obley and Yeoval amongst the last towns to be established in the area. Obley was once a thriving mining town. It was an important settlement because it had the only telegraph station between Molong and Dandaloo. There was a police station, hotels, blacksmith shops and goods stores that catered to the public. Obley was used as a camping ground for teamsters who carted produce and wool from the west. The first leases were taken up in the Obley district in 1849.

Since settlement, a large number of small schools have operated throughout the district, with Obley apparently the first school to begin in 1869. A school was opened at the Cross Roads (Cumnock), Burrawong in 1879. Yullundry Provisional School opened in 1879 and Eurimbla Public School opened in 1881. Myrangle Provisional School opened in 1892. Other schools operated at Balderodgery, Rocky Ponds, Gulgullendah, Mountain View and Fairy Mount, Blackwater at Dilga Creek, Springfield and Closewater near Baldry, later replaced by a school in Baldry. Closer to Yeoval were Goodrich, Bournewood, Killeigh and Walmer.

This long list of schools reflects the determination of families of all generations to provide education for their children. The schools at Walmer, Obley and Baldry remained open until the rural recession of the 1960's and 1970's when mechanization, droughts and poor returns led to fewer farm employees and consequently a decline in the rural population and numbers of school children. Now, only the schools at Yeoval and Cumnock remain, and children from the surrounding areas travel long distances to attend.

There are a number of well-known properties in the Cumnock area. Many of the properties have been in the same hands for several generations. A lease was taken out on "Buckinbah", near Yeoval, by Eleanor Terry in 1868. The property covered an area of 19,200 acres. Thomas McCulloch took over the lease and in 1908 the estate was subdivided into farms. The present homestead was built by George Bowhay who started a merino stud in 1923. The Johnson family now owns the property.

Francis Lord acquired "Burrawong", near Cumnock, in the late 1830s. The second owner of "Burrawong", John Young, transformed the station into one of the finest grazing properties in the west. A number of lavish homes were built on the property for family members. These included "Geneffe", "The Manor" and the "Burrawong" homestead. One of John Young's daughters, Annie, married S. P. Reynolds. The property remained in the Reynolds' hands until 1988, when it was sold at auction.

The first major flood in Wellington's history was in July 1823. The most significant floods in the area were in 1955 and 1956. The construction of Burrendong Dam was authorised in 1946 and commenced the same year. Construction was suspended in 1952 due to budget cutbacks. The magnitude of the floods in 1955 and 1956 meant that the partly built dam needed to be redesigned before construction began again in 1958.

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