

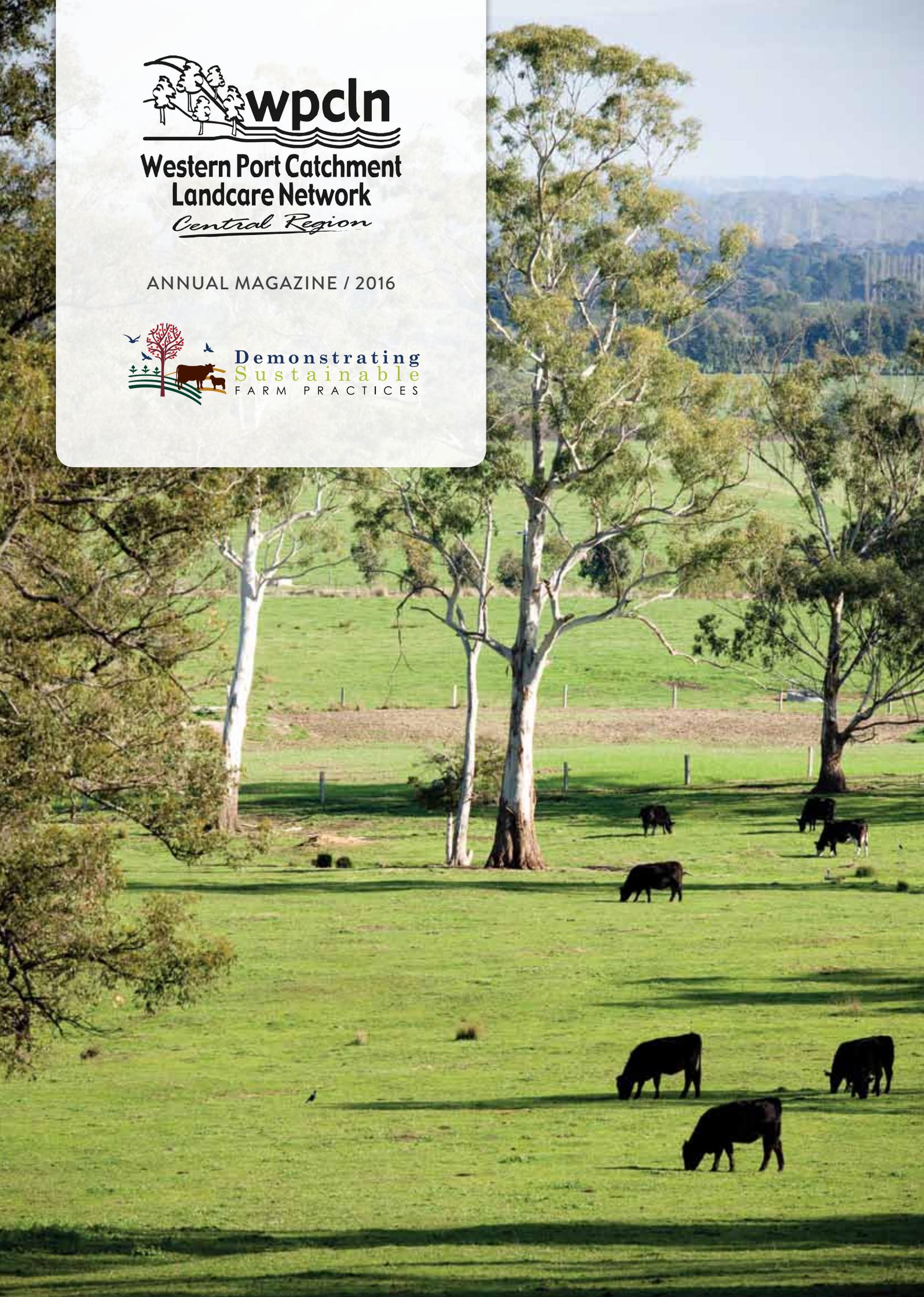


**Western Port Catchment
Landcare Network**
Central Region

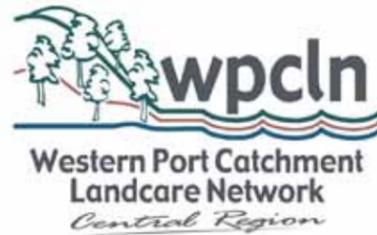
ANNUAL MAGAZINE / 2016



**Demonstrating
Sustainable**
FARM PRACTICES



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Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
peter@wpcln.org.au
0402 650 382

Kathleen Roberts
Landcare Group Facilitator
kathleen@wpcln.org.au
0488 013 613

Bridgette Sullivan
Landcare Projects Facilitator
bridgette@wpcln.org.au
0407 205 749

www.wpcln.org.au
Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/wpclnlandcare/>
Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/wpcln>

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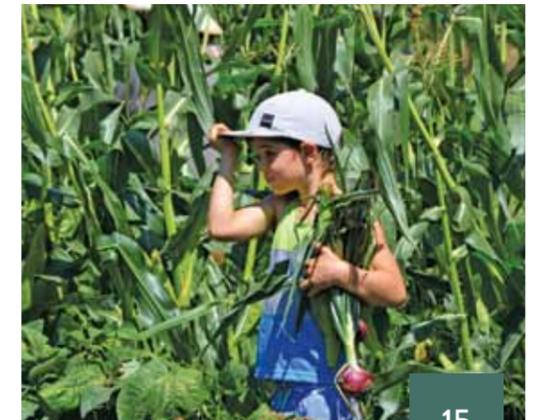
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PRESIDENTS THOUGHTS... AND CONGRATULATIONS

The Westernport Catchment Landcare Network is an organisation of individuals who are involved in the protection and ongoing care for our local catchment and environment. These individuals are the 'doers' who get dirt under their nails, plant trees, remove weeds and clean up waterways.

Our Network was established to create an organisation that:

- Shares knowledge
- Provides a voice for this catchment which includes its members and the community
- Assists in its education of the benefits of a healthy environment and waterway, as well as
- Providing advice and support to encourage its members to grow.

The Network staff and Committee of Management seek to support and help a network that cares, so that collectively our Landcare community can become stronger and more effective in making a difference where it counts. Ultimately our role is to make a difference to restore our environment and catchments to places of beauty, with clean water and native habitat that will support our community and wildlife for time to come.

By definition, a catchment is an area with a natural boundary, where surface water flows to the central waterway. From source at the hinterland to the ocean, this flow of water defines distinct boundaries, where smaller reserves, creeks, lakes and canals, and larger rivers and wetlands connect the freshwater, estuarine and marine environments. Wherever you see water, it is part of a catchment.

The Westernport Catchment community is proud of its waterways and there are many care initiatives transforming the health of the water quality, resilience of the riparian zone and connecting natural areas. For us our challenge is that where an environmental issue exists, we need to collaborate with the right partners and inspired community, to take action.

The questions that need to be considered are:

- Should we engage people to care by instigating a re-think in the way the community is engaged in Landcare?
- Should we participate in and host stakeholder meetings?
- Should we plan and market our Landcare initiatives to encourage larger crowds of volunteers?
- Do we need to connect those who care, to our key purpose which is to transform and restore?
- Do we change our language to incorporate the younger generation?

I would consider an affirmative response to all of these questions.

We know it is important for us to bring together like-minded people, to remain as close as possible to what has been possible. The trend of tree changing has gained momentum and how we get ourselves known to new people is also a challenge. We can use the local noticeboard and paper, the



"For us our challenge is that where an environmental issue exists, we need to collaborate with the right partners and inspired community, to take action"

Internet and of course, word of mouth. The more we all get it out, the more the newcomers understand the importance of protecting and improving upon, their natural environment – be it a natural bushland or waterway. It is unfortunate that locally and nationally we are losing many species due to human intrusion.

The tenacity and continuity of Landcare serves as a platform on which we are able to build cohesive community resilience, introduce new ideas and promote the strong connections between ecological and community health.

Landcare is a bottom-up movement where local knowledge, effort and continuity are combined to address specific environmental problems. Since Landcare began in Victoria in 1986, the efforts of thousands of volunteers have developed a nation-wide capacity, to engage effectively in restoring and protecting wildlife habitats, waterways, productivity, controlling pest plants and animals, as well as building community capacity and resilience. Hence at our soon to be held AGM, we will celebrate the value you have all given to our local community.

For that, as part of the Committee of Management and Staff of the WPCLN, I applaud the contribution you have all made. You have all participated in resounding successes and have made great contributions to our local areas. I hope that 2017 will be as, if not more successful than this year.

Marijke de Bever-Price
President
Westernport Catchment Landcare Network

PETER RONALDS – SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MANAGER

Did you know I have now been delivering Landcare Projects in the Western Port Catchment for over 10.5 years, supporting farmers with the uptake and promotion of sustainable farming practices? I am now in the third year of the "Demonstrating Sustainable Farming Practices" Project. This 'flagship' project continues to achieve great outcomes and widespread media coverage. I have some amazing project partners and more detailed info about the project can be found in this magazine.

I love working with farmers and am continually inspired by their innovation, perseverance and passion for growing amazing produce. Over the past couple of years there has been a huge increase in interest from people who want to know the story behind the food they eat, how it is produced and who is growing the food. This provides a great opportunity for 'Landcare' farmers to tell their story about how their food is produced in a sustainable way through using landcare principles.

I continue to volunteer with 'Beyond Subsistence' which supports some of the poorest farmers in Africa with practical training. I travelled back to Africa this year to use my skills and experience to train another 60 farmers in conservation farming and the incorporation of trees on farms to improve livelihoods. Some of the WPCLN landcare groups, local schools and the community have supported this project which has culminated in the establishment of Junior Landcare in 6 schools in Uganda along with community vegetable gardens and school orchards. More great things are happening in Zimbabwe as I write this report.

Thanks to all the dedicated staff who I work with. Bridgette Sullivan was on maternity leave this year and has just returned to work, so it's great to have her back. It was sad to say goodbye to Rachel Drew in January who did a fantastic job for 4 years and I wish her all the best as she completes her training to become a teacher. It was great to welcome Kathleen Roberts who is the new landcare group facilitator. Thanks to Carol also, who works very hard in the office.

A special thank you to the farmers I work with! All those who opened up their farms for field days, discussion groups, farm tours, hosted demonstration sites, smiled for the cameras and promoted sustainable agriculture through their actions and words! 2015-16 has been a great year with 68 field days, discussion groups, training courses and other activities held throughout the region with a total attendance of 1460 people!

All the best, Pete

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



"I love working with farmers and am continually inspired by their innovation, perseverance and passion for growing amazing produce".

KATHLEEN ROBERTS – LANDCARE GROUP FACILITATOR

“We have been involved in some great projects such as the One Tree Per Child project, Cardinia Shire Biodiversity project, Threatened Species Protection Initiative and the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage program”.



Garfield, Jindivick, Bunyip, Neerim South, Ripplebrook, Cardinia, Labertouche and Nayook to plan and prepare planting projects on school sites and public land. It has been a successful project in creating partnerships and supporting student's connection to the environment.

Indigenous trees and shrubs were planted to create habitat, improve air and water quality and to improve the aesthetic value of the school environment at each site.

Tooradin Primary School added to their established indigenous garden, Garfield Primary School planted wildlife corridors around the school, Jindivick Primary school created a she-oak forest, Bunyip Primary school planted understory plants in established wildlife corridors, Neerim South infill planted along the Red Hill Creek to connect with the Neerim South Wetlands – and worked in partnership with the friends of Neerim South Wetlands and the Neerim Landcare Group, Ripplebrook Primary School created a nature walk around the boundary of their school, Cardinia Primary School planted out some wet areas to improve biodiversity and improve soil erosion in dry areas around the school, Labertouche Primary School added to their beautiful indigenous garden and Nayook enjoyed planting around a frog pond.

In total 1300 indigenous trees and shrubs were planted and cared for by 1300 students with the involvement of 1530 participants in total. It was great to see the brightly coloured tree guards and each student taking responsibility for the plant they put in the ground.

Thanks to Westernport Indigenous Nursery, Habitat Creations and Koo Wee Rup Trees and Shrubs for supplying the plants, tree guards and stakes for each project! Thanks also to Cannibal Creek Landcare Group for preparing the site at Garfield Primary School for planting, and to the Canty's for helping with the Garfield Primary School planting, Sandra McPhee for her assistance with the Neerim South Primary School planting and Susan Anderson for her help in preparing for the Bunyip Primary School planting.

Over the past year I have enjoyed working with the Western Port Catchment Landcare community. It has been wonderful getting to know the volunteers that work hard to protect our environment and the Landcare Groups they are a part of.

Some of the highlights to date include, working with the Cannibal Creek Landcare Group and Melbourne Water on their Frog Night, completed as a part of their involvement in the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity project; taking part in the Bunyip Landcare Field Day (supported by the same project); wildlife camera training with the Jindivick Landcare Group; planning planting projects with the Back Creek Landcare Group; organising a Network Planting day with Toomuc Valley Landcare Group; visiting the Lang Lang Arboretum and being introduced to the awesome work the Westernport Swamp group are doing to create outdoor classrooms and a beautiful place for the community to visit and protect; learning from the Langwarrin Woodlands and Northern Westernport Group about online tools for volunteer groups. These are just some of the highlights.

In September, I attended the Landcare Conference and it was inspiring to hear Landcare staff and members from across the country and to learn from others about some of the great projects they are working on and ideas they have.

Thank-you to the WPCLN Committee of Management and staff for your support and hard work and I look forward to another year of Landcare together.

We have been involved in some great projects such as the One Tree Per Child project, Cardinia Shire Biodiversity project, Threatened Species Protection Initiative and the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage program with more details on each project below.

ONE TREE PER CHILD PROJECT

The WPCLN received funding from the Australian Government 20 Million Trees Programme for a One Tree Per Child Project.

We partnered with eight primary schools including Tooradin,

THREATENED SPECIES PROTECTION INITIATIVE COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER ACTION GRANTS

We recently received funding for a Threatened Species Protection Initiative Community Volunteer Action Grant. Our project “Protecting the Present, Planning for the Future - Powerful Owl Habitat” will focus on strengthening community connections to the local environment by protecting and restoring the habitat of the Powerful Owl through on-ground re-vegetation and conservation activities as well as education about the threatened species and its habitat.

We are looking forward to working with Landcare groups to organise and deliver on-ground works involving re-vegetation and fencing off the threatened species habitat.

We will be fencing off remnant vegetation on private land and re-vegetate the area with understory plants to enhance the habitat for these species.

We will be connecting habitat and making links with Bunyip State Park where the Powerful Owl is located. Landholders, volunteers, Landcare Groups and the network will be involved in the delivery of the project.

We currently have project sites in the Maryknoll, Jindivick, Longwarry North and Tynong areas and there will be a possibility of other potential project sites.

LANDCARE AUSTRALIA SUPPORT GRANT

We received funding from Landcare Australia to support the Landcare Network and contribute to network activities.

A successful Woodland Bird workshop was run in partnership with Birdlife Australia. We learnt about some of the threatened woodland bird species and ways to help with their conservation.

The Toomuc Valley Landcare Group hosted a Network Planting day at the Toomuc Valley Nature Reserve and we planted 900 tubestock along the Toomuc Creek to add to the wonderful work of the Toomuc Valley Landcare Group in this area.

CARDINIA SHIRE BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

We have worked with some inspiring landholders in the Cardinia Shire keen to participate in biodiversity projects on their properties, from re-vegetating wetlands to creating wildlife corridors.

The 2015/2016 Cardinia Shire Biodiversity Project involved 16 landholders in projects that fenced off and re-vegetated areas to improve biodiversity on private property.

We are looking forward to delivering the 2016/2017 Cardinia Shire Biodiversity Project and are inviting expressions of

interest from landholders in the Cardinia Shire.

For more details contact Kathleen Roberts at kathleen@wpcln.org.au or 0488 013 613. Visit our website for an Expression of Interest form <http://www.wpcln.org.au/projects/biodiversity-grants/>

MELBOURNE WATER STREAM FRONTAGE MANAGEMENT

We have partnered with Melbourne Water for many years to assist in delivering the Stream Frontage Management Program in the Western Port catchment. This program is designed to improve waterway health, increase biodiversity and improve farm productivity through fencing off waterways, planting indigenous vegetation and providing watering troughs in paddocks for stock. We also visit and advise landholders and farmers on waterway management projects and organise and run waterway focused events.

Funding and eligibility: Your eligibility for funding, and the specific amount of funding you are entitled to, will be determined after a site visit by our river health assessor. The amount and type of funding varies according to the type of work you are willing to undertake, and the length of river or creek you wish to protect. Funding can include fencing to exclude stock from waterways, plants, weed control and in some cases, off stream stock watering systems such as header tanks, troughs and pipes.

For more information please contact Kathleen Roberts at kathleen@wpcln.org.au or 0488 013 613.

Access to the Expression of Interest form and more relevant information about the program is available at <http://www.melbournewater.com.au/getinvolved/applyforfunding/Pages/Stream-frontage-management-program.aspx>

Kathleen Roberts
Landcare Group Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

BRIDGETTE SULLIVAN – LANDCARE PROJECTS FACILITATOR

CLYDE RAIL PROJECT

The Landcare Network has recently received funding from Landcare Australia via VicTrack to manage and restore the Clyde Rail Precinct, a 6km link of indigenous vegetation between Ballarto and Manks Road, Clyde.

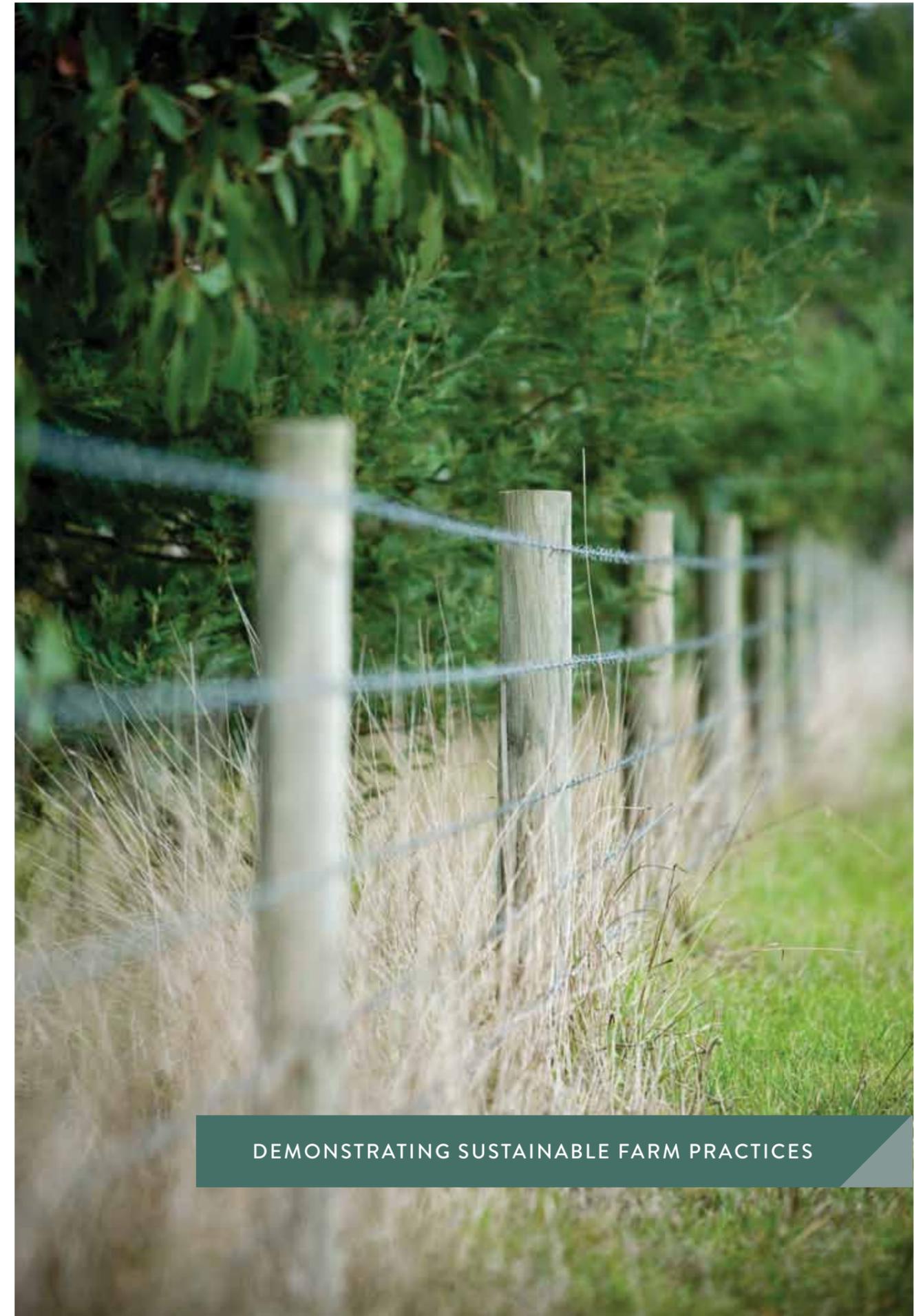
This section of the disused railway contains some significant flora as well as sightings of Southern Brown Bandicoot along the site. The site also contains significant infestations of weeds such as blackberry and gorse.

The project has been funded for 12 months and will use contractors to undertake some of the weed control works, there will also be a number of days where the community will be invited to come along and learn about the plants or participate in a planting day. For more information please contact Bridgette Sullivan on 5941 8446 (Mon or Tues).

“This section of the disused railway contains some significant flora as well as sightings of Southern Brown Bandicoot along the site. The site also contains significant infestations of weeds such as blackberry and gorse”.



Bridgette Sullivan
Landcare Projects Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



DEMONSTRATING SUSTAINABLE FARM PRACTICES



2015/16 has been another fantastic year for the "Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices" flagship project. The five year project receives funding through the Australian Governments National Landcare Programme and the objective of the project is to increase the uptake of sustainable farming practices to improve farmer's productivity and our natural resources. The project is working with landholders from multiple enterprise types throughout the Western Port Catchment, Mornington Peninsula and parts of the Yarra Catchment to promote Sustainable Farming Practices.

The project continues to significantly exceed all targets and this year was no exception. In 2015/16 the project team ran 68 events with 1460 farmers participating! This is almost 1.5 events per week throughout the region!

The major activities for the past year included;

- Discussion group farm walks
- Steering C/tee meetings
- Bush food field days
- Field days at Demo sites
- iFarm courses
- Fert\$mart training courses for dairyfarmers
- Open "Day on the Farm" events
- iFarm refresher course
- Three day farm tour to the Otways
- Soils and Pasture courses
- Farm Planning course
- Farm Chemical Users Course
- Farm Chemical Users Course Refresher

"I am continually amazed by the ingenuity of farmers in this region".

In addition to the above courses I was also a keynote speaker at a large farming conference in Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula with over 200 farmers attending.

I am currently working with farmers who produce; beef, dairy, sheep, goats, chickens, eggs, agroforestry, apples, avocados, citrus, berries, cheese, grapes, wine, mushrooms, bush foods, hops, vegetables, nuts, and many other interesting and unusual crops.

I am continually amazed by the ingenuity of farmers in this region. We run many programs each year but due to the wide range of farmers we work with, we are able to tailor activities that are focused towards individual farmers needs and are therefore relevant to them. For example we have set up discussion groups which are targeted towards specific producers such as the WPCLN Organic Fruit/Vegie growers group. BCLN established an innovation and diversification group which showcases some of the more niche farming enterprises such as mushrooms or dairy goats etc.



This year I have worked very hard to promote the project through various media channels. The WPCLN website was upgraded to allow the storage of fact sheets and flyers etc. I set up an Instagram page @wpclnlandcare which now has over 300 followers and have also significantly increased our presence on Facebook resulting in over 300 new followers this year. The programs and activities that have been run are generating significant interest in the community. We have also received coverage on WIN TV, ABC, StarFM, the Weekly Times Farming newspaper and all local papers.

I have used social media extensively to engage with people who traditionally haven't been involved in Landcare previously. This has worked really well with many more people in the community becoming aware of the work of WPCLN and attending events that we are running. The success of the increased media presence is such that of the 1460 participants that attended activities this past year, 603 people had not previously been involved in the project! Honeypt Creative Solutions have been integral partners in helping with project promotion.

One of my dreams has been to provide an opportunity for the general community to visit a farm, to see where their food comes from, meet the farmer and hear their story. This is something that the Warragul Farmers Market and the Baw Baw Food Movement have also been dreaming about and this year it came to fruition as we partnered together and ran two successful "A Day on the Farm" events with nearly 200 people attending.

We have many partners and they all play a specific and integral role in the project. Major partners include Bass Coast Landcare, South Gippsland Landcare, Mornington Peninsula Shire, AgVic, PPWCMA, Dairy Australia, GippsDairy and Melbourne Water. The project is so successful due to the passion and extremely hard work of all the partners involved.

We have had some changes to the project team this year as Bridgette Sullivan went on maternity leave. Gillian Stewart left Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to take up a job in Western Samoa to empower and equip poor rural families to support sustainable businesses that maximize farm-based resources. Jenny O'Sullivan's role also changed slightly. We use several dedicated and experienced consultants that add additional credibility and rigour to the information that we provide, and they are an important part of the project.

Finally, a special thank you to the hundreds of farmers I work with! You are an amazing bunch of innovative, supportive, friendly and hospitable people. Thanks to each one of you who opened up your farms for field days, discussion groups, farm tours, hosted demonstration sites, smiled for the cameras and videos and were great sports with everything!

We look forward to another awesome year ahead! Don't forget to follow wpclnlandcare on Instagram and wpcln on Facebook and meet some of the farmers we work with and view some of the things we get up to!

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Blueberry Farm Walk

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORT

Discussion Groups with farm walks are one of the key activities that farmers in the 'Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices' project participate in. Discussion Groups have been proven to be a significant benefit to farmers as they contribute to the future development of better farming practices. Farmers that actively engage in discussion groups are more open to new ideas and are able to contribute their ideas and learnings in a setting that is supportive and friendly. Some of our discussion groups also provide a mentoring service to newer farmers by more experienced farmers.

I have been involved in the establishment of four discussion groups over the past three years. All are well attended and meet regularly.

The Organic Vegie/Fruit Growers Discussion group is now in its second year and is the only vegie/fruit growing discussion group in Australia which specifically supports organic growers. The organic sector is growing rapidly and the group is comprised of large commercial vegetable/fruit growers through to smaller growers. We generally get over twenty growers at each discussion group.

Other groups are situated throughout the region and they primarily cater for grazing farmers (primarily beef and dairy). Another highlight has been the establishment of an innovation and diversification discussion group in Bass Coast which caters for producers looking at diversifying into niche enterprises such as goats, mushrooms, etc.

Don't forget to follow wpclnlandcare on Instagram and wpcln on Facebook You will see lots of discussion group activities on these pages and view some of the things we get up to! Please don't hesitate to contact me for more information.

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Costa Meets Growers



Pruning Demonstrations



Farm Walk

FARM TOUR REPORT

INNOVATION IN THE OTWAY'S - GIPPSLAND FARMERS INSPIRED BY INNOVATIVE FARMERS DOING AMAZING THINGS.

We ran our third farm tour this year. A group of twenty eight Gippsland farmers and Landcare staff travelled to the beautiful Otways to visit a diverse range of farmers and farm enterprises, displaying all the hallmarks of diversification and innovation. The bus tour followed sections of the Otways Harvest Trail, where the hosts had successfully found unique solutions to generating profit on small and larger holdings in a sustainable manner.

Day one was jam packed visiting three farms, where all the owners were generating sufficient income from small acreages, and the visitors were continually inspired by the energy and stories of the three properties. Hayden and Jasmin Findlay's story of establishing farm multiple enterprises, value adding, and setting up a farm shop and café at Ravens Creek Farms was a compelling start.

Belinda Appleton from Moriac Farmstead Dairy has recently started producing delicious goats' milk cheeses from her small farm. She displayed great perseverance to import leading animal genetics, and talked about learning cheese making techniques and her approach to marketing. The final visit for the day was the wonderful Dennis family's Tardwarncourt homestead with their high quality Polwarth wool, wool products and heritage farm stay. All three properties have been successful in evolving with changing agricultural markets and climate change.

On day two Chris and Helene Bell inspired us with their story on walnut and truffle production on their beautiful volcanic soils. This was followed by a meeting with Tony Mahoney from the Alvie Tree Planters Landcare Group who took us on a wonderful tour of the Red Rock volcanic region and Lake Corangamite.

Mike Edwards from Special Effects Nursery in Colac gladly shared his knowledge producing tubestock for agroforestry, cut flowers and bush foods, as well as inoculated logs for shitake mushrooms. Then Matt and Sharon Bradshaw from Forrest Brewing Company amazed us with their story on how an innovative modern business can turn around the fortunes of a declining timber town.



Flower Growing

Twenty eight Gippsland farmers and Landcare staff travelled to the beautiful Otways to visit a diverse range of farmers and farm enterprises, displaying all the hallmarks of diversification and innovation.

Day two ended on a high with an amazing meal at the iconic Bespoke Harvest Restaurant.

In the heart of the small township of Forrest this venue has developed a wide reputation for amazing meals, at least 80% grown and sourced locally from producers in the Otways. People travel far and wide to soak up the atmosphere and experience the food from this wonderful venue. An exhausted bunch of Gippslanders all had a wonderful night's sleep in their wonderful Forrest accommodation venues, which included a converted church.

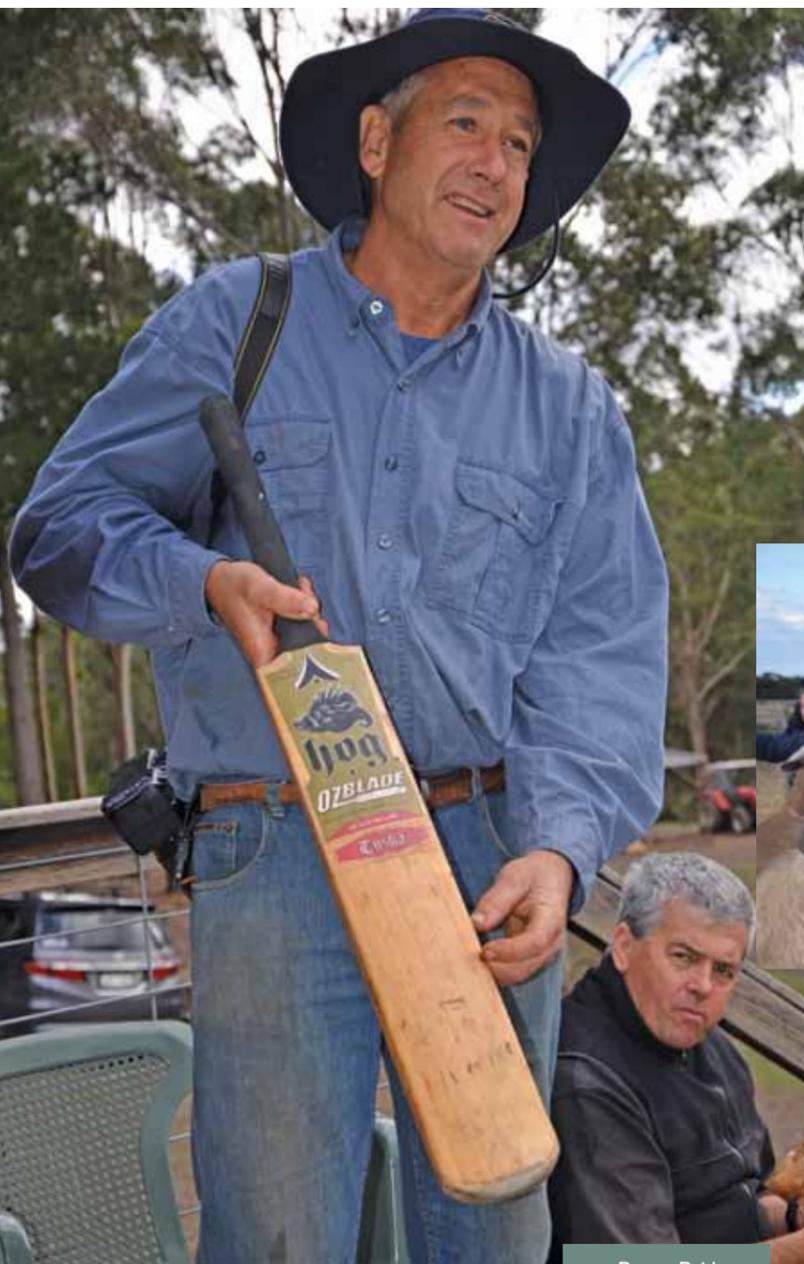
Our final day was focussed on farm trees and timber production. Andrew and Jill Stewart from Yan Yan Gurt West Farm took us on a wonderful tour of their property, demonstrating how sheep,

“Over three days we were continually inspired by people willing to take risks and try new things”.

agroforestry, cut flowers and biodiversity all support each other on this diverse sustainable farm. We were also lucky to be shown around a home built of natural products and the simpler alternative lifestyles that many people are choosing. Lastly we visited Rowan Reid's Bamba Agroforestry Farm. An expert in forest science, Rowan hosted an educational walk around his property and also demonstrated timber milling on a sustainable property scale. Rowan's knowledge and passion is unmatched and he challenged all our traditional thinking on agroforestry and its role in the landscape.

Over three days we were continually inspired by people willing to take risks and try new things. We heard about their successes, their failures and their learnings, as well as gaining valuable insights into their communities. We also took away new ideas and news ways of thinking that can one day transform Gippsland and beyond.

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Rowan Reid



Fun On The Farm



Armful Of Veggies!

OPEN FARM DAYS REPORT

We have some of the best farms in Australia in Gippsland. We have fantastic soils, high rainfall, innovative and hard working farmers and incredible produce is grown here. I am truly thankful that I can experience this every day of the week!

One of my dreams has been to provide opportunities for the general community to experience some of the things that I experience. To visit a farm, see where their food comes from, taste the local produce, meet the farmer and hear their story. This is something that the Warragul Farmers Market and the Baw Baw Food Movement have also been dreaming about, and this year it came to fruition as we partnered together and ran two "A Day on the Farm" events.

The first event was on an organic vegetable farm and the second event was on a dairy farm. The events were promoted far and wide and were extremely popular with nearly 200 community members attending the two days. The people attending were able to do a farm walk, hear the farmer share their story, see the animals, pick some veggies, paddle in a creek and eat a lunch made out of local produce. The farmers spoke about the ways that they care for the land and how landcare helps them achieve this.

Both events attracted widespread coverage from the media and were very popular with those attending. A highlight was the number of young families attending. Hopefully the connections then lead to the local community making conscious decisions to support local farmers through purchasing local food. This is a 'win win' for both the farmer and the consumer.

Don't forget to follow wpclnlandcare on Instagram and wpcln on Facebook and have a look at some pictures and videos from the Open Farm Days!

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Learning About Food



Picnic On The River



Trevor and Anne-Marie

TREVOR AND ANNE-MARIE MILLS – CASE STUDY

As Trevor and Anne-Marie Mills and their family represented Victoria in the '2016 Australian Government Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award' it is only fitting that we celebrate this achievement with an uplifting story of sustainable farm management.

MINNIEBURN SPRINGS - TREVOR AND ANNE-MARIE MILLS

2012 – PPWCMA Regional Landcare winner – 'Sustainable Farming'

2013 - DEPI Landcare – 'Regional Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices' – 2nd in Victoria

2015 – DEDJTR Landcare – 'Regional Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices' – Victoria Champion

2016 – Represent Victoria in the '2016 Australian Government Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award'

Location: Drouin South

Property size: 122 hectares

Enterprise: Dairy Herd of up to 150 Milking cows plus 200 dairy heifers. Milk is sold to Fonterra.

Soil types: Brown dermosol soils on the hills with some hydrosol soils on the flats.

Land type: Undulating.

Summary: Trevor, Anne-Marie and their two children own and manage a 122 hectare farm in Drouin South, Gippsland. Trevor's parents purchased the farm in the 1950s and managed the property with traditional farming practices, running beef and dairy cattle with set stocking and using the same fertiliser regime every year. Trevor worked with his parents on the property after finishing school and then purchased the farm in 1997 and from then on has worked on making it as sustainable and productive as possible.

When Trevor purchased the property he obtained an aerial photograph of the farm and then used a computer program to redesign the farm. It was lacking shelter, fences, laneways, drainage, water troughs and small paddocks.

Originally the farm consisted of 25 paddocks of different shapes and sizes, now there are 45 paddocks, most 2-2.5 hectares in size. Trevor has always had a business plan to provide direction on his farm to make it more profitable and this meant moving away from what he views as 'traditional farming practices'.

Trevor and Anne-Marie view their property as a garden and want it to look like parkland (they believe they are 90% of the way there). Trevor and Anne-Marie have two operations in their enterprise to reduce business risk, improve lifestyle, and increase farm profitability. The two operations are; a) Dairy – milk production, b) Dairy Heifers - export.

"Trevor has always had a business plan to provide direction on his farm to make it more profitable and this meant moving away from what he views as 'traditional farming practices'".

The Dairy Operation: Over time, Trevor gradually increased the number of cows he milked from 120-200 cows. In the last few years Trevor has actually reduced milking numbers to approx 150 cows (whilst increased the dairy heifer numbers). Despite reducing cattle numbers, milk production has actually increased over the same time period. The herd is averaging close to 6500 litres per cow per year. This year Trevor is planning to increase numbers to 180 milkers once the new dairy has been installed.

The Dairy Heifer Operation: Trevor has been rearing and selling calves to China for many years. Australian Dairy Heifers are highly regarded throughout the world due to their enviable disease free status. These heifers are exported at a young age to support the establishment of dairy industries in many countries throughout the world. The animals are used for milk production and breeding purposes. This has proven to be a profitable venture for Trevor. Trevor buys calves (a week old), then grows them on robotic milk feeders (until 3 months old, ~120 kg) and sells to China for their new dairy industry. This year he is rearing about 150 calves.

Drivers for change: The biggest change in Trevor's land management practices came when he joined the Warragul Beefcheque group in 1996. He attended monthly meetings, held on a focus farm under the guidance of farm consultant Jeff Urie. Jeff changed Trevor's entire way of thinking about grazing management. Up until then his grazing management had been a traditional set stocking routine. By being shown the benefits of rotational grazing and understanding the basic principles behind pasture growth he has been able to increase his stocking rate by 50% without additional inputs. A pasture renovation program incorporating crops and improved pasture species was implemented and this also was a key driver in improving production.

The change in grazing management has come with the additional benefit of better soil management. This has occurred mainly due to improved pasture cover, leading to less pugging in wetter months and better pasture cover in summer reducing moisture evaporation and top soil being washed away in summer storms.



Trevor Mills

Fertiliser Regime: Trevor used to take soil tests across the farm yearly to measure fertility levels with the aim of reaching the recommended levels of Olsen P 20-25 and K 200-250. Fertility levels over most of the farm are now at (or above) recommended levels. Trevor mainly applies 3:1 fertiliser and applied Nitrogen (Urea) from 1997-2007, but has since reduced the applications of Urea. He was observing bare patches in the pasture, and a reduction in clover content. Since reducing the use of Urea Trevor has noticed the return of the clover.

Dairy Effluent: Trevor has made full use of his dairy effluent system through the use of a direct application system. The effluent is used to improve pastures, maximise summer crop production and reduce the quantity of purchased fertilisers. 20% of the farm receives the effluent which is pumped through a self propelled travelling irrigator.

Water Management: Water and nutrient runoff from the farm has been improved through the installation of a 25ML dam which was constructed under the 'Slow the Flow' program. This dam helps prevent nutrients and sediment from entering the Minnieburn Creek which flows into Westernport Bay via the Lang Lang River.

Trevor has installed a water trough in each paddock, which is situated in the third of the paddock furthest from the creek. This avoids the risk of nutrient run-off from cattle standing around the trough. The water to troughs is pumped to 2 header tanks and then gravity-fed to troughs.



New Dam

Innovation: Trevor was involved in the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network's 'Ag Emissions' Project. This project audited the farms Greenhouse Emissions, Water Usage and Waste to landfill. The auditor then recommended changes to farm practices to improve in each of these areas. As part of this project Trevor installed a solar hot water service on the dairy and a heat exchange unit on the milk vat compressor. This reduced electricity use significantly.

Robotic milk and grain feeding systems have been in use on the farm for many years. The controlled individual feeding help to improve calf health and saves on labour costs. Trevor rears up to 200 calves throughout the year so the labour savings are considerable.

Trevor is currently building a new robotic dairy. The Mlone robot will be the first of its kind to go into operation in Australia and the first time a Mlone has been installed on a pasture based milking system anywhere in the world. With three milking boxes being serviced by one robotic arm the new dairy will be capable of milking up to 180 cows. The robotic dairy is expected to revolutionize the way cows are milked on the farm and will integrate well with the export calf rearing operation. It is expected the new dairy will begin operation on the 1st May 2014.

Biodiversity: Trevor has a strong interest in photography, particularly native birds. This interest began as a teenager, when he joined the Warragul Camera Club. Through photography, and extensive travel throughout Australia, Trevor has noticed the extent of degradation throughout the landscape and this has reinforced his feeling that we need to do more to manage our land sustainably.

When Trevor purchased the farm from his father most of the remnant clumps of trees had gone and most of the solitary trees had blown over. It was obvious unless action was taken immediately the farm would end up tree-less, without wildlife and with an open creek running through the middle.

Trevor started planting indigenous plants on his property in the late 80s around the same time as the Landcare movement started. He initially started by fencing off and planting the steep embankment at the back of the property where small landslips were occurring causing blockages in Minnieburn Creek which runs through the farm.

Cattle were accessing and walking in the creek causing damage, so his next project was to fence off the remnant vegetation along 2.5 km of Minnieburn Creek. He also fenced off the drainage lines and dams. Initially he collected his own seed and propagated the trees himself but in more recent years trees and fences have been supplied through Melbourne Water and Landcare grants.

In total Trevor has planted approximately 20,000-30,000 plants and undertaken two successful direct seeding projects. Before undertaking a planting Trevor rips up the ground to encourage natural regrowth. He does not use tree guards because he believes that good preparation will create a successful result. Trevor's father is very proud of what his son has achieved.

"Trevor is currently building a new robotic dairy. The Mlone robot will be the first of its kind to go into operation in Australia and the first time a Milone has been installed on a pasture based milking system anywhere in the world".



Robotic Milking System



The Mlone Robot



Before and After

All the remnant vegetation, wetlands and creeks have now been fenced off from cattle, and many of these areas are interconnecting to provide corridors and better habitat for fauna. The remnant vegetation is now thick and dense, particularly sections that he has burnt. Trevor has noticed a return of native birds and animals to his property, including wallabies, antechinus, koalas and echidnas, plus a wide variety of new bird species, including waterbirds. Animals are moving freely around the property, using the wildlife corridors he has created. To date 14 different orchid and wildflower species have been found by Trevor, plus 80 different bird species.

Waterways: Trevor has noticed that creeks that are unfenced with pasture up to the edge tend to flood more than the areas that have been planted. This is because in tree-less areas the weeds would choke the creek. Whereas the areas that have been planted out each side are shading out the grass and weeds and the creek is flowing freer in these areas. Furthermore there has been an improvement in water quality, (monitored by the Lardner Landcare Group), a reduction in stream bank erosion and easier management of cows. Prior to fencing off the creeks, the cattle used to roam freely through creeks and streams on property, water quality was poor and he was losing cows and calves which got stuck in mud and drowned.

"Trevor has noticed that creeks that are unfenced with pasture up to the edge tend to flood more than the areas that have been planted".

Some unique aspects of the operation that sets Trevor apart from many other local farmers:

- Trevor has found it is more economically viable to purchase grain and hay than cut it himself. The purchased grain and hay contain significant nutrient levels which have reduced the quantity of purchased fertilisers required.
- Trevor doesn't rear replacement cows for his own enterprise now, as he has found it more cost effective to purchase replacements. i.e. He can purchase replacements for \$700 but to rear an animal for 2 years costs up to \$1000.
- Trevor is happy to run a cool burn through his remnant vegetation to stimulate regrowth and encourage diversity and improve the health of the remnant vegetation.
- Trevor only uses electric fencing on his Landcare and Melbourne Water projects as when a branch falls over the fence, usually no damage to the fence is incurred.

How Landcare activities have helped the farm?

Trevor has been involved in Landcare since the 1980s and is an inaugural committee member of Lardner and District Landcare Group. He has hosted and supported many Landcare plantings and field days on his property and has inspired others to also become involved.

Trevor believes the farm is a better environment now for his family to live and work. Some of the benefits to the farm, that Trevor has observed include; more shade for cows resulting in less stressed cows and improved milk quality, increased production, improved cow condition, and better quality pastures. He believes that their farm is more drought resilient and observed that during the height of the drought his farm had a tinge of green whereas other areas were brown.

The Future: Trevor recently suffered a health issue which limited his ability to contribute to the farm over the past year. This and the fact that Trevor and Anne-Marie have a young family have caused them to evaluate their future and how best they can adapt their farm management practices to their changing circumstances. The installation and implementation of the new robotic dairy will free up Trevor and Anne-Marie to spend more time focusing on their family and other aspects of the farm.

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



LANDCARE GROUP REPORTS

BACK CREEK LANDCARE GROUP



Post-Planting Lunch

GREETINGS FROM BACK CREEK LANDCARE GROUP!

We had a bit of a late start this year waiting for the rains to come and boy didn't they come! So in perfect planting conditions we worked at the properties of three of our members to infill an already established creek area, creating a new shelter belt in a bare paddock and a planting in a back yard backing onto a reserve in Maryknoll.

Over the past few years we have been weeding a reserve in Maryknoll in conjunction with the local Tracks and Reserves Group to clear the area of pittosporums. This year was the fun part and we were able to plant out the reserve with indigenous plants to take the place of the weeds. It was so exciting to see native orchids growing in the area and have an impromptu botanical lesson from our member Charlie.

Now the work is over for the season we can sit back and relax a bit with our guest speaker for the year. We are fortunate enough to have engaged the services of a speaker from the Victorian Weed Society who will be joining our group to talk all things weeds and of course partake in some supper.

All in all, another productive year for our group with plenty of laughs and friendship. Our group would like to take this opportunity to thank WPCLN for their support throughout the year in particular Kathleen for attending our meetings, helping us with funding and researching to find answers to our questions.

Raelene Newham
Back Creek Landcare

“All in all, another productive year for our group with plenty of laughs and friendship”.

BUNYIP LANDCARE GROUP



Walk With The Valley

PLANTING AND CONNECTING

Bunyip Landcare had two group planting days on members' properties in 2016 and also helped at a Cardinia Shire planting day at Bunyip Sanctuary. It's great to see second generation Landcarers coming back to the farm to help on planting days.

An extra planting day saw a collaboration between Bunyip Landcare and the Earthworker Cooperative as they stopped over in Bunyip on their "Walk with the Valley" event in September. The cooperative manufactures heat exchange and solar hot water units, and is moving to Morwell to support renewable energy in the Latrobe Valley. Although new to Landcare planting, they got 200 plants in the ground in two hours.

Our now annual bushdance in July was enjoyed by young and old, and we thank Councillors David Young and family and Graeme Moore for coming along. Our youngest participant has been to all three bushdances and at not quite 5 years old, expects to see many more. So, we might have to keep going with this event. Very welcome guests also were Hani, Noha and Timothy from Pakenham, who became Bunyip Landcare friends through our collaboration with students from Living Learning Pakenham.

Also in July Bunyip Landcare hosted a field day on Stream Frontage Management with guest speakers Gavin Brock from Melbourne Water and Uncle David Wandin from the Wurundjeri Tribal Land Council. On a very cold day, we visited Andrew and Jan Troedel's property at Bunyip North, followed by a very welcome afternoon tea at Bunyip Hall supplied by Bidy Martha's Café.

An unexpected bonus was to hear Victor Stephenson from Cape York who was visiting the Wurundjeri. He spoke about using fire to heal the land by "trickling through the landscape like water".

The field day was sponsored by Port Philip and Westernport CMA and by Melbourne Water as part of Bunyip Landcare's participation in the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project.

Sue Anderson
Bunyip Landcare Group



Field Day



Annual Barn Dance

CANNIBAL CREEK LANDCARE GROUP



Planting Day

Cannibal Creek Landcare Group began in the mid 1990's. It grew out of a group of local residents in the Tynong North area who had banded together to fight the possibility of a third granite quarry being set up in Tynong North. When the battle to stop the development of this quarry was successful the local group decided not to disband but instead morphed into the Cannibal Creek Landcare Group set up under the overall control of the Tynong North Community Affairs Association. The people who were the driving force behind the formation of the group were Anthony Hooper and Julie Weatherhead. This dynamic couple were the main instigators of the growth of the various Landcare Groups from Beaconsfield to Neerim South and the eventual formation of the Bunyip Catchment Landcare Network – now the Westernport Catchment Landcare Network and the Cardinia Environment Coalition.

For the last twenty two years from formation to the present day the Cannibal Creek Landcare Group has carried out very successful planting days on over 80 properties in Tynong, Tynong North, Garfield, Garfield North, Bunyip and Iona. If one was to calculate that at least 400 trees were planted on each of these properties – quite a few more than that were planted on many occasions – then over 90,000 -100,000 trees, under storey scrubs and grasses were planted by the Group and members over its years of existence. The

"Considerable effort has been put into the rehabilitation of Cannibal Creek as one of the best preserved natural creeks in the State. This involves weed control – blackberries, pittosporums and willows".

photographic evidence displayed shows how very successful these plantings have been.

Tree planting and shelter belt construction were not the only works carried out by the group. Much encouragement and support through grants received by the group has gone into remnant protection through the construction of permanent fencing. Considerable effort has been put into the rehabilitation of Cannibal Creek as one of the best preserved natural creeks in the State. This involves weed control – blackberries, pittosporums and willows.

In the last year we have been involved, and leading the way, in a programme in conjunction with Melbourne Water, Catchment Management Authority, Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, Friends of Mt Cannibal, Cannibal Creek Reserve, Gumbuya Park, Bunyip Landcare, Cardinia Shire Council, Mt Cannibal Preservation Society and Cardinia Environment Coalition called the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project. The aim is to completely clean up and protect Cannibal Creek from its source to where it joins the Bunyip River. Over \$58,000.00 has been allocated to this task and work is well underway. The project emphasizes our new resolve to participate in environmental protection works in conjunction with local groups and government agencies whose aims are the same as ours.

Direct seeding of native shelter belts has also been a project encouraged and facilitated by our group. Our members Charlie and Paula Rupe have carried out several direct seeding operations and the results have turned their farm into a show piece of the success of direct seeding.



Planting

Our numbers have fluctuated during the period of our existence but we have always managed to hang on to a core of 12-15 active members. Many of the people on whose properties we have worked are no longer active members but we do not consider this fact as a negative. Trees in the ground and vegetation and waterways protected were achieved as a result of their involvement with us and those achievements are ongoing and constantly improving. We make special efforts to make contact with new residents in our district and as a result we have several new families with young children actively involved.

Our AGM is always a major social event for us with a delicious meal prepared by members who can relax and enjoy each others company.

Over the last three years we have encouraged and financially supported the efforts of one of our members Garry Burns to run a feral animal project. Its aim is to reduce the number of feral foxes, deer and rabbits from properties within a three kilometre radius of Mt Cannibal. This project has seen the elimination of over 206 foxes 320 rabbits and 60 deer since its instigation. Local shooters guaranteed to be licensed and competent in contact with local landowners have carried out this work under Garry's guidance.

One of our most recent events was the organization of a "Clean Up Australia" day effort. This event involved collecting rubbish and the removal of pines and pittosporums from the roadside and bush land. Over 36 people attended and it was a very successful day, the work was done in conjunction with Gumbuya Park and Holcim Quarry.

Our plans for the future are to press on with rehabilitation work on Cannibal Creek through the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project. We shall continue with as many tree planting and tree protection projects as we can possibly organize and fund. We continue to seek new members young and old to keep the Landcare cause alive.

Special mention to Gerard Cunningham who has steered the ship as President since 2007 and was Secretary at its instigation and for the passion he brings to Landcare.

Pam Cunningham
Cannibal Creek Landcare

"We shall continue with as many tree planting and tree protection projects as we can possibly organize and fund. We continue to seek new members young and old to keep the Landcare cause alive".



Planting Day



Planting Day

JINDIVICK LANDCARE GROUP



Tree Planting

Jindivick Landcare group kicked off the year in March with an environmental and local focus quiz night with some welcoming fun games as entree! This evening was particularly hilarious and enjoyed by all who attended. This jovial beginning to the year tested knowledge with a Landcare focus. It was a race not to have to ask – Have you Ever? We also had a look at some interesting and unusual celebrity heads and listened to some entertaining songs focusing on nature having to guess song titles and performers. Yet the real challenges that focused on environment, air pollution, sustainability and a little bit of geography proved where the real knowledge and competitiveness lay. All were winners enjoying simple spoils and honours by nights end.

In April we partnered with "Friends of Nangara" to complete a working bee focusing on track clearing, trimming, Agapantha removing and eradicating blackberries. It was a highly successful event – and wonderful to have so many passionate locals work together and share a mutual interest.

The Westernport Landcare network supplied 40 Casuarina trees, stakes and guards enabling a one tree one child planting as part of the National 20 Million Trees Project, at the Jindivick Primary School

Our group has had two plantings this year – one was supported by the National Bank and another at a local landowner where some 2,000 natives went into the ground in three hours.

A couple of members commented, "One of the best things we've done on our farm is plant trees. With the help of Landcare, we've invested in the land in a way that will pay us back for decades to come". Also.... "Investing in green infrastructure has increased our farm's productivity – and ultimately our farm".

Russell Broadbent congratulated Jindivick Landcare with the success of obtaining a Volunteers Grant of \$5,000. He acknowledged the valuable role volunteers play in building more resilient and cohesive communities and supporting individual participation in community life.

With the funds, Jindivick Landcare has been able to purchase remote sensing wildlife cameras so that members



Wildlife Cameras

and local farmers are able to record the types of wildlife that utilise their properties and native bush. Network Facilitator Kathleen Roberts facilitated a "How To" and "Benefits" presentation and know members will take advantage of this basic training.

The Jindivick Landcare group is about to complete a Sensory garden at the Jindivick Primary School and welcome Ian Southall, the Sustainability Project Officer from the Baw Baw Sustainability Network, to speak at our AGM. The year will then be celebrated with a BBQ at Glen Cromie along with more initiative games.

Our Group continues to grow and make valuable differences to the community.

Marijke de Bever-Price
President

LABERTOUCHE LANDCARE GROUP



Solar Pump

Monitoring of water quality at Labertouche Creek on Drayton Road has been regularly undertaken through the year by Jim Armstrong and Geoff Hudson.

A Feral Pest information evening was held in June. Guest speaker was Barry Davies, Community Engagement Officer for the Victorian Government Wild Dog Programme. Those who were able to attend were given an eye opener as to the damage wild dogs can do and left with a greater understanding (if it was ever needed) as to how important the wild dog Programme is to stock owners.

A grant for funding for wildlife cameras was applied for during the year but we were not successful in the application. We had hoped to be able to buy our own cameras for lending to members so we could conduct a survey of feral animal activity in our Landcare area.

Labertouche Landcare and Sustainable Farming Group celebrates 25 years this year, a dinner had been planned for August but, unfortunately, has had to be postponed. We are planning to hold the dinner in February 2016. The dinner will be at the Labertouche Community Centre and we look forward to as many Landcare members as possible joining us for this milestone celebration.

Members of our group continue to undertake land caring and sustainable farming projects. Not necessarily with direct Landcare input but of their own accord. Geoff and Mary Hudson are developing a wetlands on their property which will provide habitat for birds and water fauna. Rocky Mordica has invested in a solar powered water pump. Jim Armstrong attended a field looking at salinity and trials of new pasture grasses - particularly of a new Fescue awaiting commercial release.

We welcomed two new members to our group at our September meeting and look forward to increasing our membership in the next year and to more great community involvement throughout 2017.

Geoff Hudson
Labertouche Landcare Group



Community Planting

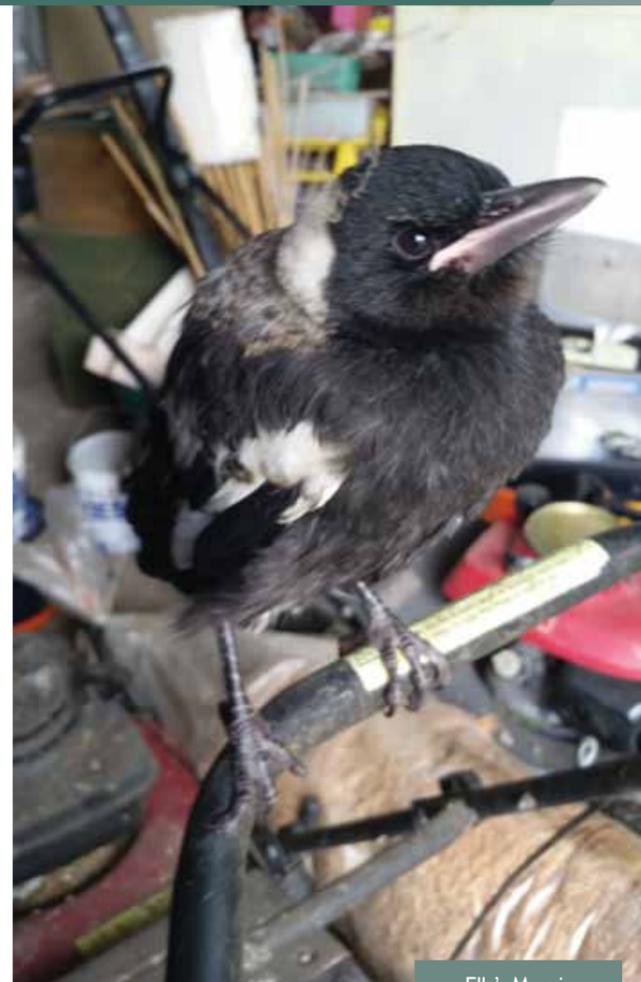
Labertouche Landcare has had a busy year. As part of the Community for Nature grant, Labertouche Landcare has been planting and direct seeding in the Labertouche Reserve. Community involvement was the key here, we have had three school groups from Marist Sion College come out and plant over three days. Each group also took the opportunity to learn about the reserve and take a walk through the bushland. The National Australia Bank also brought out a small but efficient team which planted around 500 plants in only a couple of hours. They developed a great system, demonstrating how team work can make the task seem easy. Local members from the community have also assisted in the direct seeding of some parts of the reserve. It will be good to compare the difference between the two areas in a few years.

Over 1,000 trees have been planted by both direct seeding and tube planting on 5 properties (including the Labertouche Reserve).

With a Melbourne Water Grant we also provided an information and demonstration on bush food. Leslie Smith from Jindi Farm Bush Food, with the assistance from her family, cooked a meal for participants using bush food. We had around 25 people attend and it was a great evening. Everyone went home with a greater knowledge on what native plants we can use in our cooking and garden and also some goodies. If you have a chance to attend a workshop by Leslie, we highly recommend it.

We have also had a number of farmers completing direct seeding, and we just now need the spring rain to help us in making the projects for 2015 successful. A big thank you to Jim Armstrong who has done a lot of the running around and co-ordination.

LANGWARRIN WOODLANDS GROUP



Ella's Magpie

As incoming President of this fledgling but growing group, it has been a huge thrill to work along and see the community engagement participation.

The success of the group's momentum has largely been attributed to the energy and drive of Elle Gaye, our President for past year.

She has been tireless and undaunted in her efforts to provide support, information and enthusiasm for all members interested in learning better ways of managing land conservation and restoration.

To that end we have thoroughly enjoyed the following workshops:

- Rabbit eradication Workshops
- Living with Snakes
- Integrated Pest Management Workshops
- Ecology Workshop with Malcom Legg, Senior Ecologist
- Leon Costermans Workshop Senior Botanist and Author



Nest Boxes

- Native species cuttings and propagation Workshop
- Weed eradication Workshop
- Nest box preparation Workshop

We are still currently following up our successful Grant applications and ongoing works on properties, with collection of data and final reports.

We are looking forward to the next year with more interesting workshops planned, working bee's and a regular newsletter with contributions from keen specialists in different fields of expertise.

Stay posted,

Mariea Pacheco
President
Langwarrin Woodlands



Biolinks

LARDNER AND DISTRICT LANDCARE GROUP - SPECIAL MEETING

The Lardner and District Landcare group decided to wind up in May 2016. The group is very proud of its achievements, and the majority of the goals that it set in place have now been achieved. One of the key highlights has been the creation of a Biolink from Drouin South to Hallora. This was achieved through many local landholders working together to link existing corridors with new biolinks. The Western Port Catchment Landcare Network and Melbourne Water were integral partners in the Biolink.

We have also completed projects at the Lardner Primary School and have just supported an environmental project at Drouin South primary School. More recently we have also supported the establishment of Junior Landcare in Uganda along with some community vegetable gardens and orchards in 4 schools through local development organisation Beyond Subsistence.

We had a celebratory dinner in July for all the members and will continue to plant trees on our properties and promote sustainable farming practices on our properties. We still have our weed control trailer which is available for any former member of the Lardner Landcare Group.

Finally congratulations to Trevor and Anne-Marie Mills and their family who represented Victoria in the Australian Landcare Awards recently.



Trevor and Anne-Marie Mills

“The group is very proud of its achievements, and the majority of the goals that it set in place have now been achieved”.



Landcare Picnic

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another twelve months have gone by...and I have been delighted by the continuing commitment of our committee and members to both undertake Landcare projects in Neerim District and publicly fly the Landcare flag.

In terms of actual projects, I'm most pleased that Melbourne Water renewed funding for the Tarago Catchment Sustainable Farms program in its thirteenth year, although at a lesser level than past years.

When making that further commitment, Melbourne Water undertook an audit of activities to determine benefit of the program to date and we got the tick of approval, largely due to the efforts of our project manager, Ian McLagan.

As well as the flagship Tarago program, other projects have moved forward, having both an on-ground impact and fostering community support.

The application for Threatened Species funding received approval and the grant of almost \$20,000 allows us to go to the next step of the Red Hill Creek habitat restoration plan.

Subsequently, Sandra McPhee has been determinedly signing up property owners along the creek and five have now participants.

We also received \$2,000 from VicForests (matched by \$2,000 from the Landcare discretionary fund for community engagement), which we're putting towards the Neerim Frog festival in November.

Hopefully the Frog festival will be as successful as some other recent events organised by NDLG.

The Wild Foods Dinner at the bowling club, put together by Sandra, Jenny Komsky, Phil Darton and the Country Women's Association, attracted 40 people and raised over \$500 for the CWA and \$220 for Landcare.

The recent evening Landcare Picnic at the Tarago Reserve also received compliments for being a great local Landcare initiative.

“The more of these events we do, the more we make ourselves visible in the community and attract potential membership to a group committed not just to environmental improvement but also to community wellbeing”

Not only did those gathered by the fireside get insights from platypus expert Josh Griffiths, but they also had a good bbq cooked by Sandra's boys Matt and Nick.

The more of these events we do, the more we make ourselves visible in the community and attract potential membership to a group committed not just to environmental improvement but also to community wellbeing.

This is one of the underpinning strategies of our continuing program of engagement with local schools and other community groups in the Neerim District.

We are also increasingly integrating our activities with those of Westernport Landcare Network, both to gain their support and to support them.

I am hopeful we will attract more members over the next twelve months as we implement a focused program of community engagement.

Sean Dignum
President
Neerim and District Landcare Group



Planting

THE TOOMUC VALLEY NATURE RESERVE

Toomuc Landcare has long had a dream of enabling a transformation of some 7 ha. of degraded lease-land which bordered Toomuc Creek just to the South of Brown Road into something we could all take pride in. This area is of special interest to everyone as we all pass by every time we enter Toomuc Valley!

Last year we were fortunate enough to start this transformation. The Shire had become the Managers of this area, on the understanding that Toomuc Landcare would be delighted to do the actual 'work' and Growing Connections of Westernport Biosphere had given us 6,600 species to plant. This we did and they are thriving!

This Spring, the Westernport Catchment Landcare Network and the plumbing firm ProPlumb have together sponsored the planting of over 900 more plants. We took the opportunity of an especially wet year to plant out what is normally a very dry area. We are very grateful to these two bodies and especially to ProPlumb's Director Adam Lowndes for sponsoring this latest planting. WPCLN's Kathleen Roberts has, as you would expect, gone above and beyond her expected workload to enable this work!

There are unexpected rewards too. Melbourne Water intends to add another 1,200 species to the creekside AND to continue the Herculean task of removing all the weeds along Toomuc Creek. Holcim's Mt Shamrock Quarry will continue its help by providing the pipes and metal to bridge the drainage ditch that runs through the middle of the planting.

"This Spring, the Westernport Catchment Landcare Network and the plumbing firm ProPlumb have together sponsored the planting of over 900 more plants".

It is not often that all the organizations 'just happen' to collaborate in turning what was a degraded blackberry infested area into what we have now re-named the Toomuc Valley Nature Reserve. We are very grateful for everyone's help!

Joy Carberry
Toomuc Landcare



Prickly Moses

WESTERNPORT SWAMP LANDCARE GROUP

LANG LANG PRIMARY SCHOOL ARBORETUM - WORKING BEE

Saturday 3 September 2016
(with 4 Origin Energy volunteers!)

Ten fabulous nest boxes were pre-constructed by the Koo Wee Rup Venturers. Inserting wire to attach to trees for birds/bats/possums. John added compost to bottom of boxes.

The Team: Polly Freeman, Barry Freeman, Darcy and Ruby Freeman, John Boekel, Robyn Wilke, Nicholas Cole, Maurie Cafra, Cr David Young, Travis Parker, David Settle, Paul Peatey, Lindsay Andrews, Ron Jones, Marie-Anne Beilharz, Sue Davies. The morning was topped off by a great barbecue prepared by Marie-Anne and Polly. (Origin Energy volunteers in orange).



Working Bee Members

WESTERNPORT SWAMP VISIT TO BUNYIP FIELD DAY

Thursday 14 July 2016

On a freezing cold day about 40 landcarers attended a great afternoon learning about streamside management. Gavin Brock, MelbWater, talked about tree plantings, erosion, fencing out stock, platypus, wombats, at the Troedel farm "Buneeep" on the Bunyip River. A Wurundjeri speaker told us that the places we were standing on at the riverside was at a confluence, and also that it was a "women's place". We moved further afield to learn more about country.

Later back at the hall Victor Stephenson from Cape York, gave an amazingly valuable talk on healthy country and light burning. No-one has seen healthy country because none remains. I may include notes at later date, meantime www.livingknowledgeplace.com.au

Susan Davies
Westernport Swamp Landcare



Installing Nest Boxes

The WPCLN gratefully acknowledges all the landcare group members and farmers who have contributed to the 2016 WPCLN Annual Magazine.

We particularly thank the funders of the two major projects that WPCLN delivers:

1. 'Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices' project funded by the National Landcare Programme and the PPWCMA. This project is supporting Sustainable Agriculture in the region.
2. 'Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program' funded by the Victorian Government.

We also acknowledge other partners who have funded WPCLN projects during this past year. These include the PPWCMA, Cardinia Shire Council, Melbourne Water, Landcare Australia, DELWP, Dept of Social Services and One tree – One child.

This project is supported by Western Port Catchment Landcare Network through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme

