wpcln
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network
Central Region

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Demonstrating Sustainable FARM PRACTICES

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2018 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is generally a cold, wet and windy weekend morning when volunteers gather to plant trees, shrubs and other native species. They check and monitor rivers and creeks infested with weeds such as willows and blackberries that potentially block summer flows, foul the water or provide a haven for introduced animals.

Where volunteers had removed weeds at restoration sites, plantings have become quite dense and some discover that native species, including native fauna now thrive. The story usually begins with – the weather was miserable, but on this day the community took yet another step towards rebuilding a natural linkage corridor that would help to restore biodiversity, improve the health of a waterway and the health of the local community. Some may ask - how could a community group coordinate these actions and integrate them with a wider longer-term plan to protect biodiversity and restore all the Westernport streams? The answer usually involves – passion and it usually incorporates Landcare.

The Westerport Catchment Landcare Network (WPCLN) is a voluntary, locally focussed, community group that takes action to protect and repair our environment so that we can live, work and enjoy a healthy, productive and balanced landscape.

Landcare's bottom-up achievements in Westernport has become a source of interest and pride. The work as part of the Healesville to Philip Island Nature Link, the funding success for the next three years with Cannibal Creek Biodiversity Response Planning project, Bunyip Landcare's Deer Forum which will no doubt continue to make an impact, Labertouche and their desire to work with establishing a local equine group, the re-ignition of the Drouin Landcare Group focusing on rabbit control, the Westernport Swamp Group and their dedicated work with the Lang Lang Primary School and so much more.

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.

The value of our partnerships and the value of long-term thinking with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Cardinia Shire and more, have proven to be powerful, long-term alliances for improving the natural health of Westernport. We are truly grateful for the support and encouragement of our partners. Thank you.

WPCLN has developed considerable expertise in bringing together agencies and stakeholders so that the whole is greater and more effective than the parts. The assembly of this multi-disciplinary team is an example of how Landcare is integral to effective action.

A FUTURE FOR LANDCARE

WPCLN is doing quite well. According to the Landcare Victoria Incorporated, there are currently 12 Landcare groups representing our Network. Funding shortfalls usually means that few groups are in a strong enough position to employ anyone. WPCLN are currently lucky enough to employ three part-time staff, thanks to their hard work in accessing funding, in particular Peter and Bridgette. However, governments seem to be making this funding more difficult to access.

Landcare is a local movement where local knowledge, effort, and continuity are combined to address specific environmental problems. Since Landcare began the efforts of hundreds of local volunteers have developed a capacity to engage effectively in restoring and protecting wildlife habitats, waterways, improving productivity, controlling pest plants and animals, as well as building community capacity and resilience.

In the Westernport Catchment, Landcare has need for younger members. Demographic and population pressures have put up the price of land to the point where there are few young landholders. Without new and younger members, Landcare will wither and die. This means that our Network must adapt and evolve into an organisation that includes more of the 'landless'; more townsfolk, more members of the community who want to take real action and more outsiders who want to come to our Westernport catchment region to learn about healthy living from natural systems.

While our Network has its own Intrepid Landcare group, the pressures these young adults have in their lives moving forward, must also be understood. Study and creating a secure future requires time and lots of effort, so when they do participate in our work – that of the generation who struggle with the hard physical demands – must be grateful and welcome them with open arms.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

The WPCLN Committee of Management (CoM) usually meets bimonthly, and over the last year and have organised three Network meetings where Landcare groups are able to share their successes and learnings. CoM representatives have contributed hundreds of unpaid, voluntary hours in the process of ensuring thorough and rigorous governance for WPCLN. Thanks to Ian Maclagan, Jim Armstrong, Geoff Hudson and Gerry Cunningham for representing

the CoM so well. Ian for his tireless work as Treasurer and Geoff for his thorough and dedicated work as Secretary. All committee members have consistently worked in a professional and passionate manner and have been the engine room of WPCLN.

STAFF

Our Landcare Network is blessed to have in it very talented staff. Without them, the Network would not have been able to complete or embark on the many projects they deliver.

After a demanding and potentially stressful year with end of project reporting and seeking new funding, Peter Ronalds continues to ensure that whatever is attempted is done professionally and with excellence. He has a way with people and knows what is necessary to keep the community engaged in aspects of sustainable agriculture as a matter of importance. He has been generous with his time and enthusiasm.

Bridgette Sullivan has been predominantly working with Melbourne Water completing property assessments. Her work is underpinned by a deep commitment to community engagement and consultation.

Nicole Walsh has, over the past 12 months, demonstrated her value, knowledge and expertise in this field providing support to groups in many ways. In her tenure, Nicole has secured several grants and put the Network well on the road to form and nurture stronger partnerships and more independence.

Carol our book-keeper, must be appreciated for her commitment, knowledge and skill in performing her activities while staying on top of constant change. She plays a vital role in our financial success – organising and updating our records and keeping the Network on budget. Thanks Carol! We appreciate your commitment to our success!

Last, but not least, I would like to thank all our volunteers and you, the members of Landcare. We would not exist without you. Your ideas and enthusiasm drives us. You have been out there working in wind and rain when others stay at home. When positions are declared vacant we hope you step forward and take a turn at the helm of this wonderful organisation.

Marijke de Bever-Price
President
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

"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."

PETER RONALDS – SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MANAGER

I have now been delivering Landcare Projects in the Western Port Catchment for nearly 13 years and have just completed the "Demonstrating Sustainable Farming Practices" Project. This 'flagship' project achieved some wonderful outcomes for farmers in the region and really lifted the 'Landcare' profile in the community. You can read more about the project highlights in this magazine.

I love working with farmers and are continually inspired by their innovation, resilience and passion. Thanks to the hundreds of farmers I work with! Your friendship and generosity in opening up your farms for field days, discussion groups and farm tours is appreciated.

It is satisfying that new projects that we have piloted such as GrazFert are now being rolled out throughout the state. Another highlight was the running of a Master TreeGrower program. The program proved to be an amazing opportunity for all participants to increase their knowledge, engage with other like-minded people and develop ideas and actions for their own properties. Facilitated by national and local leaders in tree growing on farms, participants visited a series of outstanding West Gippsland properties and enterprises that demonstrated 'what can be done' and inspired participants to create a vision for their properties and landscapes that includes trees for multiple purposes.

Over the past few years, there has been increased interest by the community in the ways the food they purchase is produced and farmed. We have provided a number of opportunities for the community to meet farmers and see and hear the story behind the food they eat. This provides a great opportunity for 'Landcare' farmers to show how their food is produced in a sustainable way by using Landcare principles.

I have written another project proposal to continue the work we do supporting farmers up until 2023. This will be another major project partnering with Bass Coast Landcare, Mornington Peninsula Shire, South Gippsland Landcare, Melbourne Water, AgVic and the PPWCMA.

I continue to volunteer with 'Beyond Subsistence' which helps some of the poorest farmers in Africa with practical training. We established Junior Landcare programs in more primary schools in Uganda this year with support from the Neerim and District Landcare Group. I have just returned from Zimbabwe to run another Master TreeGrower Program. I also returned to the area that we delivered training to in 2016 and visited farms and schools that have since implemented some of the learnings. We visited a school with 1450 children that was in an area that was so hot, that many children were fainting due to the heat. In the 2 years since we were there, they have planted over 6000 trees and fainting is now a rare occurrence as the children can sit under the small shady trees. We also visited a number of farmers that had started growing fruit trees and wood trees to diversify their income. What they have achieved in the 2 years since we completed the training has been remarkable!

"Thanks to the hundreds of farmers I work with! Your friendship and generosity in opening up your farms for field days, discussion groups and farm tours is appreciated."

Finally, thanks to my family, Bridgette, Nicole, Carol and the WPCLN Committee for your support over the past year.

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

NICOLE WALSH – LANDCARE GROUP FACILITATOR

It's been a busy year with the Network. The start of 2018 saw me working with the Labertouche Landcare and Sustainable Farming group to try and get an equine Landcare group established in the Cardinia area. We've held two separate information sessions and a pasture management paddock walk. People appear to be are interested in attending the sessions but less so with setting up an equine group. Many thanks to Sarah Halligan, formerly from the PPWCMA for her assistance with funding and running these events.

I helped the Bessie Creek/Ararat Creek Landcare Group to organise a Deer Information Night with a speaker from the Sporting Shooters Association. Sporting shooters are keen to engage with Landcare groups as they see this as an opportunity for their members to have access onto private land to shoot deer with the result in a reduction of deer numbers.

I was also quite busy pulling together the biodiversity priorities across the Western Port Region, so we could contribute project ideas to the Port Phillip & Western Port CMA on the state government's Biodiversity Response Planning process. From this came two project proposals, one of which, the control of deer, foxes and woody weeds on private land adjacent to Bunyip State Park was successful in gaining funding with a three-year project.

We've also had a series of Conservation Action Planning (CAP) workshops with Doug Evans from the PPWCMA. A total of three workshops were held to involve other groups from the Network to identify a conservation asset i.e. native vegetation, set a goal to work towards and develop a series of strategies and actions to achieve the goal over a five-year period. From this we developed a results chain to work through and document the process. We will be working with Cardinia Shire and Landcare groups to implement these actions around controlling Sweet Pittosporum.

One of the highlights of the year for me has been the reactivation of the Drouin Landcare. This group had become inactive over the last three to four years but with an increase in rabbit numbers, particularly around the Drouin Golf Course and the support of Baw Baw Shire, this group has reformed and held their first rabbit control field day and AGM in October 2018. See Drouin Rabbit Control Landcare Group report.

CONNECTING POCKETS OF HABITAT AND IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY FOR NECTAR FEEDERS IN THE WESTERNPORT CATCHMENT

In February I ran a "Planting for Pollinators" event at the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens with twelve attendees, which included a tour of the gardens plus a talk from local native bee expert Stan Glowacki from the Gippsland Beekeepers Association.

During autumn and winter project funding participants planted out nectar and pollen producing plants to assist local populations of nectar feeding bees, birds, butterflies and bats. At the end of the first year of the project landholders, with the assistance of other volunteers, have put in close to 5,000 plants which we hope will be of huge benefit to our local biodiversity. The project has another two years to run and by the end, we aim to plant out 8 hectares at 30 sites across the catchment with 30,000 plants. Two more engagement events to educate the community about the importance of provide food plants for nectar feeding species will also be run as part of this project.

My thanks to the WPCLN Committee members, President Marijke de Bever-Price, staff members Peter Ronalds, Bridgette Sullivan and Carol Hoskins for their assistance and support over the last year. I would also like to thank the various Landcare groups who have invited me to their meetings and events during 2018. I look forward to continuing these productive relationships in 2019.

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Nicole Walsh
Landcare Group Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

BRIDGETTE SULLIVAN – LANDCARE PROJECTS FACILITATOR

WOW, can you believe another year has flown by! It has been a very busy year for me, delivering 5 projects and being involved in several others, and learning so much. I hope that you have all had a wonderful year too. Although I am only delivering a couple of projects this year, it is already turning out to be just as busy as the last.

MELBOURNE WATER STREAM FRONTAGE MANAGEMENT

In July last year the Network was asked to take on some Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Management Program work in the lower Dandenong's, which tied in with the Stream Frontage Assessment work I was already doing in the Bunyip and Tarago catchments. This has been an interesting learning experience for me, working on smaller properties in mostly urban settings, a good contrast to working on the larger beef and dairy properties in our catchment. Then in June this year the Network found out that we had been successful with our tender to deliver the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Management Program so I will continue to work in the Bunyip and Tarago catchments as well as the lower Dandenong area.

CLYDE RAIL PROJECT

The Network once again received funding from Landcare Australia via VicTrack to undertake works along the disused Clyde Railway. This site is home to the Southern Brown Bandicoot and Maroon Leek Orchid and also a small patch of grasslands, so the aim of this project is the create habitat for the Bandicoot, protect the Orchids and extend the extent of the grasslands. The project has been successful in doing this and the revegetation work from last year is looking very healthy, hopefully the plants we put in the ground this year will do just as well!

RIPE FOR CHANGE PROJECT

Late last year we received funding from Ripe For Change/Casey-Cardinia Foundation – a philanthropic source of funding to look at native foods. The funding was to be used to run three field days/ workshops and link community members that had an interest in native foods to growers. The project was a great success and in total 95 people attended the field days and over 130 people made enquiries about the days. It is great to see that we were able to meet the needs of the community and provide them with some information around native foods – of course it would be great to receive more funding to take the base information to the next level. Personally, I found it very interesting to learn about the density of nutrients that our native foods have and the research that is being undertaken to look at the medicinal qualities of native foods, some very interesting results into conditions such as MS. And to make it even better they are delicious!!

DUNG BEETLES FIELD DAY

In May we had the wonderful John Feehan down to talk about Dung Beetles. It was a wonderful Autumn morning and I think that the 35 people that attended got a lot out of the morning, a special thanks to Ross and Tara Cheesewright for the venue and the wonderful lunch. This field day was to look at results from the Cannibal Creek Dung Beetle release program. John is a wonderful speaker and has been working with and studying dung beetles for about 50 years. He said that he would love to come back to our Network and map dung beetles that we currently have and look to do further releases of the species that we are missing.

Bridgette Sullivan
Landcare Projects Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

DEMONSTRATING SUSTAINABLE FARM PRACTICES + DISCUSSION GROUPS

DEMONSTRATING SUSTAINABLE FARM PRACTICES WRAPS UP AFTER 5 YEARS!

Demonstrating Sustainable FARM PRACTICES

It was a privilege to manage and co-deliver the 5 year "Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices" project as part of the National Landcare Program.

There were many highlights, but a big one was the number of people engaged through participating in the project. We ran 321 training workshops, field days, discussion groups and forums with a total attendance of 7362 people! An even bigger highlight was the number of farmers who made changes to their farm management practices as a result of participating in the project.

These results were only achieved due to the hard work of all our key delivery partners; Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, Bass Coast Landcare Network, Mornington Peninsula Shire, South Gippsland Landcare Network, AgVic and PPWCMA who made up the Steering Committee and managed and delivered the project. Thanks to all of you. You did an amazing job!

The regional participation breakdown was;

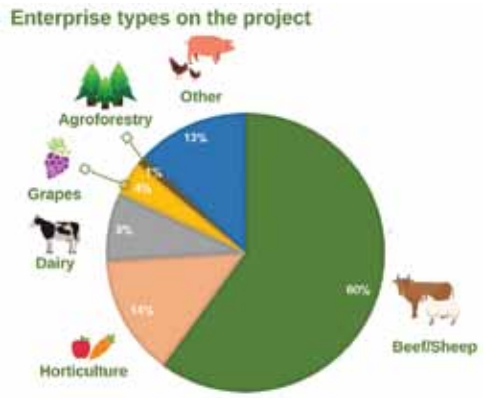
- Western Port Catchment Landcare Network – 147 activities with 3971 participants
- Bass Coast Landcare Network – 86 activities with 1617 participants
- Mornington Peninsula Shire – 38 activates with 865 participants
- South Gippsland Landcare Network – 17 activities with 519 participants
- Jointly managed activities make up the remainder of activities and participants

"An even bigger highlight was the number of farmers who made changes to their farm management practices as a result of participating in the project."

FARMER DISCUSSION GROUPS

We established 5 new farmer discussion groups; 2 in WPCLN, 2 on the Mornington Peninsula and 1 in Bass Coast Landcare Network. Another 4 existing groups were supported. We believe the WPCLN Organic Fruit/Vegie growers group is the first discussion group in Australia supporting organic horticulture growers. The BCLN innovation and diversification group supports farmers in niche enterprises such as mushrooms, hops, dairy goats etc. It was especially pleasing to connect with and support farmers in horticulture, viticulture, agroforestry and niche enterprises that have not traditionally been supported by Landcare.

The Farmer Reference Group were a great group of farmers who played a significant role in this project through assessing each of the innovative demonstration site applications that were put forward by farmers. The group selected demonstrations which they deemed to display innovation and replicability on other farms. The group also approved each of the case studies outlining the outcomes and learnings from the demonstration sites. The case studies are a valuable resource for farmers considering trialling new practices and the case studies can be found here http://www.wpcln.org.au/resources/case-studies/



Strong interest and attendances at all the demonstration site field days confirmed the group's selections.

Training programs such as GrazFert which we piloted were hugely successful and are now being rolled out across the state. Fert$mart and the Master Tree Grower programs also created strong interest from farmers leading to significant practice change.

Most importantly, a special thank you to the hundreds of farmers we work with! Thanks to each one of you who opened up your farms for field days, discussion groups, farm tours, hosted demonstration sites and smiled for the cameras! Your generosity, friendships and support are greatly appreciated by all the project team.

The project has created a real buzz around sustainable agriculture in the Westernport region and we look forward to continuing to support farmers in the region. A comprehensive final report is on our website http://www.wpcln.org.au/resources/reports/ and a final report video can be viewed on our YouTube channel https://youtu.be/aLWr6vAnxS8

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Peter Ronalds
Project Manager
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

GRAZFERT – SOILS – NUTRIENTS – FERTILISER PROGRAM

The GrazFert program was developed by Agriculture Victoria (AgVic) Gippsland staff, and run as a pilot in conjunction with the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network (WPCLN) in 2017 and was the first GrazFert program run in Australia. Due to the positive feedback from the participants who participated in the pilot program, and the resulting practice change that they implemented, the GrazFert program was then rolled out throughout the wider Gippsland Region.

The aim of GrazFert is to increase grazing farmer's knowledge of soils, nutrients and fertiliser management. Improved understanding from participants should bring about practice change to help increase farm productivity and efficiency.

13 farmers participated in the pilot program and then another 27 farmers (managing 29 farms) participated in the 2018 program, (42 farms total ranging from 8ha to 200 ha).

Farmers were asked to contribute $100+GST to participate in the program which included; two comprehensive soil tests, two workshops, a visit from a Landcare and AgVic representative and a comprehensive farm nutrient management plan. Participants could also choose to pay for additional soil tests for properties with more than two farm management zones.

There were four main phases to the project:

1. AgVic staff and the WPCLN Project Manager visited the farms to interview the farmers. The interviews were to understand the aspirations of the farmers, their productivity goals, the fertiliser history and details of any prior soil analysis. A farm map was provided and the farm was divided up into nutrient management zones.

2. Soil testing was conducted. The farmers were involved in identifying the different nutrient management zones, and soil testing was carried out in the targeted zones. The soil testing transects were tracked with a GPS for future reference.

3. Interpreting and understanding the test results. This was a key part of the program and was delivered by AgVic staff at two workshops. The first was about understanding soils, fertilisers and nutrient requirements in general, and the second was

about devising and understanding nutrient budgeting and a personalised nutrient management plan.

4. Developing a farm nutrient management plan for each farm using the results from the soil tests and the nutrient budget. The reports were designed to be easy to understand, and included tables with traffic light signals highlighting areas of risk and the required target levels for healthy soils and optimum pasture production.

The participants all rated the program very highly and all said they would recommend the workshop to other farmers. Importantly, all participants indicated an intent to change their land management practices based on what they had learned from the GrazFert program.

The results of the participant's soil analyses, combined with a strategic look at the productivity of each individual farm, revealed some surprising results. Prior to taking part in GrazFert many of the farmers assumed their soils were healthy and that they were applying the correct nutrients. However, the results and knowledge learned from the GrazFert program showed that, in many cases, nutrients were not at a required level to maximise pasture production and profitability.

Based on the results of the farm management plans that were created, farmers that participated in the program are now taking the appropriate actions to address their soils nutrient requirements to the optimum levels.

Examples of the actions being taken include:

• Applying lime to land to increase the pH and reduce the acidity of the soil

• Not adding nutrients where they're not required, thus saving money and time

• Adding Phosphorous and Potassium to balance and improve the soil nutrient value

• Interpreting soil tests to make accurate fertiliser decisions and applications

• Establishing a fertiliser plan for the next 3 years

• Ongoing soil testing to improve the land and soil

• Improved documentation of fertiliser costs

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

'Excellent program. Very useful tools for budgeting and future planning'

'This has been an outstanding experience'

'Presentation and facilitators were excellent'

'Excellent advice'

'Great project – thank you'

'Keep up the good work!!'

If you would like to participate in a future Grazfert program, then please contact Peter at 0402 650 382 or peter@wpcln.org.au

Peter Ronalds
Project Manager
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

"The participants all rated the program very highly and all said they would recommend the workshop to other farmers. Importantly, all participants indicated an intent to change their land management practices based on what they had learned from the GrazFert program."

Trev Stammers & Peter Ronalds collecting soil samples

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Discussion Groups and farm walks are one of the key farmer support activities of the 'Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Practices' project. Discussion Groups provide significant benefit to farmers as they meet together in small groups to share ideas and experiences with each other. It is proven that farmers who participate 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.

The project supports 8 farmer discussion groups in the region. All are well attended and we meet regularly. There are 2 discussion groups that I facilitate;

1. Organic Vegie/Fruit Growers Discussion Group is now in its fourth 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 has a mix of large and small vegetable and fruit growers. The group met 5 times this year and 20-30 growers regularly attend. We meet at a different farm each time and have a discussion and farm walk.

2. Sustainable Farming Discussion Group is in its fifth year. This group is primarily comprised of beef farmers. The group met 6 times this year and 15-35 farmers attend regularly. This group also meets on different farms and we always have a discussion and farm walk. Most of the farmers in this group have completed GrazFert nutrient management training and this year we also completed Biosecurity training to help us understand the new reporting requirements.

3. The Warragul Beef Cheque Group is another local group that our project supports as required. They are also very active and comprise a great bunch of farmers and some of the farmers have completed the Grazfert training. The sustainable farming discussion group and Warragul Beefcheque group also combine on occasions to expand their networks.

If you follow wpclnlandcare on Instagram and wpcln on Facebook you will see lots of discussion group activities and view some of the things we get up to! If you would like to join a group, then please contact me.

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

"Discussion Groups provide significant benefit to farmers as they meet together in small groups to share ideas and experiences with each other."

LANDCARE GROUP REPORTS

BACK CREEK LANDCARE GROUP

In August 2017 we continued infilling an area close to the creek at Raelene and Rob Newham's property at Nar Nar Goon North. They have planted out hundreds of plants over the years and are now attracting a variety of birds, frogs and providing shelter for the local kangaroos. The Melaleuca ericifolia is busy suckering and providing greater protection and habitat for the ringtail possum. It will be a very special day when they move in!!

In September 2017 we planted out an area that had been thick with flax-leaved broom along the roadside at Windana Drug Rehabilitation Centre along Snell Road. This population of broom had been there for ages and it was so good to see the residents at Windana remove it and our Landcare group helped with planting out a variety of trees, shrubs and groundcovers to replace the broom.

Bill Ringin from the Gippsland Apiarist Society came to our meeting in October and spoke about keeping bees, the benefits and the bees as indicators of the health of our environment.

Our annual Landcare Christmas Meal was at the Gembrook Ranges Hotel.

For the last number of years, Back Creek Landcare has been combining with Maryknoll Tracks and Reserves Group to help with Pittosporum and Broom removal of the Sister Chanel Reserve in Maryknoll. Over the years hundreds of these environmental weeds have been removed. This year, thanks to Rob Newham and his amazing chainsaw skills, a number of large Pittosporum were removed and in a follow-up activity in May 2018 were cut and painted and the smaller ones pulled. Alan Gorick and his four wheel drive delivered them to the burn pile. After this, a planting day with Maryknoll residents and the Shire of Cardinia's bushland team filled the empty spaces with a variety of trees, shrubs and groundcovers.

At the start of August 2018 we planted on two properties. Firstly, at Neil and Louise Matthew's property where we planted grasses on their steep bank to hold the soil together and encourage a greater variety of birds and mammals to visit their property. Then, after morning tea, we went down to Kris Bernard and Kieran Murphy's property to continue to plant out a linkage between their bushland and the Yarrabubba Reserve behind their property. We had two Bassian thrushes and a Yellow robin watching our progress!!

At the end of August, we were back at Windana continuing to plant out the area that connects the previously planted out roadside with Back Creek to the east. Windana residents had been working hard over the previous weeks to remove the Blackberries, Pittosporum and Broom in preparation for the planting day. We had a great turnout with 500 plants in the ground before morning tea!!

LANDCARE GROUP MEMBERS

GRASS PLANTING

GIPPSLAND APIARIST SOCIETY

"They have planted out hundreds of plants over the years and are now attracting a variety of birds, frogs and providing shelter for the local kangaroos."

Vivien Clarke – Secretary
Back Creek Landcare Group

BESSIE + ARARAT CREEK LANDCARE GROUP

Although the past year has been a fairly quiet year for the group, there are some matters to report.

A Deer Information Night with the Sporting Shooters Association was held in the Nar Nar Goon North Hall in March. This provided landowners with information about deer and the damage they cause, and gave owners options for controlling the animals on their land, including inviting shooters in to shoot deer on their property.

The group was the lucky winner of a Maginon motion-sensing Wildlife Camera from the PPWCMA. This camera is now available for all members of the group to borrow and use.

The Group's committee meeting held in August, resulted in several new office bearers taking on the responsibilities of Secretary and Treasurer. It is hoped that this will bring some new enthusiasm to the group. The Group also farewelled its long time Treasurer, Fiona Howell, who is moving away from the area. We thank Fiona for her service to the group over many years and wish her and her family well at their new property at Darnum.

A planting day was held in September at a property on Warren Road. With 16 volunteers taking part, the planting was finished quickly and we combined the day with a farewell morning tea for our outgoing treasurer.

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Kate Holmes
Bessie + Ararat Creek Landcare Group

"The group was the lucky winner of a Maginon motion-sensing Wildlife Camera from the PPWCMA. This camera is now available for all members of the group to borrow and use."

PLANTING IN NAR NAR GOON NTH

DEER INFORMATION NIGHT

FIONA HOWELL

BUNYIP LANDCARE GROUP

Two dingoes came to Bunyip Hall as guests at the AGM in October 2017. One of the visitors was Sheba the dingo, whose DNA test revealed that despite her dark coat, she is 100% dingo. This fact and many others surprised members as speaker Dr Ernest Healy expanded on his subject with scientific detail and statistics. He explained genetics and varieties, pack behaviour, and the conflicting listing of dingoes as a threatened species under one Act whilst they can be killed under another Act. He also explored their role as an apex predator, and spoke about the importance of their continued existence to support biodiversity. One of our members, a sheep farmer, commented later that his perception of dingoes had changed significantly after listening to Dr Healy.

Meanwhile, we have maintained our representation with the CEC, WPCLN and Pound Road Reserve. We have attended Conservation Action Round Tables with the CMA, and Melbourne Water consultations, workshops for the proposed Healesville to Philip Island Nature Link, and also two Conservation Action Planning sessions with the CMA and WPCLN.

Bunyip Landcare continues to be a stakeholder in the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project and through that funding has directed weed control works at Michel Road, Bunyip Sanctuary, and Old Sale Road. An ongoing collaboration with this group is assured through Biodiversity 2037 funding from the Victorian Government for the next 3 years.

We submitted comments to the Minister for Planning on the need for an Environmental Effects Statement, and on what should be included in that process, for the proposed quarry at Bunyip North. We have had a further dialogue with Hanson's representatives and will continue to advocate for the best environmental outcomes.

Four members, Julie Kidd, Roz and Lindsay McNaught, and Sue Anderson undertook Gardens for Wildlife training with Cardinia Shire and have started garden assessments in Bunyip.

In August we hosted an information day about deer at Tonimbuk Hall attended by 70 people. Congratulations are due to our new secretary Gemma Phillips for her presentation on the biodiversity values in the area. Other speakers were from Bunyip Police, Victorian National Parks Association, Cardinia Shire, Parks Victoria, Australian Deer Association, WPCLN, landowners and recreational shooters. In traditional Landcare style, delicious scones from Biddy Martha's café helped to encourage conversation in the tea break.

The model of the meeting allowed ample time after the break for shooters and landowners to share their experiences. Guest speakers spoke for 5 minutes each only and power point was discouraged. It became clear that many landowners are still hesitant to host shooters on their properties and there is a lot of anxiety about illegal shooting. We had great support on the day from Bunyip Police and they encouraged landowners to always call 000 when there is illegal shooting. There is little doubt that deer and the effects of climate change are the greatest threats to biodiversity in our district.

"The meeting heard from residents that the deer population has grown exponentially in the last 3 years and is severely impacting on native vegetation and on property productivity."

DEER INFORMATION MEETING

ALPINE DINGO

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Susan Anderson - President
Bunyip Landcare Group

CANNIBAL CREEK LANDCARE GROUP

"Group members, Jeanette Cope and Pam Cunningham, have continued their Water Watch efforts and were rewarded by a day out Whale Watching on Westernport Bay courtesy of Melbourne Water."

This financial year we had 8 meetings which included 6 plantings (putting in over 3,000 plants) our combined Christmas party and AGM, and a weed eradication day. On average the number of members attending on these days was 14 which was a great effort by the faithful.

Our July effort involved the planting of 600 trees at Alan and Angela Forte's property in Ellis Road, Tonimbuk. On this day we were helped out by some members of Bunyip and Labertouche Landcare, Adele Richardson from the Cardinia Environment Coalition nursery and Nicole Walsh with the WPCLN. The site was a particularly beautiful area along a tributary of the upper Bunyip River which was burnt out in the 2009 bushfires. Although there was quite a bit of natural regrowth, there were also large areas where we were able to plant species which were sure to thrive along the banks.

In August we went back to Arthur Thorpe's property in Mintern Road, Tynong North where we completed the planting of 600 trees as part of the Powerful Owl project. Lyn and Arthur have recently sold their property. We can only hope that the new owners will treasure the work we did there!

September saw us back at Alan Forte's property for another 600 plants. This was followed in October by our return to Arthur Thorpe's property to complete our work with another 600 plants.

Our AGM and Christmas Party were held at the home of Nicole Kuhnell and Steve Capizzi. All office bearers were returned! We were treated to a beautiful meal of first class meat prepared on a spit by Nicole and Steve. Desserts and salads supplied by members were first rate. It was a time to reflect and plan for the following calendar year.

We began our work for 2018 with a combined effort with Friends of My Cannibal in the clearing of Sweet Pittosporums along the southern side of the mountain on private land. The weather was inclement, but the job was done and followed by a lovely lunch provided by the Friends Group.

Our May effort involved a return to properties for two of our members Scott Bentley and Cameron Trott. We planted 260 infill plants in areas where we had planted two years before. After the planting we assembled owl boxes which were purchased through the Port Phillip and Western Port CMA funded Powerful Owl project.

In June we were back at Alan Forte's property for a further 600 plants. Only another 1500 plants to go which we will get in before the end of the year. A planting with the help of staff from Pana Chocolate and other volunteers is being organised with the help of Robert Hall from the PPWCMA which will help us to complete this large project.

The works associated with the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project have continued for the third year. The stretch of creek between Pooley Road and Brew Road has seen weed removal carried out for a second time. Melbourne Water, as part of their capital works program, has removed and mulched the large willows in the same stretch of the creek. Weed spraying has also taken place along the creek from Brew Road to Garfield North Road and on four properties along Hamilton Creek.

FORTE'S PLANTING

PLANTING DAY

Group members, Jeanette Cope and Pam Cunningham, have continued their Water Watch efforts and were rewarded by a day out Whale Watching on Westernport Bay courtesy of Melbourne Water.

We have a drone which is being used by members to monitor the progress of their plantings over the year. Our drone expert Scott Bentley takes care of these operations.

The ever increasing problem of feral deer remains a great concern for our group. We have lobbied local members of Parliament to seek some action in controlling deer in State and National Parks. One of our group members Garry Burns, continues his great work in organising local shooters to work on fox and deer control on private land. Other members of our group also support this program by either shooting on their own properties or organising their own shooters to cull the deer. If Parks Victoria does not come on board by organising a cull in the Bunyip State Park, the tide of deer coming out of the park will soon crossing the highway and heading for the swamp at Koo Wee Rup.

Gerard and Pam Cunningham
Cannibal Creek Landcare Group

DROUIN RABBIT CONTROL + LANDCARE GROUP

This group has reformed with a focus on rabbit control with a new Committee appointed in August 2018. We had a rabbit control field day and our first AGM for three years in early October. Seventeen people from the local area attended and four new members joined the group on the day. Guest speakers included Dominic Bromilow from Deepergreen Pty Ltd, a vertebrate pest control specialist and Chris Morris, President of the Warragal and District Landcare Group who have been engaged in a six year battle with rabbits on private and VicTrack land.

After a demonstration of different rabbit control techniques and equipment we went for a short walk to a nearby road reserve where there was clear evidence of rabbit activity (droppings and diggings). We compared this to an area nearby where bush rats had been active, but where the disturbance pattern is quite different with tunnels in evidence rather than mounds.

Our group intends to purchase four rabbit traps to make available to members and implement a rabbit baiting program this spring. If you'd like to learn more about the group then please contact Nicole Walsh at ecoservicesgippsland@gmail.com.

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Nicole Walsh
Secretary
Drouin Rabbit Control and Landcare Group

"After a demonstration of different rabbit control techniques and equipment we went for a short walk to a nearby road reserve where there was clear evidence of rabbit activity."

RABBIT CONTROL FIELD DAY

RABBIT CONTROL FIELD DAY

WESTERN PORT INTREPID LANDCARE GROUP

The newly formed Westernport Intrepid Landcare group has allowed young people to learn, gain skills and experience the outdoors, develop a passion for the land and the environment by contributing to on-ground activities that benefit the local environment as well as participating in adventurous activities within it.

Connection to the land, to nature and our broader environment has been acknowledged as providing a unique connection to ourselves. What more wonderful way than by providing access to the land through Landcare. So as our Intrepid group grows, it needs to retain its core knowledge while building a generation of young adults equipped to inherit and care for the land we live on.

Some of the things members who connect with this group have and will continue to learn are:

- Breaking barriers
- Sharing stories
- Valuing connectedness
- Having positive intentions
- Experiencing learning journeys
- Leadership
- Co-designing ideas
- Make ideas happen
- Stimulate collaborations
- Build networks

Intrepid activities such as walks, bike rides, abseiling, caving and canoe trips alongside environmental activities, whether they are track clearing, planting, invasive weeds and rubbish removal and more will be undertaken. Opportunities to listen to inspiring speakers and planning fun events have occurred and will continue to happen.

Since beginning our journey in June 2018 at the Gilwell Park retreat, we have had a planting day at Harewood House at Tooradin, followed by a walk along the Westernport coastline to view mangrove dieback. We have assisted the Friends of Mt Cannibal Reserve to remove woody weeds on two occasions, followed by a walk to Lawson Falls and abseiling the Four Brothers Rock formation.

These are exciting times for our Westernport Intrepid group with the possibility of encouraging more young people to become involved in Landcare. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to make enquiries at:

outcon@outlook.com or 0438 522 743

Marijke de Bever-Price
President
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

"Intrepid activities such as walks, bike rides, abseiling, caving and canoe trips alongside environmental activities, whether they are track clearing, planting, invasive weeds and rubbish removal and more will be undertaken."

HAREWOOD PLANTING DAY

WPI LANDCARE GROUP MEMBERS

JINDIVICK LANDCARE GROUP

Jindivick Landcare Group has had a productive and enjoyable year. We have been active in the community and a feature of our group is the great friendships that have been formed and the enjoyment we all have when we get together. Thanks to everyone in the group who participated this year. We were successful in obtaining a PPWCMA support grant, a Baw Baw Shire Grant and are a key partner with eDNA and Neerim District Landcare group in delivering a large environmental grant to monitor farm dams for biodiversity through DNA sampling.

At our AGM this year, Marijke stepped down as president of the Jindivick Landcare Group to focus on her role at WPCLN as president. We thanked her for her hard work and enthusiasm over the past few years and we welcomed 2 new committee members and a number of new members to the group this year. Brian Morphet is now our president.

Over the past 12 months we have conducted a wide range of activities to cater for all our members. Damien Adcock talked about pest plants and insects in paddocks, along with nutrient management.

We had a Christmas breakup at Jindi Cricket Club and enjoyed a social community BBQ.

We kicked off 2018 with Helen Barclay from eDNA talking about monitoring biodiversity through DNA sampling of water, and then we had Greg Hollis from Baw Baw Shire talking about the endangered Strzelecki Gum which is a feature of Jindivick. We also were represented at the Jindivick Flower and Craft Show and helped a local farmer plant 500 plants on his farm.

All activities were really well attended and it was great to see new people coming along to the events we ran.

We have another busy 12 months planned with a feral feast showcasing delectable ways to eat and enjoy some of our pest animals and plants! This will coincide with our AGM. We also have a farm water field day planned, along with monitoring lots of farm dams for biodiversity with DNA analysis!

We always welcome new members, so if you want to join our happy bunch of volunteers, then please contact our president Brian Morphet on 0407 341 595.

Brian Morphet - President
Jindivick Landcare Group

"We kicked off 2018 with Helen Barclay from eDNA talking about monitoring biodiversity through DNA sampling of water."

MAZ COVENTRY

BEAU + HELEN PLANTING TREES

LABERTOUCHE LANDCARE GROUP

"In 2017/18 Labertouche and District Landcare have focused on providing some quality guest speakers to come and speak to different groups in the community."

In 2017/18 Labertouche and District Landcare have focused on providing some quality guest speakers to come and speak to different groups in the community.

- Bunny War Information evening in conjunction with Baw Baw Shire – Guest speaker Dominic Bromilow from Deepergreen Pty Ltd
- Compost Field Day with Gerhard Grasser from Agri Solutions
- Sustainable horse ownership - Equine Landcare seminar in conjunction with WPCLN. Guest speakers Marianne Sawyer and Ron Sawyer.
- Sporting Shooters Victoria, with Trevor Knight

Membership has remained constant; we have farewelled long term members Richard and Karen Van Dord who have retired from the land, and have five new members. Jim and Geoff have continued their water testing of Wattle Creek. The results from the creek have been within a satisfactory range. Trevor Knight from the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia visited a member's property to identify what feral animals were present. This is still an ongoing program.

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Tammy Barnes - Secretary
Labertouche and District
Sustainable Farming Landcare Group

EQUINE FIELD DAY

SUSTAINABLE HORSE OWNERSHIP

NEERIM DISTRICT LANDCARE GROUP

The Neerim District Landcare Group (NDLG) has been active over the last 12 months with a range of programs, information days and community engagement activities.

NEERIM FROG FESTIVAL

In November 2017 NDLG, with the support of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Baw Baw Shire Council and VicForests, held its second annual Neerim Frog Festival at the Neerim South Wetlands. An estimated 250 people attended the one day event. They were treated to guided tours of the wetland, native plant giveaways, live animal displays, wood carving, face painting and food and drinks provided by the local Lions club and local businesses. Planning is underway for another Festival.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TREES

Also in November, Judy Farmer and Peter Ware from the Friends of Drouin Trees addressed a community event in Neerim South about their work identifying valuable trees in Drouin and the resulting Drouin Significant Tree register. NDLG is interested in developing a similar register for our district.

WEEDS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

NDLG ran an information program to foster control of noxious and environmental weeds with the message to be proactive and do your weeds before Christmas. Matt Stephenson was contracted to call on landholders who were interested or had a weed problem to develop a 3 year blackberry (or other weed) management program and to assist with sourcing spray contractors free chemicals provided by Baw Baw Shire Council. A number of landholders took up the offer and developed management plans and started control programs.

WILD FOODS DINNER

The third annual Wild Foods Dinner was run in March with over 50 people attending. This fun social event held at the Neerim South Bowling Club and was again catered for by the Neerim District Branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA). They provided a magnificent 3 course wild foods themed meal. Guest speaker Rob Waddell from Grand Ridge Propagation Tree Planting Service & Bioactive Tea Trees was well received and gave an interesting talk, providing insight into Leptospermum plant species, their suitability for our local environment and importance in the medicinal honey industry. Local Neerim District businesses generously donated goods and services which were auctioned through the night with all proceeds going to the CWA for their charitable projects.

DRONES FOR FARMS FIELD DAY

In May a Drones for Farms field day was held. In the morning session at the Neerim South public hall, Michael Green from Drift Media provided extensive information on everything a landholder would need to know to fly a drone for land management and productivity purposes. The 30 odd participants also had the opportunity to fly some of the drones inside the hall. After lunch we went onto a nearby farm for a full scale drone flight demonstration and hands-on go for those who wished.

MUD SEED BOMBS WITH NEERIM SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

NDLG again worked with Neerim South Primary School where the students made mud seed bombs to disperse native seed in hard to reach revegetation sites. Funding through the Tarago project provided a small grant to the school for the production of the bombs. The school then used this money to support a Primary School Junior Landcare club in Uganda.

Some of the participants at the Drones for Farms field day.
Photo taken from the drone by Michael Green (in HiViz vest, 5th from the right)

This small project generated the twin benefits of local community engagement and Landcare across two continents.

RUBICON OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

One of our committee meetings was held at the Rubicon Outdoor Education Centre. Rubicon is an outdoor secondary learning centre operated by the Vic Dept of Education & Training for state school students. Students live in a self-contained community in a bush environment while undertaking learning programs focused on sustainable living. NDLG supported the centre's successful submission for a Landcare Powerful Youth grant. We were impressed with the philosophy and enthusiasm of the staff and the magnificent setting and infrastructure at the Centre. We will explore ways of working with the staff at the Centre on future Landcare initiatives.

TARAGO PROJECT

NDLG continues its important ongoing work, funded by Melbourne Water, with landholders in the Tarago Reservoir Catchment to improve water quality through land management practices such as stream protection with fencing and revegetation.

UP COMING EVENTS -

WATER ON FARMS

At the time of writing, NDLG in conjunction with Jindivick Landcare group and with the support of Baw Baw Shire Council and Melbourne Water, has a field day planned for mid October. The day will start in the Neerim South public hall and conclude at the Neerim South wetlands. Topics will cover farm water requirements, research on pollution and sources in the Tarago catchment, new methods to monitor biodiversity in waterways through DNA, waste water septic options for landholders and choosing plants for wet areas.

DAM BIODIVERSITY – CITIZEN SCIENTIST GRANT

Again, working with the Jindivick Landcare Group, NDLG has secured a small grant to work with an innovative tech company, EnviroDNA, to sample dam water for animal DNA. This project will look to use the citizen science model to explore biodiversity in farm dams in the district. This monitoring method will provide a quick non-invasive snapshot of the invertebrates, fish, amphibians and mammals that inhabit or visit our dams. This can inform future biodiversity protection programs.

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Phil Darton – Secretary
Neerim District Landcare Group

"The third annual Wild Foods Dinner was run in March with over 50 people attending. This fun social event held at the Neerim South Bowling Club and was again catered for by the Neerim District Branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA)."

WILD FOODS DINNER

TOOMUC VALLEY LANDCARE GROUP

Toomuc Landcare Group had their annual Lyrebird survey at the R.J. Chambers Reserve back in July where an enthusiastic group of volunteers got up very early on a Sunday morning to help count the number of adult Lyrebirds in the reserve through triangulating their calling pattern.

Feral cats and foxes continue to be threat to the Lyrebird population. This year's survey results are more positive than last year as they show one more male lyrebird within and around Chambers as well as a new bird that we could hear east of the rotunda. This could possibly be due to a young male maturing and taking over a territory or the results of earlier fox eradication.

Enormous thanks must go to Don Petty for all his advance work in setting up all the monitoring points and in organizing the survey itself. We were all especially grateful and appreciative of the fireside breakfast he and Sue had waiting for us after our dawn vigil. It was just fantastic.

Joy Carberry – President
Toomuc Valley Landcare Group

"An enthusiastic group of volunteers got up very early on a Sunday morning to help count the number of adult Lyrebirds in the reserve through triangulating their calling pattern."

LYREBIRD IN SHERBROOKE FOREST
PHOTO CREDIT: ALEX MAISEY.

WESTERN PORT SWAMP LANDCARE GROUP

PPWCMA GRANT - HEALESVILLE TO PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE LINK (HPNL)

Dr Pat Macwhirter and her team have completed the Strategic Plan and Appendices for the Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link: Cardinia Waterways Catchments Section, August 2018. The plan is wonderfully comprehensive and a milestone achievement. Conservation assets are habitat, fauna, and people. The vision is to create the Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link (HPNL) connecting three of Victoria's iconic ecotourist attractions and linking Yarra River catchments to those of waterways leading into Western Port via natural corridors on public and private land. An introductory video has also been produced http://www.hpnl.org.au

PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS DAY AT HAREWOOD

A successful day was held at Harewood in Tooradin with 30 attendees. Westernport Swamp group member Pat McWhirter received a grant through WPCLN for Nectar and Pollen Producing Plants for birds, bees and insects for 1,200 tubestock. Species planted were Golden Spray (Viminaria juncea), Boobialla (Myoporum insulare), (Dogwood (Cassinia aculeata), Tree Everlasting (Ozothamnus ferrugineus), Hop Goodenia (Goodenia ovata), Kunzea, Prickly Moses (Acacia verticillata), Prickly Tea Tree (Leptospermum continentale), Snowy Daisy Bush (Olearia lirata), Woolly Tea Tree (Leptospermum lanigerum). Marijke invited the Westernport Intrepid Landcare team who did a terrific job, and who later explored some of the local coastline.

LANG LANG PRIMARY SCHOOL ARBORETUM

After many working bees and an Origin Energy grant, the school and community are now able to enjoy the 4 acres nature reserve. The local garden club even visited one afternoon. Experts and cameras have identified the flora, fauna and fungi. The school held a wildlife art competition which later gave inspiration to local artist Brigitte Dawson who created the beautiful shed mural. All the students have visited and attended sessions. A highlight for students was the successful Bug Blitz sessions "Botany, Bones, Bugs & Birds".

MELBOURNE WATER GRANT – HEALTHY WATERWAYS WILDLIFE CAMERA MONITORING

We received a grant from Melbourne Water to deploy wildlife cameras around northern Westernport to determine wildlife and bandicoot distribution. Group member David Nicholls is collating a report with maps to show Southern Brown Bandicoot distribution. Results will enable better bandicoot conservation and management.

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Sue Davies
Secretary
Westernport Swamp Landcare Group

"After many working bees and an Origin Energy grant, the Lang Lang Primary School and community are now able to enjoy the 4 acres nature reserve."

POLLINATORS DAY AT HAREWOOD

MURAL AT LANG LANG ARBORETUM

The WPCLN gratefully acknowledges all the landcare group members and farmers who have contributed to the 2018 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 Programme' funded by the Victorian Government.

We also acknowledge other partners who have funded WPCLN projects during this past year. These include the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Cardinia Shire Council, Melbourne Water, Landcare Australia, VicTrack and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

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