

VICTORIAN

# LANDCARE

SUMMER 2023-24 Issue 86

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



## LANDCARE SUPPORT ROLES

Two Mallee facilitators share their stories

Supporting Landcare staff in South Gippsland

A Bass Coast work-life balance



Victorian  
**Landcare**  
Program



# Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

SUMMER 2023-24 ISSUE 86

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#### Cover photograph

Marissa Shean with Donald Cooper, President of the Nullawil Landcare Group, at Uttiwillock Wetland in 2021. Photograph supplied by Mallee CMA.

#### Disclaimer

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#### Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.





## From the Minister

As the Minister for Environment, I'm thrilled to continue to support organisations like Landcare as we work together to protect and preserve our beloved natural environment.

It takes a group of highly skilled and energetic Landcare facilitators to ensure that Landcare and environmental volunteer groups are operating at their best. This magazine issue celebrates the work of those in Landcare support roles, who are the backbone of our Landcare and environmental volunteer groups and networks.

These stories about Landcare facilitators, coordinators, project officers and other support roles are deeply inspiring. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) provides funding for 80 part-time Landcare facilitator positions through its Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. These Landcare facilitators support more than 700 Landcare and environmental volunteering groups and networks across Victoria, to build their capacity and resilience and support work to protect, enhance, and restore our land and natural environment.

Mallee Landcare facilitator Marissa Shean tells us how new technologies including online and virtual meeting platforms are upskilling and empowering Landcare facilitators. These platforms have helped her to collaborate, chat and participate in webinars and training that she would have

otherwise had to travel long distances away from the farm and family to attend.

Sue Pretty, also from the Mallee, coordinates the Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group. Sue says that although her group has a small membership, it has a big appetite for conservation. She believes Landcare has a critical role in rural communities providing social support and emergency responses. The recent flooding in the area is a focus of her current work.

The Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) is one of Victoria's most successful Landcare networks. Dave Bateman, BCLN's Executive General Manager and Landcare Facilitator, joined the organisation as a Project Officer in 2007 and has played a major role in its growth and development. Dave finds BCLN a rewarding workplace full of passionate people who care about what they do.

The spotlight is also put on Volunteering Victoria – the state's peak body for volunteering – focusing on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering. Volunteering Victoria runs training and workshops and provides opportunities for networking support and mentoring for facilitators and others who work with volunteers.

Ultimately, the consensus is that working for Landcare is about people and relationships as much as it is about the environment.

Having visited some Landcare groups myself, I have seen firsthand the sense of community and support Landcare is able to create. Landcare has the unique ability to unite local communities in both caring for the land, and caring for each other.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers that work with Landcare, and make it so special. I would particularly like to thank the Landcare facilitators who are steering, educating, and supporting each local Landcare group. Your work is invaluable, in preserving our wonderful land but also in assisting local groups to achieve their own goals.

For those interested to find out more about our review of the outstanding Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, visit the Engage Vic website.

Thank you again to all our Landcare facilitators, and I am excited to see more of your work into the future.

The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP  
Minister for Environment  
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events  
Minister for Outdoor Recreation

## 2024 Victorian Landcare Grants

The Victorian Government has provided \$3.55 million funding for the 2024 Victorian Landcare Grants to enable Landcare and environmental volunteer groups/networks to undertake on-ground works, education, and capacity building projects that protect, enhance, and restore our land and natural environment.

**Project Grants:** up to \$20,000 for on-ground works, capability building activities, community education and engagement that protects or improves our natural environment such as native

vegetation, native fauna, waterways, wetlands, and soils.

**Support Grants:** up to \$500 to assist groups/networks with costs such as insurance, incorporation and operational needs, or meetings and events or newsletters, websites and other communication.

**Eligibility:** open to all Victorian Landcare and environmental volunteer groups and networks that are community-based and have a focus on on-ground land and

natural environment improvement work. This includes Landcare groups/networks, Friends of groups, Conservation Management Networks, Committees of Management, Coastcare groups and Aboriginal groups and organisations working on Country.

**Applications close:** 5pm Tuesday 30 April 2024

**More information:** <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/victorian-landcare-grants>



*Online platforms for video and audio conferencing now allow me to collaborate, chat and participate in webinars and training that I would have previously had to travel away from the farm and family to access.*



South East Mallee Landcare Facilitator Marissa Shean was born and bred in the Mallee.



Marissa Shean, Alexa Shean and Memphis Shean representing Tempy Primary School at the National Landcare Awards in Sydney 2022.

## Facilitating nine remote Landcare

**I was born and bred in a Mallee community and like many young people moved away to study and work. I completed tertiary science and environmental qualifications and worked for a while, but in 2016 we returned to the Mallee to manage our broadacre family farming enterprise and raise our three daughters.**

I have two part-time Landcare roles. I'm employed by Nullawil Landcare Group with funding from the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program to work 20 hours a week as the South East Mallee Landcare Facilitator. In this role I support eight Landcare groups in the townships of Berrillock, Lalbert, Ultima, Birchip, Nullawil, Culgoa, Sea Lake, and Curyo-Watchupga.

I am also employed one day a week directly by the Mallee Landcare Group as their Landcare Facilitator covering the townships of Ouyen, Mittyack, Patchewollock, Speed, Nandaly, Tempy, Walpeup and Underbool.

I have a grassroots passion for agriculture and the environment. In my Landcare roles I undertake environmental work while collaborating and networking at local, state, and national levels to empower improved environmental and agricultural outcomes. Emerging technologies, the sporadic nature

of dryland farming and possessing strong organisational skills enables me to support others in achieving positive change for our environment and climate.

### Technology empowers rural facilitators

In 2000, when I started out in Landcare, the professional and geographic isolation of working in the Mallee was much more challenging. Training opportunities were often based in the city or interstate and even local Landcare facilitators did not catch up that often.

New technologies have really empowered Landcare facilitators. Online platforms for video and audio conferencing now allow me to collaborate, chat and participate in webinars and training that I would have previously had to travel away from the farm and family to access. Even the smart phone is reducing the tyranny of distance and has become a key tool in connecting with my Landcare community.

Communication and collaboration skills are vital in my roles. I now have a wonderful network of people from my Landcare groups, the wider community, and stakeholders across the state that are sharing common interests and exploring innovation to improve agricultural and environmental outcomes. I look forward to even more improvements in communication technology infrastructure in rural Victoria in the future.

### Organisation key to work-life balance

I love the flexibility of being a Landcare facilitator. I get to spend time in the field with community groups, visit new places and step out new projects. Working casually means I can juggle Landcare, attending my children's special school events and farm work. Sometimes this requires catching up on my Landcare work in the evening when my children are in bed.





Marissa Shean with Donald Cooper, President of the Nullawil Landcare Group, surveying the environmental water allocation at Uttiwillock Wetland in Nullawil 2021.

*I love the flexibility of being a Landcare facilitator. I get to spend time in the field with community groups, visit new places and step out new projects.*

## groups in the Mallee

By Marissa Shean

November to February is generally a quieter period as many of my Landcare members are involved with harvest and then taking leave with their families. This allows me to catch up on report writing, acquittals, planning activities for the next year and enjoying leave with my family.

Strong organisation skills are critical when assisting groups with grant submissions. Many long days and late nights are spent researching, obtaining quotes and letters of support, developing project plans, assisting with mapping, budgets, and acquittals. There can be a lot of pressure when you are working with deadlines for funding rounds that are back-to-back. Preparing major reports and publishing newsletters can also be very time consuming.

Time management is critical. I have lists of jobs to do, lists of project ideas awaiting the right funding opportunities, and calendar reminders of when grants open and close, and when milestones and reports are due. I also need to schedule project monitoring, make time to take photographs of our projects, undertake fieldwork, organise and promote workshops, programs and events on social media. Travel time must also be factored into my planning with my groups spread over a 100-kilometre radius.

### Communication is paramount

Maintaining good communication with

Landcare group committees, boards, members, and stakeholders is paramount. Meetings are an opportunity to present members with opportunities. Regular meetings are important, but in small rural communities Landcare group members are generally also members of the CFA, school council, football club and other community development groups, so there needs to be a balance. Sometimes it can be advantageous to hold a meeting at the same time as a meeting of another community organisation to help people manage their commitments.

Using a range of communication tools is more effective than just relying on email or social media. Some members are flooded with emails and can't keep up. If the message is important a phone call or text message can be worthwhile. Landcare facilitators need to be active listeners and to be able to break things down to suit the diverse needs of their groups.

### Online planning, training and celebration

One positive to come out of COVID-19 has been the leadership, mentoring and upskilling opportunities that have reduced social isolation and fostered stronger and more resilient remote, rural, and regional communities. I have attended grant writing, social media, mentoring and leadership programs and workshops – many of them

conducted wholly online.

I have been able to use online platforms to take part in strategic planning, management meetings, and contribute to policy development from the comfort and safety of my home office. In 2021, I participated in the online celebration of the 2021 Victorian Landcare Awards where I was highly commended in the Victorian Farmers Federation/Landcare Victoria Inc. Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship Award.

In 2022, I had the privilege of attending the National Landcare Awards in Sydney where Tempy Primary School was representing Victoria in the Woolworths Junior Landcare Team Award. Working with young people is so gratifying. Their enthusiasm for the environment and yearning to make a difference is inspiring.

Looking to the future, with all the complications climate change will bring, I think Landcare facilitators will be more important than ever. I look forward to the challenges this will bring.

*Marissa Shean is South East Mallee Landcare Facilitator. Her position in this role is funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information [southeastmalleelandcare@gmail.com](mailto:southeastmalleelandcare@gmail.com)*

# A supportive network for Landcare professionals in the

By Kerstie Lee

**If Landcare facilitators are the heart of local Landcare, project officers are its blood – transporting fresh oxygen to energise and renew interest and ideas for the Landcare community.**

In the Goulburn Broken region Landcare project officers work on education, soils, urban Landcare, biodiversity, and farm planning with funding support through specific project grants. Landcare facilitators are in state funded roles through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, focusing on support for natural resource management groups and environmental volunteers.

All Landcare professionals with the Goulburn Broken CMA region are part of our community natural resource management network, connecting for meetings and training regardless of their source of funding. The network members are an integral component of our partnership delivery team and are included in all planning for regional change.



*Landcare facilitators and project officers were funded to attend a training event run by Biolinks Alliance in Bendigo during August 2022.*

The development of a supportive network of Landcare professionals has been highlighted by many of our Landcare professional staff as an essential part of working in this sector.

## **CMA facilitates network of Landcare staff**

Neil van Buuren, Landcare Facilitator for Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative said he “appreciates the support of our community natural resource management network and the role the CMA plays to facilitate this.”

The Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative represents communities in the Hughes Creek catchment, including Caveat, Highlands, Hughes Creek, Ruffy, Tarcombe, Terip Terip, and Whiteheads Creek. The collaborative was formed from the amalgamation of several Landcare groups in February 1994.

According to Neil coming together to share ideas and hear what others are up to is important in feeling connected when people live in rural areas.

Landcare roles in the Goulburn Broken region are attractive jobs for those who are natural resource management trained. Landcare has a reputation as an action-oriented organisation with many jobs being created within our networks to fulfil community natural resource management needs.

## **Project officer funded through fee-for-service**

Up2Us Landcare Alliance is a community organisation within Mansfield Shire which aims to lead in the preservation, protection and enhancement of land and water ecosystems by empowering community and individuals to act. The alliance has employed a Project Officer through a fee-for-service model, specifically to work on developing property plans for new landholders who have moved to the district.

Kim Magnay, Landcare Facilitator for Up2Us Landcare Alliance said, “having a dedicated Project Officer to support new landholders



*Damian Saunders conducting a smoking ceremony and welcome to Country at a Cascade Connections training event for Landcare professionals in Wangaratta during May 2022.*



# Goulburn Broken



not only creates regional employment but improves understanding of the importance of balancing nature and productivity across the landscape for new landholders."

According to Goulburn Broken CMA Regional Landcare Coordinator Tony Kubeil, "diversity of Landcare professionals brings new ideas and possibilities to local Landcare networks and groups supporting ongoing change at the grass-roots level."

"It is essential we support and facilitate an inclusive and valued community of Landcare professionals to maintain and promote their importance at a local and regional level," Tony said.

## Peer sharing promoted

The Goulburn Broken CMA have been using different approaches in our meetings to foster connection and inclusion for our community natural resource management network. One method has been borrowed from the resilience approach which encourages conversation through focusing on future vision/scenarios and the challenges and opportunities these may bring to a local network.

This framework identifies vulnerabilities and promotes peer sharing to help resolve challenges. It aims to reduce competition that can be created between networks due to the nature of funding bids and to develop joint projects across municipalities and networks.

The Goulburn Broken CMA's focus on developing and sharing a vision, a supportive framework and peer learning, has been instrumental in sustaining a positive working and growing environment for our Landcare community.

*Kerstie Lee is Regional Landcare Coordinator for Goulburn Broken CMA. For more information email [kerstiel@gbcm.vic.gov.au](mailto:kerstiel@gbcm.vic.gov.au)*



*APEN members gathered in Darwin for training on hosting engaging events in October 2022.*

## APEN – a network for facilitators

*By Dr Patricia Hamilton*

The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) was created in 1993 as the leading representative organisation for people whose job involves facilitating change in regional and rural communities in the fields of government and industry agencies, agribusiness, agricultural consulting, community and rural development, adult education, communication, rural health, and educational institutions.

APEN represents more than 500 professionals across Australia, Asia, and New Zealand. The network provides a unique platform for people from a broad cross-section of disciplines to share knowledge, skills, and experience about more effective ways to facilitate change.

People primarily join the organisation because of the valuable opportunities it offers to improve their job skills, lift the performance of their organisations, and help enrich the rural and regional communities with which they work.

APEN members enjoy a regular program of events and activities, including national and international conferences and professional development programs, which allows professionals to share new knowledge, skills, and experience about facilitating change.

APEN provides education and training to develop professional competencies and standards, professional recognition

through an awards for excellence program, a website that provides resources for professional development, and a regular newsletter with industry case studies, news and events.

APEN offers communication and support between people and organisations sharing similar aspirations and challenges and a desire to improve the practice of extension. Ultimately, this enables members to achieve better outcomes for the research, development and extension organisations, departments, and companies for whom they work – all to grow the capacity of rural communities.

*Dr Patricia Hamilton is a Director of APEN Ltd, its Communication Editor and Chair of the Regional Activities Committee. For more information go to [www.apen.org.au](http://www.apen.org.au)*



*APEN members listen to the keynote address at the most recent conference held in Darwin in 2020.*



The BCLN team on their annual team building trip at Walkerville.

# Building a successful Landcare network – a chat

**A cup of tea and a chat are a powerful tool to understand people and deliver meaningful Landcare outcomes says Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) Executive General Manager and Landcare Facilitator Dave Bateman.**

Dave stepped into Landcare in 2007, initially as a BCLN works crew member and Project Officer for the Powlett Project. Since then, Dave has had plenty of successes to draw on, not least of which is contributing to more than three million plants going in the ground across the BCLN area. There have been successful trials of differing natural resource management techniques, the complete transformation of landscapes, the ongoing success of recruiting new Landcare champions, and multiple Victorian Landcare Awards for a network that rivals some Catchment Management Authorities in scale and breadth of activities.

But it's the feeling of being involved in something collective that really motivates Dave, who took on the Executive General Manager role with BCLN in 2019.

"I just couldn't imagine being in a more rewarding environment from a workplace point of view – I am part of a team of passionate people that care about what they do. Half the fun of Landcare is learning everyone's stories and Landcare people aren't members or clients in a way – they become friends and we are interested in each other's lives," Dave said.

"I'd say Lew Potter, a farmer in his 70s, would be my best mate – every week at some point I'd call in and have a cup of tea and some breakfast and after a good chat and laugh I'm ready to go. There would be 15 or 20 friends I have made from Landcare where I could drop in like that."

According to Lew, his mate Dave is much more than the jovial character you may see on first meeting.

"His job as a manager is to deal with different types of people and when we are talking farmers you are talking a wide mix, and he does it very well," Lew said.

"There is an old guard, some of whom are moving on, or have children not taking up the cudgel, and then you have the newcomers from the tree changers to multinationals and regardless of who they are Dave is the first one in front of them.

"Dave works out pretty quickly who is open to new ideas and those that won't hear anything new – he isn't fazed by confrontation," Lew said.

## Identifying and building on opportunities

When Dave joined BCLN it had a small team of around seven or eight staff. Fifteen years later there's a works crew, nursery, pest animal team, project officers, education officers and more – around 30 are generally working at any one time.

Dave, a father of three and keen surfer, believes it's being willing to step out of the comfort zone and be open to opportunities that has contributed to BCLN's growth.

"Building relationships with our council and two CMAs (West Gippsland CMA and Melbourne Water) has been huge and we've tried to be proactive and be a conduit with farmers and newcomers to the area – a way to link people to an arborist or a Landcare group and sit down and discuss a farm plan.

"A supportive board and a motivation to look for opportunities gives the network the flexibility to consolidate itself with partnerships and not have to rely so much on funding. That's what works with our model.





Dave Bateman at a recent Landcare Facilitator Conference at Rawson.



*When Dave joined BCLN it had a small team of around seven or eight staff. Fifteen years later there's a works crew, nursery, pest animal team, project officers, education officers and more – around 30 are generally working at any one time.*



## and a cuppa at a time

By Barry Kennedy

"We've done some great things as a team – we had 200 year nine kids planting 20,000 trees on the steepest hill in the area at Karl Russo's place – now five years on I'm seeing that landscape turning into a habitat link," Dave said.

### Traineeships pay off

In recent years BCLN has introduced a traineeship pathway. Luke Phillips, now a Project Officer with seven years behind him at the network, was one of the early beneficiaries of the program. Luke took a risk of his own when he first met Dave on a summer's evening after work.

"I was about to go for a surf and I saw a Bass Coast Landcare Network sticker on a car in the car park. I was studying natural resource management online and not really getting much out of it. I did some research in the car as to who it might be and saw Dave in the water and worked out who he was." A chat conducted on surfboards across the waves led to Luke's entry into a bush crew role at BCLN.

"I ummed and ahed for an hour before I paddled out, caught Dave and asked for some advice before his last wave in – he said come down to the Bass Office and that's how I started here," Luke said.

"It was a true chance encounter and has changed my life – I moved from Melbourne to take up the role and so it was pivotal for

me. Now I'm working as a Project Officer which is a great learning process. I have this wide natural resource management skill base from lots of weed and plant identification which just wouldn't have happened without getting a job with the network."

### Changing farm practices

Anderson Inlet Landcare Group member Daryl Hook said Dave's knowledge and curiosity had contributed to him changing his farm practice. Daryl introduced shelter belts after a BCLN trial of new direct seeding techniques. The techniques and shelterbelts are now common across the Bass Coast.

"My dad wouldn't have had trees as part of his planning, now 20 per cent of my land is trees and I want to donate paddocks of trees, so my grandchildren have air to breathe. As a kid I saw bare hills through this area – now it's all trees – it's a miracle and it's the BCLN that's made it happen," Daryl said.

For his part Dave credits the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program as being a coup for Landcare, helping groups transform ideas into action. He's excited to see new groups like Intrepid Landcare and the Gippsland Threatened Species Group that are now coming on the scene.

Dave is only too happy to sit down and share what has worked for BCLN.



Dave Bateman (at right) talking revegetation with Bill Cleeland on his farm at Phillip Island.

"To me Landcare is such an easy sell, you meet some excellent people and when you go for a drive and see the changes to the landscape you feel pretty satisfied."

**Barry Kennedy is Regional Landcare Coordinator at Melbourne Water.**

**For more information on Bass Coast Landcare Network go to**

**[www.basscoastlandcarenetwork.org.au](http://www.basscoastlandcarenetwork.org.au)**

# Pivoting into partnerships

By Lisette Mill



The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network (BBLN) was established in 2008 to increase, protect, and enhance the land, soil, water, agricultural and biodiversity productivity of their region. The network covers 548,100 hectares in Moyne Shire in south-west Victoria.

I joined BBLN in 2012 as a part-time Landcare facilitator to work with members and communities on increasing the amount of native vegetation across our region.

Landcare facilitators need to have a range of skills, experiences, and ideas. Energy, resilience, creativity, curiosity, flexibility, and the ability to solve problems are critical.



Basalt to Bay Landcare Facilitator Lisette Mill at Laang.

The Landcare facilitator's skills are then shared, grown, and further expanded with our groups and communities.

At the time I joined BBLN the Australian Government's Caring for our Country funding was ending and sourcing funds for essential projects was becoming more difficult. Most funding streams were concentrating on threatened species protection and priority waterways. Our network needed to get trees on farms where there were none, where there were few records of threatened species, and often in between major waterways. We needed to pivot, and fast.

## Building an economic argument

It was time for some problem solving. Without guaranteed funding programs to encourage farmers to plant trees we had to find another incentive. Farmers were telling us they needed to know the economics of the equation. How would establishing on-farm plantations and shelterbelts benefit their businesses?

In 2014 BBLN commissioned a landmark report – *The Economic Benefits of Native*

*Shelterbelts (EBONS)* to clearly articulate more than 40 years of research that proved planting native shelterbelts was good for the economy of farm businesses.

It's one thing to produce a report, but if nobody reads it or uses it then it's dead in the water. As soon as a draft of the report was ready, I shared it with every peak Landcare and agriculture body in Australia and asked them to read it and provide feedback.

I put special effort into approaching the national industry bodies that represent the landholder farming base in our area – cattle and sheep. Our first endorsement of the EBONS report came from Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). Their mission is to collaborate with stakeholders to invest in research, development and marketing initiatives that contribute to producer profitability, sustainability, and global competitiveness. The endorsement from MLA opened the door to a partnership with BBLN. We now work with MLA to share information and education about the benefits of native vegetation and Landcare.



*Landcare facilitators need to have a range of skills, experiences, and ideas.*



James Glasgow direct hand seeding a self-funded shelterbelt on former cropping land at Warrong. The rocks were dragged out of the paddocks when it was cropped by a past owner. The site is now fenced for habitat.



The direct seeded shelterbelt at Warrong one year later.





*Landcare shelterbelt with tree guards on a rocky outcrop at Aringa North Station. This shelterbelt was funded by the Moyne Community Carbon Project in 2021.*

BBLN can help MLA achieve its mission at a local level.

### **Industry body an influential partner**

This partnership was further invigorated in 2019 when MLA set a target for the red meat industry in Australia to be carbon neutral by 2030. MLA identified planting vegetation for shade and shelter as number four in the top 10 actions producers can take to work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Here was a total endorsement of the EBONS report.

Our partnership with MLA is continuing. The Spring 2022 edition of Meat and Livestock Australia *Feedback Magazine* featured an article about BBLN's carbon project with Moyne Shire Council. This article reinforces the link between carbon neutral actions and Landcare. It is another acknowledgement of Landcare's role in supporting the practical, grassroots building of climate resilience, emissions storage, and biodiversity habitat in farming landscapes across Australia.

Our network has come a long way in the last 10 years and I'm proud to have been part of the journey. Facilitation work is always throwing up new challenges, but there's one constant we need to be aware of. Landscape change doesn't happen in isolation. We need to be alert for partnerships and then commit to making them as productive as possible for all partners.

*Lisette Mill was Landcare Facilitator for the Basalt to Bay Landcare Network. This role was funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email [facilitator@basalttobay.org.au](mailto:facilitator@basalttobay.org.au)*



*Wendy and Horrie Poussard celebrating the 30-year anniversary of Landcare in Melbourne.*

## **Vale Horrie Poussard**

### **Landcare lost one of its founders and advocates with the death of Horrie Poussard in late December 2022.**

After studying agricultural science and advisory extension at the University of Melbourne, Horrie worked in soil conservation and catchment management. In 1986 he helped to develop the Landcare program in Victoria, working alongside Bob Edgar and under the direction of the late Premier Joan Kirner, (then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands) and the late Heather Mitchell, (then President of the Victorian Farmers Federation) as the initial co-chairs of the Landcare program.

Horrie was Victoria's first Landcare executive officer. He formed training groups and created incentive grants and educational materials. He oversaw the formation of the first 50 Landcare groups in Victoria and maintained a close interest in Landcare for the rest of his life.

After helping to establish Landcare Horrie went on to hold senior policy roles within the Victorian Government and also lived and worked in Asia and the Pacific alongside his wife Wendy Poussard on environmental and community development projects.

In 2008 Horrie was one of the founders of Australian Landcare International, a non-government organisation that advised and supported rural community projects overseas. Horrie served as both secretary and treasurer for many years, establishing the overseas travel fund and publishing many newsletters. His interest in encouraging sustainable food production and resource conservation in developing countries never waned.

In 2021 Horrie was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for service to conservation and the environment.

Horrie and Wendy's most recent contribution to the magazine – a report on the North Central Regional Landcare Forum in Issue 71, Summer 2018 – is available on the Landcare Gateway at [www.landcare.net.au](http://www.landcare.net.au). This LVI regional forum had the theme 'Sharing the Landcare story'.

Horrie was a good listener and a great collaborator with a strong belief in grass roots community action. His wisdom and values helped to shape Landcare and will ensure its continued growth and success into the future. He will be remembered and missed.

# Managing, supporting and developing Landcare staff in South Gippsland

By Jillian Staton

The South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) was formed in 1995. It is made up of 13 member Landcare groups with over 500 families who farm and manage land in our region.

The network area covers 270,000 hectares, bordered by the Strzelecki Ranges in the north and stretching 100-kilometres from Nyora in the north-west to Port Welshpool in the south-east.

As chair of the board, it's clear to me that managing, developing, and supporting our staff is a big challenge for the network. When the current board formed SGLN had already stepped away from its relationship with the West Gippsland CMA who were the host employer of the network's Landcare staff. An important consequence of this decision was the loss of the CMA's human resources framework and staff.

Responsibility for human resources now falls on the SGLN board. Like most other networks, our board is made up of a group of people who share a desire to protect the environment.



SGLN Landcare facilitators Nick Stephens and Andrea Clifford practising their poses during a workshop on how to take inspiring photographs held at Rawson in November 2022.



*The skills, ideas and passions of our staff present us with many opportunities.*



I doubt any of us expected to find ourselves in a situation where we had to actively recruit and manage staff. We have a broad skillset, but none of us have formal human resources qualifications. In my case, I am self-employed and rarely succeeded in getting my children to clean their bedrooms let alone deliver a \$100,000 project on time and within budget.

## **Managing staff – a huge responsibility**

I don't think I can exaggerate the enormous responsibility of staff management, or the consequences of messing it up. Our staff are without a doubt our most valuable

asset. Collectively and individually, like any team (including boards), they also have their weaknesses. The skills, ideas and passions of our staff present us with many opportunities. Losing their support through dissatisfaction, resignation or funding cuts is the biggest threat to our operation.

SGLN is a not-for-profit organisation reliant on project-based funding. This adds its own challenges to attracting and keeping staff. We don't have bucketloads of cash to throw at salaries, staff parties or even a coffee machine, and we can't offer our employees the security of tenure many seek.



## Professional development at National Landcare Conference By Nick Stephens

The SGLN encouraged and paid for all our staff to attend the 2022 National Landcare Conference in Sydney. This paid huge dividends. It was a great professional development opportunity providing them with new ideas and contacts. It also built a great sense of camaraderie and pride in what SGLN is achieving. Ideally, we will offer this opportunity to our employees every year.

As a Landcare facilitator you need to take any opportunity to network with other Landcare facilitators and hear what's happening in their regions. There are no textbooks for this line of work, but there are people who have many years' experience who you can turn to.

Conferences are very motivating, and the presentations are informative, but it's often a sideline conversation with someone you've never met that's your take-home piece of gold.

A strong theme at the 2022 National Landcare Conference was youth engagement, which can be challenging in a rural area. Our team gathered ideas to trial in our region.

Landcare facilitators need to be realistic about how many new ideas you can take on board and consider them in

context of how many hours and activities you've already committed to.

After a year in the job, I can say I really enjoy working in Landcare. I love the freedom of not being in a large, and often risk averse, bureaucracy. There are some support mechanisms you miss out on – I still haven't organised

my own uniform – but it's up to the individual to take command of the role. There's lots of opportunities to build on your strengths and seek out those who can support you with the things you need help with. The answer and support will be in your community somewhere. SGLN Landcare Facilitator, Nick Stephens.



From left, Nick Stephens, Costa Georgiadis, Andrea Clifford, and Kirsty Richardson at the National Landcare Conference held in Sydney during September 2022.



A morning tea in the paddock for the launch of the Bunurong Coast Community On-ground Action on Pest Plants and Animals Project in December 2022.

Continued page 14 ...



*As a Landcare facilitator you need to take any opportunity to network with other Landcare facilitators and hear what's happening in their regions.*





Participants at SGLN's Bunurong Coast Community On-ground Action on Pest Plants and Animals Project launch walked through the Cape Liptrap Coastal Park in December 2022 to learn about its unique biodiversity.

We must appeal to the desire of our staff to do something positive for the environment.

The requirements of grants programs further complicate our task. Many grants have specific short-term outcomes which are not always consistent with addressing complex, large-scale, environmental problems. Projects must often be shaped to meet the funders' objectives rather than those of the network. The amount of time that must be spent on applying for, administering and reporting on grants – especially when all our staff are part-time

and every hour is precious – has a real impact on their ability to make a difference.

### **Steering committee oversees employees**

The amount of volunteer time and effort involved in staff management can be overwhelming. The SGLN board has established an Employment Steering Committee (ESC) which is responsible for recruiting and supervising staff, preparing position descriptions and employment contracts, carrying out performance reviews and negotiating salaries. It's daunting, even before you consider the complex legislative framework around employment and industrial relations. Policies to provide an inclusive, safe, healthy, and supportive workplace must be developed, implemented, and updated.

The ESC aims to meet quarterly or more frequently if necessary. Two members of the four-person team attend a fortnightly meeting with our two Landcare facilitators on a revolving basis which lasts between 60-90 minutes. Luckily, we have a great team of employees so our interactions with staff are almost always positive, and in my opinion, enjoyable. However, as meetings with staff must occur during business hours it is sometimes difficult for three of our ESC members who are also employed during these hours to attend.

Making Landcare roles attractive to a wide range of candidates is also a challenge. Under current funding models I don't feel that we pay our staff what they are truly worth. We try to be as flexible as possible regarding

hours, days and place of work, holidays, and professional development opportunities, but there is only so much we can offer.

### **Advocacy needed**

I believe there is considerable scope for Landcare Victoria Incorporated (LVI) to broker deals or advocate for legislative changes to boost Landcare salary packages and achieve tax incentives, so they are comparable to the private sector. One network has little bargaining power, but with LVI acting on behalf of all the networks we could achieve some meaningful gains that we could pass on to our employees to show them how much we appreciate what they do for the Landcare community.

There are also opportunities for LVI and DEECA to consult with boards about what strategies and resources they need to help them negotiate their role as employers.

I would like to stress that SGLN is very grateful for the funding we have received from DEECA's 2021-24 Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program (VLFP). The 2021-24 VLFP Guidelines have enabled us to secure VLFP funding for our two Landcare facilitator positions. We also acknowledge support from the West Gippsland CMA. I believe that the SGLN is not alone in needing more resources to help volunteer boards manage their employment responsibilities as effectively as possible.

*Jillian Staton is chair of the SGLN. For more information email [jillian@board.sgl.net.au](mailto:jillian@board.sgl.net.au)*



*The SGLN board has established an Employment Steering Committee (ESC) which is responsible for recruiting and supervising staff, preparing position descriptions and employment contracts, carrying out performance reviews and negotiating salaries.*







Bev and Charles Watson, volunteers at the Barb Martin Bushbank.

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*In their role as peak body, Volunteering Victoria provides extensive support and resources for people who lead and work with volunteers.*

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## Volunteering Victoria – advocacy, resources and training

By Jen Frees and Peter Wingate

**Many of Victoria’s Landcare facilitators started their careers as volunteers. This puts them in a unique position to understand the experiences of those filling voluntary roles. Some Landcare facilitators continue with voluntary work alongside their paid roles.**

Landcare facilitators are often tasked with recruiting and managing volunteers to bolster group membership and to assist with specific projects. Landcare facilitators may be employed by a group or network board that is made up of volunteer members.

Support and advice for those who volunteer and work with volunteers is available from Volunteering Victoria – the state peak body for volunteering, focusing on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering.

Volunteering Victoria sees its role as leading the development of a collaborative, sustainable, thriving volunteering community and movement in Victoria.

In its role as peak body, Volunteering Victoria provides extensive support and resources for people who lead and work with volunteers. Staff run training and workshops, provide opportunities for networking support and mentoring, facilitate a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program and organise important events such as the Volunteering State Conference, Victorian

Volunteering Awards and volunteering advocacy forums, encouraging the sector to celebrate and promote the invaluable work of our diverse volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

The Volunteering Victoria website provides information about the various types of volunteering, helps connect volunteers with opportunities and provides information about what to do if any problems arise when volunteering.

Anyone can access the suite of tools and resources from the website around all things volunteering, including volunteer engagement, finding and creating volunteer roles, volunteer rights and responsibilities, legal issues and insurance, as well as access to research and trends.

The case studies on the website also make great reading. We learn why people decided to get involved in volunteering, how they found their placement and how it has enriched their lives.

The Barb Martin Bushbank is a good example. For more than 20 years, this group of

volunteers has been providing local provenance native plants to create quality habitat for wildlife. The Barb Martin Bushbank is managed by Phillip Island Nature Parks but the on-ground-work is done by a team of more than 50 volunteers who meet every Wednesday and Thursday around the propagation table for a chat and a laugh. The volunteers are all ages and from all walks of life. The plants grown go to local government, schools, Landcare and Coastcare groups, businesses, individuals and to the Phillip Island Nature Park’s revegetation work.

The case studies illustrate Volunteering Victoria’s vision: Victorians are happier and healthier because they volunteer, to support each other and care for the future of their communities.

*Jen Frees is Communications Officer and Peter Wingate is State Programs Support Officer at Volunteering Victoria. For more information go to [www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au](http://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au)*

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*In the end it's always about the people. The people you meet, the people you help, and the people you work with.*

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*Locals and members of the Nullawil Landcare Group learn about the wildlife of Uttiwillock Wetland from wildlife ecologist Damien Cook in 2018.*

## My 30-year natural resource management career

Working in natural resource management for the past 30 years has provided me with many interesting experiences: managing a native seedbank in Swan Hill, meeting wombats while discussing river erosion with farmers in the upper Murray, befriending tiger ecologist John Goodrich while working with rangers in Laos on protected area management, becoming a novice historian, and working with entomologists to produce a cartoon pamphlet on golden apple snail for Filipino rice farmers. I've worked in state and local government, private industry, and with community groups.

In the end it's always about the people. The people you meet, the people you help, and the people you work with. When I returned from living and working in Laos and the Philippines after seven years it took time to build relationships and connections in natural resource management.

I worked for 12 months facilitating two Landcare consortiums based in Birchip where I particularly enjoyed organising a wildlife spotlighting evening for the community at Uttiwillock Wetland, where we'd conducted a flora and fauna survey. More than 60 people turned up to hunt for night critters and learn about their habitats. It was a fantastic night. Introducing people to the wildlife that live in our remnant vegetation is key to encouraging its protection and enhancement.

### **Small membership with a big appetite for conservation**

For the past four years I have coordinated the Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group.

The group covers an area of over 113,500 hectares from Piangil to Boundary Bend on the Murray River. When Landcare started here in 1995 there were 44 farm businesses as members. Farms have become larger, and the number of people and businesses have reduced, but the passion for innovation and conservation remains.

Our local Field Naturalist Group based in Swan Hill has had many members from the Kooloonong-Natya area. Neil Macfarlane (deceased), Myf Macfarlane, Barry Wait, and many others were instrumental in lobbying for the proclamation of the Wandown Nature Conservation Reserve. John and Sheila Menzies played an important role in establishing Menzies Reserve. These reserves contain significant remnant native Mallee shrubland with many threatened species, including Malleefowl.

As a volunteer with the Victorian Malleefowl

Recovery Group, Barry Wait and I checked mound activity in Menzies Reserve in early November 2022. We found one active mound but no birds. We figured they were probably hiding behind a bush chuckling at the two ungainly humans crashing through the scrub following a GPS bearing.

### **Landcare essential for social and emergency response**

In recent years our Landcare members have worked on reducing pest plants and animals, improving biodiversity, providing training in occupational health and safety, chemical compliance, and mental health. The group is the only organisation that supports the interest of the environment and the people from Piangil to Boundary Bend. Our response to a challenge such as the recent floods will be determined and shaped by our members. When the water subsides, we will need to support our people to tackle the many post-flood challenges.





*The Murray River in low flood at Boundary Bend during winter 2022.*

**By Sue Pretty**

In 2018 the group chair, Alistair Murdoch, suggested we conduct oral history interviews to preserve Kooloonong-Natya's stories and histories for perpetuity. The project has produced a book – *Land of Plenty: A History of the Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Area* by Adam McNicol. The book features contemporary photographs by Erin Jonasson and a treasure trove of archival material.

I'm very proud that we've made this book a reality. The book committee, led by Roger McQueen, were highly motivated to collect the stories of our older generation before they were lost. Writing and publishing a book is a complex project. We had to agree on what sort of book to write, try to include as many people in the book as possible, decide when to stop collecting information and start writing, find a publisher and raise money.

Vital early funding for the book was provided by the Mallee CMA, but most of the funds came from local farmers and businesses. Once the book was well underway Geraldine Murdoch set about bringing a committee and the community together to organise the Centenary Celebration weekend launch held in October 2022. The Public Records Office of Victoria funded a museum of memories for the launch and the weekend was a great success. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go towards Landcare projects and helping local farmers who have been affected by flooding.



*The Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group executive, from left, Mark Kentish, Ian Edelsten, Alistair Murdoch, Rodney Hayden, Sue Pretty, Simon Craig, and Geoff Dawes.*

**Challenging work with huge rewards**

Coordinating a Landcare group is not a nine-to-five job. Farmers work all hours, and they call me when they need to. I work from home so sometimes it can be difficult to get away from work. That said, I get a lot of satisfaction from the work and have met some remarkable people.

I am a particularly passionate exponent of direct seeding as a way of cheaply and easily revegetating large areas of native vegetation to improve biodiversity. We did a lot of it on our farm with great success. One of my priorities is to find ways to encourage more farmers to try it.

Given the urgent need to fix carbon, direct seeding can revegetate large areas. Carbon trading offers a tantalising opportunity for

farmers to sequester carbon, improve biodiversity and get an income.

So much good work has been done on conservation in the area, but with biodiversity still declining this is an important opportunity to expand and connect remnant vegetation in our farming landscapes. This could be Landcare's moment. I'm excited about what the future will bring.

*Sue Pretty is Coordinator for Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group. For more information email [knatyalc@gmail.com](mailto:knatyalc@gmail.com)*

*Copies of Land of Plenty: A History of the Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Area by Adam McNicol are available from [www.tenbagpress.com.au](http://www.tenbagpress.com.au)*

# My Landcare work-life balance

By Lisa Wangman

When people ask me, 'So, what do you do with yourself?' I say that I'm a mum, I work for Landcare, and I also run a small business on the side. They say, 'Wow you must be busy!' and I am, but I wouldn't trade it for anything else in the world.

I've had lots of different jobs before and alongside my Landcare roles over the years – as a ranger, tour guide, youth support worker, graphic designer, in hospitality and even as a lifeguard. My Landcare career began in 2003 when I took on the part-time role of Wildlife Corridor Project Officer for the Phillip Island Landcare Group. With my passion for plants and helping people lessen their impacts on the planet, I loved working on revegetation projects and the later expansion of my role into group facilitation, urban Landcare, education, and sustainability projects.

When the Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) formed in 2006, Landcare group staff employment in the region began to be managed by the network. Currently I am the Education, Training and Communications Manager at BCLN working 3.5 days per week. With a background in graphic design, overseeing BCLN communications is a great fit for me. I love using images and words to communicate complex environmental concepts and inspiring people to act. Skilful use of language can make a big difference, helping me write successful grant applications that bring in more support for our projects and programs.

A large part of my role is educating the next generation through our Environmental Detectives Program. Students are guided through engaging and fun learning experiences that create attachment to their own local landscapes, helping develop a desire to protect and conserve them into the future. I also oversee the development of our one-hectare education, small trials and community growing space called the River Garden at Bass. Here we work with schools and volunteers, including disability groups, and host lots of interesting training programs.

I am always up for a challenge and ongoing changes to my role keeps things interesting.

## Flexible working arrangements

I have worked for Landcare both full-time and part-time over the years and have been

extremely lucky to have flexible working arrangements. I set my own hours and days in agreement with my managers.

I believe this is possibly the most important benefit that Landcare employers can offer their staff, if they want to retain good people and get great, long-term performance from them.

I was working full-time when I took maternity leave to have my daughter Tayla, now eight. That was when my creative side came rushing back. I started my own business, designing and making jewellery from crystals and natural materials and selling it at summer markets. When I returned to my Landcare work, I negotiated a part-time role, so I was able to spend time with my family and keep up my jewellery business.

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*I love using images and words to communicate complex environmental concepts and inspiring people to act.*

”



Lisa running Environmental Detectives activities at Inverloch foreshore with local school children.





Lisa Wangman working at the River Garden community education site in Bass.

Flexible hours are the key to juggling my Landcare work-life balance. It means I can still do school drop-offs, and some pickups which my partner and I share. We use after school care a few days a week. I try to keep my Landcare days regular, so people know when I'm around, but I'm flexible enough to attend evening meetings or run events on the weekend if needed. This allows me to take time off for other things that are important to me, including school assemblies, volunteering at school excursions, attending swimming lessons, to take time off on school holidays, or for family trips.

It's important to look after yourself so you can maintain all this activity for the long term. Yoga, water aerobics, meditation and walking in nature are some of the things that keep me grounded, healthy and sane. This year I am also trying to take short breaks on the way home from work or other engagements by stopping to explore unfamiliar places and to recharge.

I find the switch between Landcare and working in my jewellery business of great mental benefit. The more reflective mental state that I find myself in while doing something like knotting a mala necklace, is sometimes when the best Landcare ideas come to me, and when I realise more creative and effective answers to any problems in my Landcare work.

### No day is typical

My day usually starts hunting for lost shoes and lots of mum chores before school drop off. Then it can be filled with many different and sometimes unpredictable elements. I

could be taking a school group out to a local site, working with volunteers in the River Garden, or meeting with groups or stakeholders. I could be working from home or at the BCLN office at Bass on grant writing, reporting, emails, media campaigns, writing strategy documents or updates for our E-news, website, or social media; or organising events, training days or tours.

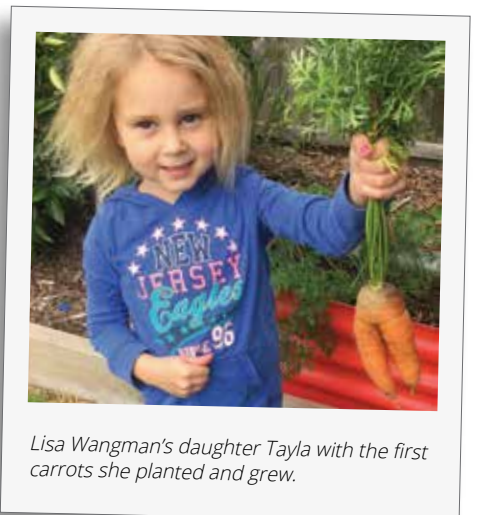
The school terms and seasons also impact my workload. Term two and three are busiest with our school activity bookings and tree plantings. The River Garden needs more time during rapid growth in autumn and spring. There are always important deadlines for grants and reporting. Stakeholder engagement, project management and group meetings are also year-round.

### Sharing the load

Planning is critical. I rely on what I call my 'horrendagram' – a self-invented spreadsheet of funding sources and projects that determines the balance of time and resources spent by myself and other staff, on the many different activities in the projects and programs I manage. I also use colour-coded lists to keep track of tasks and help our teams work together. BCLN is starting to use an online platform to assist with projects, staff, and time management too. I couldn't do what I do without my amazing colleagues at BCLN, especially Anna Brayley and Luke Phillips. We set our quarterly goals as a team and can pull together when needed to get the jobs done.

There are weeks where I just can't squeeze in another email or meeting. If I have deadlines for reports, grants, or media, I sometimes choose to work at night when it is quiet, but

*Flexible hours are the key to juggling my Landcare work-life balance. It means I can still do school drop-offs, and some pickups which my partner and I share.*



Lisa Wangman's daughter Tayla with the first carrots she planted and grew.

due to flexible working, I can take other times off when it suits me better. Setting some boundaries to protect your personal time is important and having a separate phone for work and home helps.

Getting the work-life balance right is an ongoing challenge for many people, including me. When you are doing something you love – for me that's working for Landcare – where I get to see the landscape changing for the better and help people increase their skills and knowledge, you realise you are making a difference and it's all worth it.

*Lisa Wangman is Education, Training and Communications Manager at Bass Coast Landcare Network. For more information email [lisa.wangman@basscoastlandcare.org.au](mailto:lisa.wangman@basscoastlandcare.org.au)*

# Coastcare facilitator inspired by exceptional mentor

By Johanna Tachas



**I hug the dunes on my sunset walk at Mornington Peninsula's Number 16 Beach. I'm heading for Lizard Head Rock – a walk I have taken hundreds of times. The constant sound of rolling waves is humbling.**

I can feel the coarse grains of sand between my toes. The smell of rotting sargassum is so acerbic I can almost taste it.

After the last few slanting rays of sunlight set the moon illuminates the horizon in a monochrome haze. After numerous lockdowns due to COVID-19 I was finally able to return home to the ocean.



Phillip Wierzbowski and Johanna Tachas at the Coastcare Victoria Volunteer Forum at Port Melbourne in 2022.

Just as I'm welcoming a sense of nostalgia, a series of volatile waves suddenly crash all way up to the dunes. The cold seawater reaches just below my hips. My sense of peace is destroyed. The haze seems to have lifted and I can see more clearly how the shapes of the dunes have changed since I was last here. The dunes are eroded and undercut. Lizard Head Rock has degraded. So much is changing so fast.

Marine and coastal spaces offer us rich sensory experiences. Like many Australians, I have always had an affinity with the ocean, a deep respect for the life it provides us, and strong sense of stewardship for it. My connection to seascapes can be traced back to the numerous weekends I spent with my family in Rye. Rain or shine, I was always the first in

the water and last to be reluctantly dragged out. No swim or beach visit was ever the same.

In 2020 I was accepted into the Victorian Government Science and Planning Graduate Program. This program introduced me to Coastcare. In 2021 I was fortunate to be looking for a job when the Coastcare Victoria Facilitator for Port Phillip and Western Port, Phillip Wierzbowski, was ready to take a much-needed hiatus.

Within a few weeks I fell in love with not just the work but the passionate achievers behind the program – Victoria's marine and coastal volunteers. In a career space where we often face bad news and mounting climate anxiety, the facilitator role has provided me with a new sense of hope and drive to save our natural world.



Lizard Head Rock at Rye Ocean Beach is a special place for Johanna Tachas.

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*Like many Australians, I have always had an affinity with the ocean, a deep respect for the life it provides us, and strong sense of stewardship for it.*

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*The formation of a Coastcare facilitator – young Johanna Tachas with seaweed in her hair at Rye.*

Being a Coastcare facilitator doesn't require expertise in marine and coastal science. Creativity, deep listening skills and the ability to bring people together are the most important attributes. My day-to-day work was invigorating. It was a joy to be able to indulge my curiosity, to ask expert volunteers lots of questions and to be constantly learning about weird marine life forms and unique seascapes.

My work can also take the form of assisting volunteers with grant enquiries, assessing grants, facilitating connections, building volunteer training programs, celebrating volunteer stories, and much more. It is a role that demands adaptability and the ability to face challenges that just like our coastline, change daily.

It was a huge privilege for me to work alongside and be mentored by Phillip Wierzbowski. Phillip has more than 30 years working as a Coastcare champion in Victoria and his knowledge is legendary.

Phillip and I worked together to balance the needs and requirements of both government and volunteer groups, to ensure the best outcomes for both. We share a deep respect for the innovation, creativity, wisdom and lived experience of the Victorian environmental volunteer cohort.

Phillip infected me with his passion for working in Coastcare and shared his facilitator wisdom. He taught me that a good facilitator connects, but an exceptional facilitator builds the confidence and capacity of those around them. This means that the benefits of their work are shared for generations to come. It was truly a privilege to work with the environmental warriors that are part of Coastcare Victoria. No matter how different people's experience of life it is nature that connects us all.

*Johanna Tachas was the Coastcare Victoria Facilitator for Port Phillip and Western Port. For more information email [johanna.tachas@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:johanna.tachas@delwp.vic.gov.au)*

# Employment support for Landcare facilitators and employers

*By John Robinson*

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), formerly DELWP, has developed a range of employment-related resources to better support Landcare staff and their employers.

There are 80 Landcare facilitators funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program (VLFP). These Landcare facilitators are employed by more than 60 Landcare and environmental volunteer groups and networks (eight organisations have two positions), six local governments, three CMAs, and two other organisations.

The resources developed by DEECA for Landcare staff and their employers include a generic position description for Landcare facilitators, templates to contract the employment/engagement of Landcare facilitators, a code of conduct, grievance policy, and workplace health and safety policy.

There is also a fact sheet of *Employment-related Links for Landcare Facilitators & Employers*.

Along with these resources, DEECA has developed a detailed Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program Welcome Pack to assist new VLFP Landcare facilitators to better understand the requirements of their roles. The pack has five modules including several videos. It includes:

- An introduction to Landcare, its history and growth;
- The links between the work of VLFP-funded Landcare facilitators and key Victorian Government strategies, plans and policies;
- A summary and PDF map of key stakeholders that support Landcare and environmental volunteer groups/networks in Victoria;

- The Victorian Landcare Program's logic, vision, and goals, and the Key Work Areas in the 2021–24 Landcare Facilitator Work Plan;
- Information on the day-to-day tasks of Landcare facilitators.

These resources are available on the Landcare Gateway at [www.landcarevic.org.au](http://www.landcarevic.org.au) (*Facilitator Program*).

## Landcare Employment Advice Service

The Victorian Landcare Program at DEECA funds a free confidential Landcare Employment Advice Service for Landcare staff and their employers. The service began in 2018 with the engagement of Workplace Legal. Since then Workplace Legal has provided employment-related advice to representatives of more than 60 Landcare groups/networks. Around 75 per cent of the advice they have provided has been to employer organisations, with the remainder to Landcare staff/contractors.

The most requested advice has been about contracts, entitlements, and how to engage/employ a Landcare facilitator. Advice has also been requested on disciplinary action, terminating employment, performance issues, disputes, breach of agreement, policies, insurance, and mediation.

To contact Workplace Legal phone 9972 4950.

*John Robinson is Acting Team Lead – Partnerships and Engagement (Victorian Landcare Program) at DEECA. For more information email [landcare@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:landcare@delwp.vic.gov.au)*

# Restoring bandicoot habitat in Melbourne's south-east

Cardinia Environment Coalition (CEC) was formed in 1998 to protect and enhance the natural environment in Cardinia Shire which is situated in Melbourne's south-east between Western Port and the Yarra Ranges. This active group of local volunteers are passionate about environmental protection and building interest about the local environment.

In 2021 CEC was successful in obtaining funding through the Victorian Landcare Grants to help restore habitat for the southern brown bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus obesulus*).

Although bandicoot populations still exist in parts of the Cardinia Shire their numbers are declining due to land clearing for farming and housing, predation by foxes, cats and dogs, disruption to their movement corridors and isolation from other bandicoots.

Bandicoots require dense understory vegetation with lots of small prickly shrubs and long grass to provide protection from predators. A revegetation plan was prepared by the CEC Indigenous Nursery team and a range of species, including tussock grasses and sedges, were selected to create new habitat areas to manage for conservation.

The first stage of the project, based at Five Mile Reserve in Koo Wee Rup North, involved suppressing weeds and constructing a rabbit exclusion fence (90cm high and 30cm below ground) to prepare the site for revegetation.

According to CEC Landcare Facilitator Nicci Starke, five planting days were held.

"In 2022, a total of 5000 tube stock were planted by local community members, including teachers and students. Year 9 students from Beaconhills College volunteered through the school's Common Good program and St Peters College students showed great initiative by organising a class field day. Volunteers also explored sections of established revegetation and removed plant guards from growing trees and shrubs."

"A huge thank you to all the volunteers, students, and teachers who worked together, demonstrating excellent teamwork, and offered questions and ideas to take forward into our project planning. Our supporters and contributors, including the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, Cardinia Shire Council, and many others have also generously shared guidance, lessons, stories, and management expertise. We couldn't have done this without them," Nicci said.

In 2022, further Victorian Landcare Grants funding extended the project and allowed an additional 5000 seedlings to be planted. More planting days were planned for later in 2023. Photo monitoring points to record revegetation growth will then be established and fauna surveys undertaken.

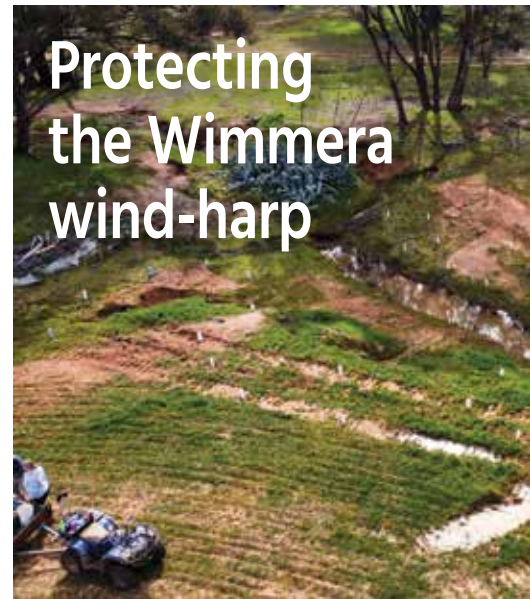
***Nicci Starke is the CEC's Landcare Facilitator. Her position is funded by the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email [facilitator@cecinc.net.au](mailto:facilitator@cecinc.net.au)***



*A community planting day at Five Mile Reserve in Koo Wee Rup North establishing habitat for the Southern brown bandicoot.*

# Regional

## Protecting the Wimmera wind-harp



The Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network (BNGLN) wants to raise the profile of an important native tree in the regional landscape – the buloke. Known colloquially as the Wimmera wind-harp due to the sound its sparse foliage makes in the breeze, buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) is listed as threatened under Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

Buloke is in sharp decline mainly due to historical clearing for agriculture. The hardness of its wood and its straggly appearance had also seen it targeted as a fencepost and firewood species. Added to this the slow growth rate of the tree means it has often been omitted from revegetation projects.

Buloke woodlands are highly biodiverse – providing habitat for a great variety of plants, birds and other animals. Some of these species, including the red-tailed black cockatoo, are endangered.

BNGLN has been successful in obtaining funding under the 2021 Victorian Landcare Grants for a project to improve community knowledge of buloke.

The first stage of Project Windharp involved mapping larger concentrations of remnant buloke. An educational campaign followed with presentations on the importance of buloke woodlands at Landcare meetings, articles in local newspapers and on social media and the development of a citizen science training package to help locals identify and record significant remnant patches of buloke.



# snapshots



*A drone photograph showing the Slaty Creek site where St Arnaud Secondary College students assisted in replanting critical buloke woodland habitat.*

Landholders are being encouraged to preserve existing species on their land with stock proof fencing and to establish new buloke plantings in suitable areas.

Since the Project began, more than 6000 trees have now been planted. These include 3000 buloke, the rest being allied species of acacias and sheoaks. In September 2022 students from St Arnaud Secondary College planted almost 1300 buloke seedlings over two days at Slaty Creek. More recently, 1700 buloke were planted at Callawadda.

BNGLN President, Ken Coates believes the project has been a great success and that it will continue to provide a focus for BNGLN volunteers for years to come.

"It has also provided an opportunity to build on several existing partnerships with local landholders, the St Arnaud Resource Centre who provided a venue for the initial training and printed out materials, and the enthusiastic revegetation crew at St Arnaud Secondary College.

"It was terrific to see the students interacting with the landowners, our Landcare Facilitator Andrew Borg, and volunteers, to not only get the seedlings into the ground, but to aid in fixing an erosion gully, and learning a bit about biodiversity and regenerative agriculture along the way," Ken said.

**Andrew Borg is Landcare Facilitator of BNGLN. His position is funded by the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email [bnlandcare@gmail.com](mailto:bnlandcare@gmail.com)**

## Plant & Dance – A day out with Intrepid Landcare

For Bass Coast locals, a steady stream of teens and twentysomethings to a South Gippsland farm on a sunny weekend usually signals a festival is set to begin. The live entertainment lineup with DJs, rappers and acoustic acts and a free food tent offering plenty of choices only added to the festival vibe, but attendees hadn't come to sit back and relax.

Instead of picnic rugs and eskys, they were pulling out gardening gloves, shovels, and trowels before the day's first session – a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony by Bunurong elders.

Next was a briefing by Brita Jobling, Secretary of Gippsland Intrepid Landcare, and the brainchild of the Plant & Dance event.

Brita, 26, and a friend came up with the concept a few years ago, around the time she began volunteering with Gippsland Intrepid Landcare – a group for under 40s dedicated to protecting the environment.

Brita approached Jye Anderson, Landcare Facilitator at Bass Coast Landcare Network, about the idea.

"The idea of Plant & Dance was to bring people our age together, introduce that element of a fun, party atmosphere, while coming out and doing something really rewarding. There were so many people



*The day of hard work was followed by an evening of free food and music at the Plant & Dance event.*



*A group of young volunteers planted more than 2000 trees in one day to improve water quality and create wildlife habitat on a Bass Coast farm in 2022.*

my age telling me that they wanted to be involved in Landcare, but they want to be with people a similar age, too," Brita said.

In August 2022 the second Plant & Dance event by Gippsland Intrepid Landcare and Bass Coast Landcare Network attracted more than 80 under 30s to the Bass Coast hills.

In just one day, the group planted 2000 trees on a farm that had been rapidly degrading. The trees will help prevent harmful sediment flowing into Archie's Creek and out into the Bass Coast.

According to Jye Anderson, the project, which is supported by a 2021 Victorian Landcare Grant, has created an enormous benefit for the environment and the farm, too.

"By recreating habitat, we're also creating wildlife corridors as well as improving the water quality. A day like today just creates so many benefits," Jye said.

Volunteer Max Combridge said he would definitely come back for another Plant & Dance.

"This is my first time planting and I can see why people do it. It's been really fun. I usually work in an office, so being out here in a group, getting my hands dirty for such a good cause has been great," Max said.

Brita said the key to success in engaging young people with Landcare was creating events with them, for them.

"Things that are low commitment, like one-day events, young people can usually fit that in with uni and jobs, and if you add in music, free food, you have a good chance of a crowd, I think," she said.

**Jye Anderson is Landcare Facilitator at Bass Coast Landcare Network. His position is funded by the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email [jye.andersen@basscoastlandcare.org.au](mailto:jye.andersen@basscoastlandcare.org.au)**

# In brief

## Resources Hub

Are you planning or running a nature, conservation or wildlife group, event, or Landcare project? Find resources to help manage your volunteer team at DEECA's recently launched Resources Hub for environmental volunteers and Landcarers.

The Hub connects groups with high-quality resources developed by peak bodies and other government departments on topics ranging from health and safety through to First Peoples cultural knowledge.

One such resource is a bespoke Communications Toolkit built for projects just like yours. This toolkit is a practical guide on how to reach new audiences, motivate your volunteers and tips to promote your projects. There are also printable templates for case studies, media releases and communications campaigns to provide practical help.

To explore the Resources Hub go to [www.environment.vic.gov.au](http://www.environment.vic.gov.au)

## Update: Landcare Victoria Inc.

New Futures for Victorian Landcare is an exciting new project that aims to support the participation of the Landcare community to develop landscape-scale



Poorni Kumar and Claire Bonieux volunteering at Greenlink nursery in Box Hill in November 2022.

plans for the ongoing protection and restoration of key environmental values. For more information go to [www.landcarevictoria.org.au/newfutures](http://www.landcarevictoria.org.au/newfutures)

With over 600 member groups, representing more than 17,000 households and an estimated 60,000 individuals, Landcare Victoria is one of the largest environmental volunteer organisations in Victoria, fostering on-ground community led action. Landcare mobilises and supports sustainable landscape management and helps to create stronger and more resilient communities.

If you would like to support our member groups to implement sustainable practices, restore degraded lands, and foster a sense of environmental responsibility, consider a donation to the Landcare Victoria Fund. You can nominate a specific group for your donation (they must be registered) or donate directly to the fund on a one off or a recurring basis. All gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Go to [www.landcarevictoria.org.au/donate](http://www.landcarevictoria.org.au/donate)

For more information on Landcare Victoria Inc, or to become a member go to [www.landcarevictoria.org.au](http://www.landcarevictoria.org.au) or (03) 9034 1940.

The *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management* magazine is published three times per year by the Victorian Government's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and distributed in partnership with Landcare Victoria Incorporated. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare and natural resource management among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



## Mailing list enquiries and to receive your online copy via email alert

Contact Landcare Victoria Incorporated  
Phone: 9034 1940 Email: [info@landcarevictoria.org.au](mailto:info@landcarevictoria.org.au)

## Read the magazine online

To access the *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management* magazine online as web pages since the Spring 2016 issue (#67) go to [www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/](http://www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/)  
Back issues of the magazine since the Spring 1996 issue (#1) can be accessed online as pdfs.

## Next issue

The next issue of the magazine, to be published in Autumn 2024, is a feature on revegetation and restoration. Contributions have now closed for this issue.

The Winter 2024 issue will feature the winners of the 2023/2024 Victorian Landcare Awards. The theme and deadline for the Spring and Summer issues will be provided on the back page of the Winter issue.

For further details about upcoming issues and contributions please email [editorviclandcare@gmail.com](mailto:editorviclandcare@gmail.com)

