

# Annual Report 2017

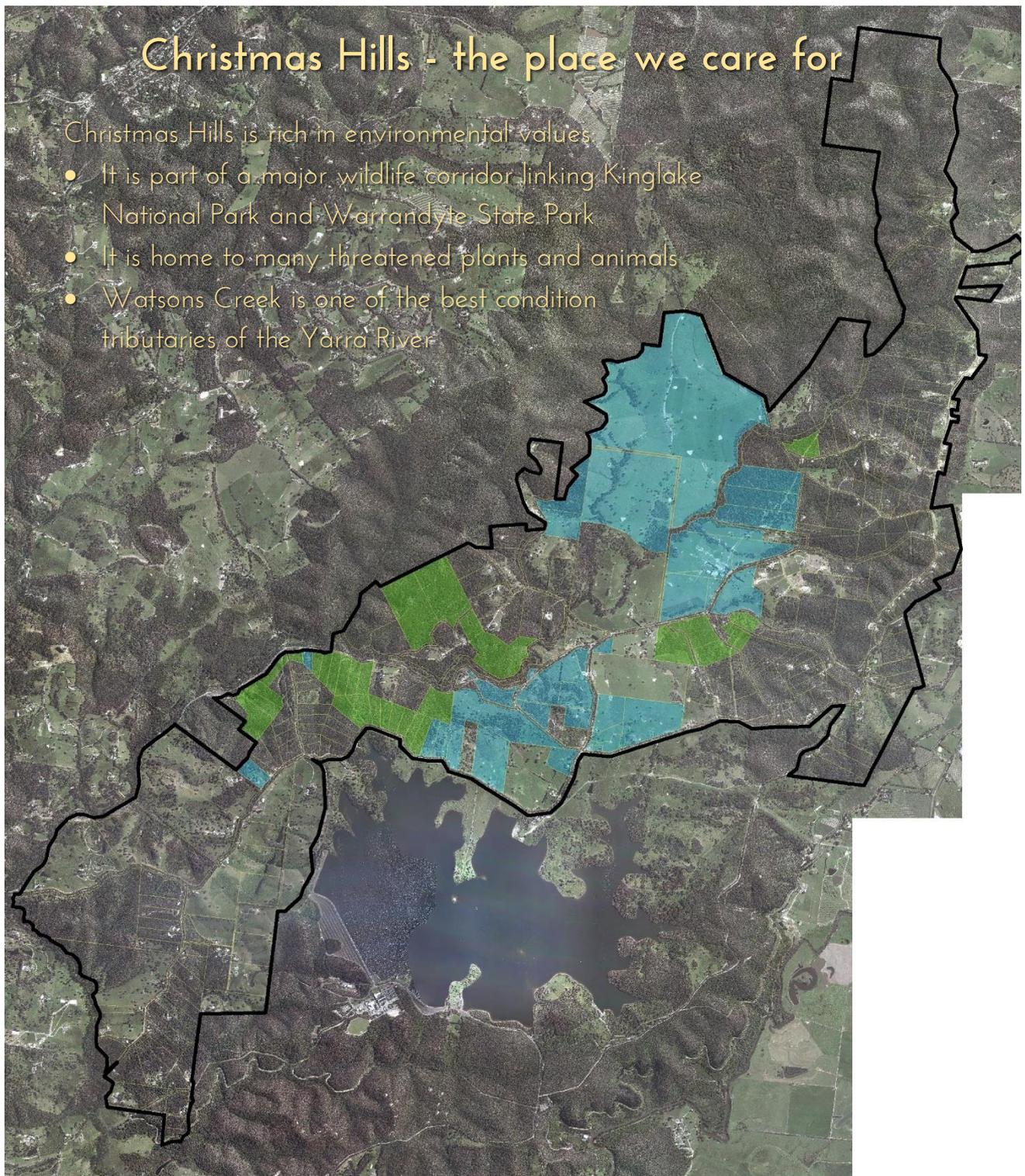


Christmas  
Hills  
Landcare  
Group



Christmas Hills  
Landcare Group

## Background



- The group boundary encompasses an area of 2550 hectares comprised of 248 land parcels, but with probably no more than 180 land owners
- Melbourne Water owns 56 land parcels within the Christmas Hills Landcare Group area - some are leased (blue), the rest are managed for conservation (green) (also see page 6)
- Christmas Hills is traditional country of the Wurundjeri people

# Formation of the Christmas Hills Landcare Group

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group in its current form came into being following a community gathering in October 2005 designed to assess the level of interest in forming a group.

The good turnout and a couple of trial 'property visit' based events late in 2005 made it clear that the level of interest was strong and at the CHLG event in March 2006, several people put their hand up to help run the group. Other than a Treasurer, specific 'office bearer' roles were not defined and an informal committee of Rob Shackleton (Treasurer), Mark Gardner, Wayne O'Donovan, Margo Heeley, Phil Styles, Bridget Bainbridge and Doug Evans was formed.

Probably as a consequence of the informality of this committee, they rarely met, yet over time the Landcare group continued to grow in profile and membership, projects became increasingly ambitious in scale and complexity, and multiple projects were on the go at once.

In December 2010 the group held its first official AGM to elect a management committee for the group, with Doug Evans, Rob Shackleton, Nicole Noy, Ross Coupar, Mark Gardner, Kylie Moppert and Tina Keene duly elected onto the inaugural committee for 2011.

Each year the CHLG seeks to deliver a series of events and projects that aim to engage landholders in Christmas Hills, connect them to our local natural environmental values, develop their understanding and skills to manage these values, remove obstacles to action, and connect them to each other socially.

Through partnerships of various types, the CHLG is also developing its relationships with other Landcare groups, the shire and other agencies to extend its influence and leverage.

We do all this to help Christmas Hills landholders protect and enhance the rich diversity of natural environmental values we are custodians of here in Christmas Hills.



### Vision

All Christmas Hills landholders working together in a coordinated and collaborative way to care for and sustain the environmental assets we value in Christmas Hills

### Mission

To engage with Christmas Hills landholders and establish relationships with and between them, leading to them taking coordinated action on their respective properties that protect and sustain the environmental assets of Christmas Hills



# Strategic pathways

To fulfil our mission effectively we need to:

**1. Understand what our environmental assets are, why we value them, what threatens them, and what needs to be done where to protect and sustain them.** How?

- Access existing information on environmental assets of Christmas Hills
- Access existing expertise on environmental assets of Christmas Hills
- Conduct community-based research to fill information gaps as required
- Document in a map-based plan

**2. Engage all the landholders that have a role to play in protecting and sustaining these assets.** How?

- Build the profile, respect and trust of the group in the community
- Regular promotion and communications with clear and consistent messages
- Recruit new and retain existing members
- Establish and strengthen personal connections through social activities
- Be inclusive - hold events that appeal to members and non-members alike

**3. Help each landholder understand what needs to be done and work out how they can integrate this with their own aspirations for their property.** How?

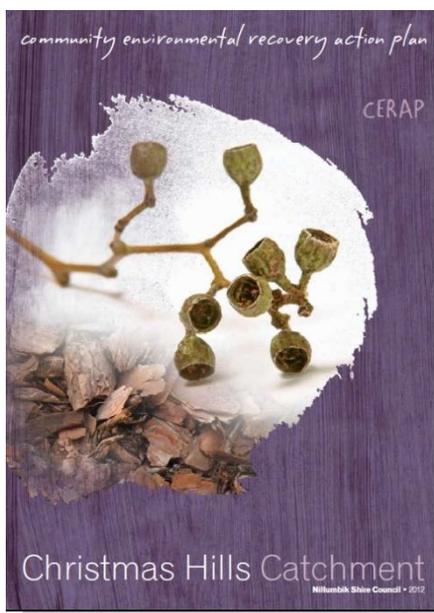
- Communicate the map-based plan of Christmas Hills environmental assets, threats and required action to landholders
- Translate and interpret the group's objectives and action priorities from the plan to property scale

**4. Coordinate and support landholders to take action on their property.** How?

- Develop landholder knowledge and skills through guest speakers, demonstrations, training, etc.
- Develop and deliver projects to remove obstacles that prevent landholders taking action (such as insufficient time, skills, funds, etc.)

**5. Integrate our efforts, and collaborate with others who have a shared interest in the environmental assets of Christmas Hills.** How?

- Communicate the map-based plan of Christmas Hills environmental assets, threats and required action to potential partners (eg Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Nillumbik Shire, Yarra Ranges Shire, Wurundjeri, university researchers, prospective sponsors)
- Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with those that can help us



The Christmas Hills Community Environmental Action Plan consolidates information on the environmental assets of Christmas Hills and also guides landholder action in a map-based format.



# Chair's report 2017

Firstly, I'd like to thank the 2017 committee for their focus and good humour during the year, with special thanks to Tina, Nicole and Nev who hosted one or more meetings during the year, and with help from Judith who kindly provided lasagne for two meetings, ensured we were well fed before each meeting got started.

I have a feeling that 2017 will be the year we look back on as the one where an enduring relationship with the Wurundjeri people started. As the Traditional Owners of Christmas Hills, they are the original Christmas Hills Landcarers, and there is much to learn from them, and them from us.

The release this year of a new strain of the rabbit calicivirus has brought with it an opportunity to have another go at reducing the impact of rabbits. With this in mind, and the knowledge that a fundamental element of any effective rabbit control strategy is the destruction of the warrens, we revisited the idea of purchasing a 'Rodenator', a piece of equipment that delivers a calibrated mix of oxygen and LPG into the warren and then ignited. Seven years back we had a look at one, and it was unable to collapse the warren it was demonstrated on. With a new improved version, we had another look and this time we saw the result we wanted to see, which led to the decision to purchase a unit. During 2018 we will get members trained in its use and determine the arrangements for making it available.

Our membership of the Nillumbik Landcare Network continues to reap benefits. The Network secured funding for two additional projects that we are likely to benefit from - one to survey for the Southern Toadlet, and one to propagate and reintroduce the Charming Spider Orchid. The Network has established regular contact with the three rural Nillumbik councillors to facilitate council support for our collective Landcare efforts, and in 2017 the Network also piloted an innovative monitoring program with the aim of measuring the ongoing condition or 'health' of our forests and woodlands across the municipality using sound recorders and cameras.

This year we have been faced with the plans of Melbourne Water to sell off the land they own in Christmas Hills. Without knowing to what extent we may be able to influence the outcome, we determined our preferred position on how the land could be disposed of that optimised the protection of our special natural environment. We shared this position across the community and it appears to have resonated, with many directly referring to our position in their submissions to Melbourne Water. We now wait to see what comes of our community's views on the matter.

Finally, I'd like to thank the ongoing support of our members. The vast majority of our members are long-standing supporters and very much appreciated, however we have only managed to recruit new members in ones and twos over the past several years. Our best advertising is you, so we ask that when the opportunity presents you espouse the benefits of membership to others you know who live in Christmas Hills.

May 2018 be another exciting and productive year for us!

Doug Evans

# Events run in 2017

# Wurundjeri Tanderrum (and AGM)

The place we call Christmas Hills has been in the traditional ownership of the Wurundjeri people for many thousands of years. In recognition of this, we kicked off the year with a traditional smoking ceremony, or Tanderrum, that saw 40 of us welcomed onto country by Wurundjeri Elder, Uncle Bill Nicholson.

*...an eagle was spotted soaring overhead - perhaps in a sign of approval...*



As part of the ceremony, symbolic reed spears were snapped to assure our safety, and we were given water and local vegetation to symbolise permission to use resources on Wurundjeri land. We were then invited to walk through the smoke created from leaves placed on a small fire to cleanse our spirits in return for our respect of Wurundjeri people, culture, lore and all that is in their land.

This was followed by some traditional stories told through dance and song by Mandy Nicholson and the Djirri Djirri Dance Troupe. During one of the dances that features the Wurundjeri creator spirit,

Bunjil the Wedge-tailed Eagle, an eagle was spotted soaring overhead - perhaps in a sign of approval - before several members took up the invitation to join in one of the dances.

We then moved inside the hall for the CHLG AGM where we briefly reflected on our 2016 achievements, did our annual group 'health check' and elected the management committee for 2017, which included welcoming Judith Ellerton onto the committee.

The weather kept us inside for the subsequent Wurundjeri cultural education session with Uncle Bill, before we ended the event with a selection of bush food-themed pies, complemented by salads prepared by Pip Charlton, Margo Heeley and Veronica Holland that featured ingredients such as Native Currants, Muntries, and Ribberies.



# Nest boxes for the Eastern Pygmy Possum

Following the discovery in 2016 of the hairs of an Eastern Pygmy Possum in the stomach of a fox caught on Skyline Road, and the subsequent capture on camera of this species on another Skyline Road property in 2017, the CHLG applied for a grant to have some nest boxes made specifically tailored to the pygmy possum.

*64 boxes in all were made and painted*



The Yarra Glen Mens' Shed (YGMS) was commissioned to construct them, and in March seven members, along with two YGMS volunteers, helped assemble the remaining unassembled boxes, and then paint them.

In the interest of building closer ties, we also heard a little about the Men's Shed and what they do, and shared with them a bit about what the CHLG does.

64 boxes in all were made and painted with paint donated by Judith Ellerton. After they were collected and taken to Doug Evans' place for distribution, Nev Ragg and Doug added some camouflaging and box numbers, before participating landholders were invited to come and collect and install their boxes.



# Collapsing rabbit warrens with the Rodenator R3

**B**ack in 2007 we held a rabbit control field day at Peter and Jane Russ' place that included a demonstration of the Rodenator, a device that delivers a mix of oxygen and LPG into the warren and then ignites it, with the resultant blast designed to kill the rabbits inside the warren. At the time we were hopeful that this method would also be a way of

*This time we got the result we wanted to see - a collapsed warren*



collapsing rabbit warrens in more sensitive areas where getting machinery in would cause too much damage to vegetation and the like. Sadly, the demonstration did not show any damage to the warren.

Ten years later, a new calicivirus strain is released, and we hear that there is a new improved Rodenator R3 that may just be able to do the warren collapsing job we want it to do. So a demonstration was arranged at

Ross Coupar and Nicole Noy's place in July, with ten members attending.

Phil Sansom from Jansen Farm Services, stepped us through the process which included using the smoking machine to locate all the entrances to a warren, then sealing off all the entrances, bar the one with the Rodenator wand inserted, timing the gas mix flowing into the warren, and then the ignition.

This time we got the result we wanted to see - a collapsed warren - and after we retreated inside to enjoy some afternoon tea, we agreed that the CHLG should look at purchasing a unit. Such a unit would be made available to landholders to aid rabbit control on their properties, with support from trained volunteers to ensure its safe use. Six members volunteered to be trained in the safe use of the Rodenator R3.



# Return of the Wurundjeri Firestick

The CHLG has recently begun exploring the idea of using traditional indigenous burning methods for managing private land to achieve environmental benefits, and this has coincided with a growing desire in the Wurundjeri community to regain their traditional burning practices.



This presented us with a wonderful opportunity to work with the Wurundjeri for mutual benefit. The Wurundjeri have found their source of traditional burning knowledge in the form of Victor Steffensen, a respected traditional fire practitioner, but need places to practice applying their knowledge - something we as Christmas Hills landholders do have.

*This presented us with a wonderful opportunity to work with the Wurundjeri for mutual benefit*

Traditional burning is about keeping Country healthy and ensuring food and other resources continue to be available.

This August event was run in partnership with the Nillumbik Conservation Futures project and saw around 60 people attend. Uncle Dave Wandin welcomed us onto

country with a smoking ceremony, the fire having been lit using the traditional firestick drill method by Yorta Yorta men, Ralph and Chris Hume. We then heard from Uncle Dave and the landholder, Mark 'Gad' Gardner, about their respective aspirations for using fire on country, as well as Victor Steffensen who explained how to 'read Country' for the signs that tell us it is sick, and when it is ready to be burnt.

Although the leaf litter was still a bit too damp from recent rains, late in the afternoon we still went ahead and lit up the grass tussocks to help demonstrate the cool and patchy nature of traditional burning, before enjoying a late afternoon tea of bush-tucker themed nibbles provided by Grumble Tumms.



# Native gardens in Christmas Hills

In response to a request at the AGM in February, the CHLG arranged an event in November to take members for a wander through two local gardens that feature native species.

*Jan simply loves gardening, and loves using native species*

The first garden was that of Loretta Childs and Hamish Knox at 'Big Hill'. Loretta is a landscape designer, and their garden has featured on



Gardening Australia and Open Gardens Victoria. The garden combines a mix of 60% natives, 20% local indigenous species and 20% exotics with basalt boulders, recycled timbers and iron to create a series of "rooms", many with water features or sculptural pieces.

The second garden was that of Jan Cranwell and Phil Styles. Jan simply loves gardening, and loves using native species. This garden is

also the place where we caught on camera an Eastern Pygmy Possum last year, and it is very likely that the mix of native plants, especially banksias, are what attracted this tiny critter in.

After plenty of wandering and questioning, we retired for a delicious afternoon tea.



# Birds of the night in Christmas Hills

We closed out 2017 with an event in December focussed on the owls of Christmas Hills. The 33 people that gathered at Pip and Doug's place kicked off the evening with pizzas before sitting down to hear from owl expert, Ed McNabb who shared his knowledge accumulated from tracking owls for over 30 years.

*...the one-legged Tawny Frogmouth that flew across the room and landed in the guacamole dip!*



Doug then announced to the gathered crowd that the organisation that had been arranged to deliver a flight display of live owls had messed up their bookings and were not coming. However, Doug was also able to announce that Michael Alexander of Blacksnake Productions had agreed, at very short notice (that morning), to provide a show of live native

animals on his way back from doing a show that afternoon. Michael proceeded to bring out a variety of animals including a frog, a crocodile, a goanna, and a kangaroo, but the comical highlight was the one-legged Tawny Frogmouth that flew across the room and landed in the guacamole dip!

The questions kept coming, so we had to cut Michael's talk short, so he could get home and we could have some dessert and sit down for Doug to do his annual presentation of what the cameras saw during the year. The presentation comprised a selection of short videos that summarised what the CHLG motion-sensing cameras had captured on private properties during 2017, with 58 different fauna species recorded - 16 mammals, 39 birds, and 4 reptiles.



## *Events*

# Projects run in 2017

# Projects



23°C 29.14inHg CHLG25 20 FEB 2017 12:00

White-necked Heron caught on camera at Rob and Linda's



CHLG29 18 OCT 2017 01:31 am

Brush-tailed Phascogale caught on camera at Ross and Nicole's



24°C 29.11inHg CHLG24 16 MAR 2017 01:43 am

Domestic cat caught on camera at Nev and Janet's



18°C 29.09inHg CHLG27 12 OCT 2017

Short-beaked Echidna caught on camera at Gad's



24°C 28.61inHg CHLG28 29 DEC 2016 07:03 am

Superb Lyrebird caught on camera at Tim and Tina's

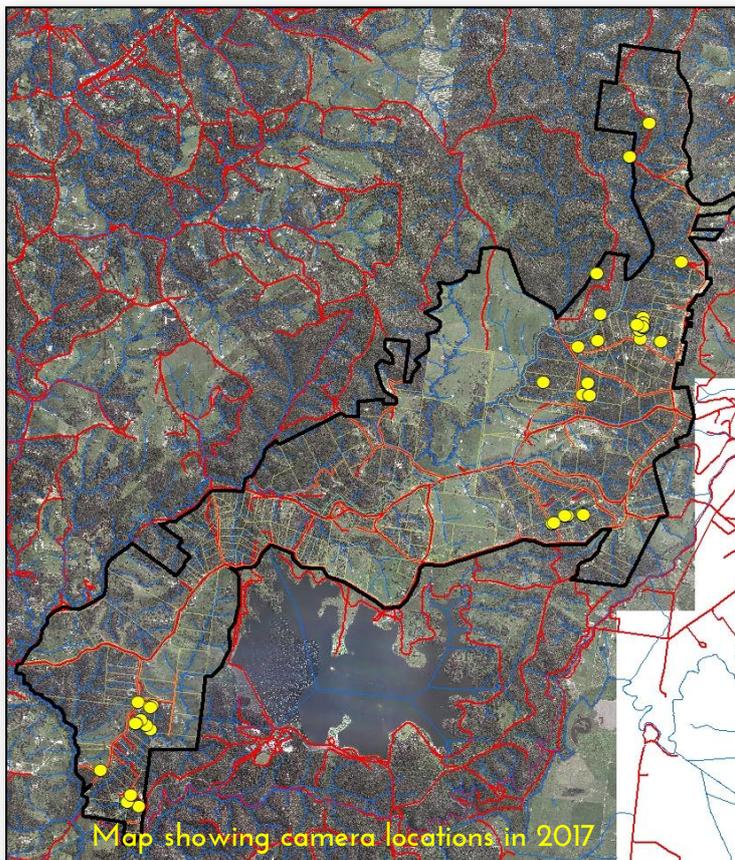
# Community fauna monitoring

Helping landholders connect with their local flora and fauna continues to be a core objective for the Christmas Hills Landcare Group. The group sees these positive experiences and insights as a key step in engaging landholders to take action on their own properties to care for their local environment.

**18 mammals,  
35 birds,  
3 reptiles, and  
1 amphibian**

The group's ongoing Community Fauna Monitoring program is the primary means we use for creating these connections. Built around making available to landholders the group's motion-sensing infrared trail cameras, landholders are invited to set up a camera, along with a scent lure to attract fauna, to help them find out more about the fauna that occurs on their properties.

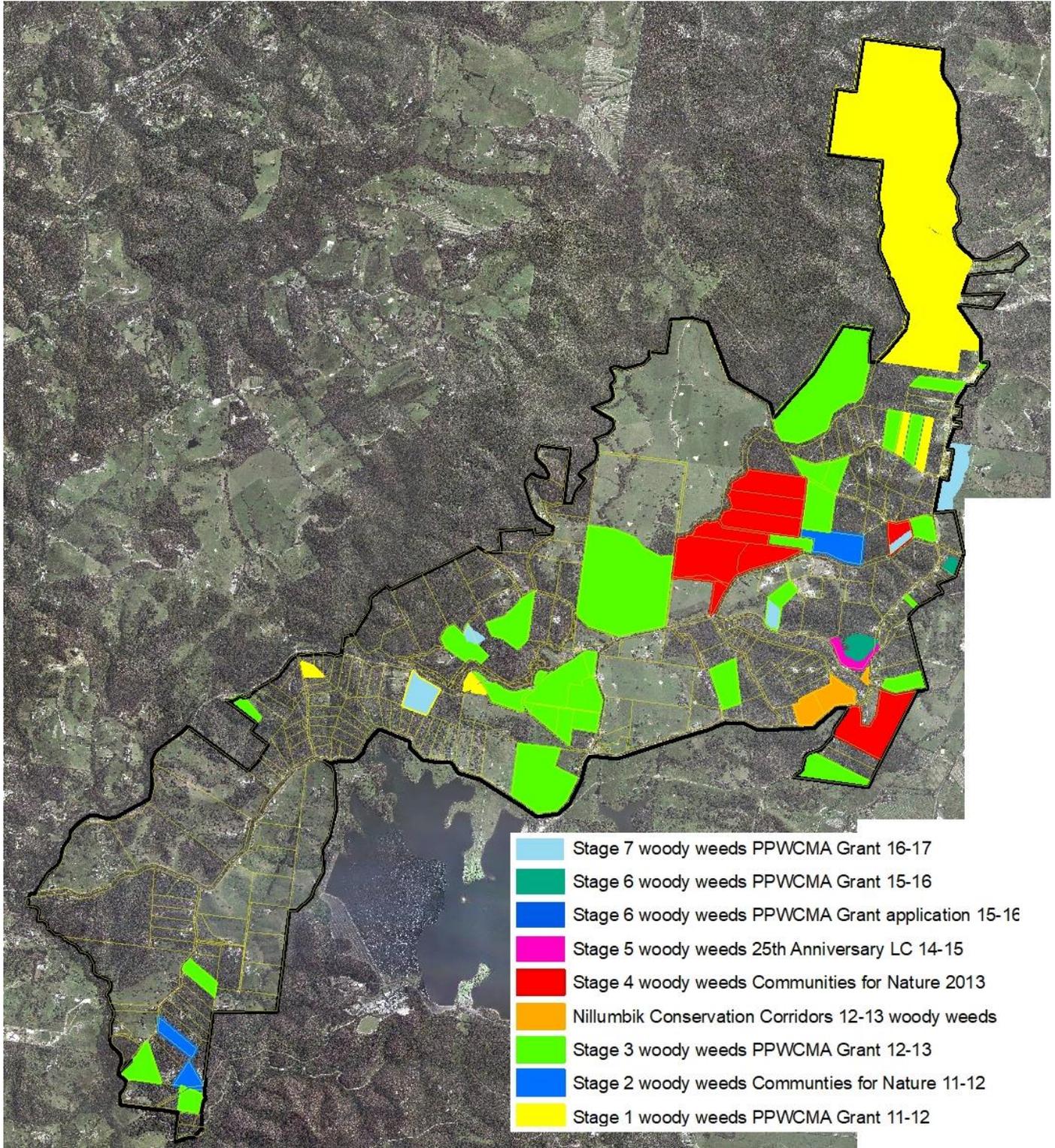
In 2017 their use by landholders was locally coordinated by Nev Ragg, Peter Laver, and Doug Evans, with cameras used on 15 different properties in 45 different locations.



With an emphasis on using the cameras near water over summer we detected a new annual record of 57 different fauna species - 18 mammals (6 introduced), 35 birds (1 introduced), 3 reptiles and 1 amphibian.

Notable 'captures' include the Olive-backed Oriole (*Oriolus sagittatus*), Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*), Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*), Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) and the Slender-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis murina*).

# Projects



Stage 1 - \$19,836 (11/12 PPWCMA)	17.5 properties, 340 Ha
Stage 2 - \$9,218 (11/12 C4N)	5 properties, 27 Ha
Stage 2.5 - \$12,808 (NCC project)	2.5 properties, 10 Ha
Stage 3 - \$19,988 (12/13 PPWCMA)	11 new properties, 158 Ha and 11 previous properties, ~60 Ha
Stage 4 - \$9,185 (2013 C4N)	6 properties, 69 Ha
Stage 5 - \$18,500 (14/15 25th ALG)	1 property, 4 Ha
Stage 6 - \$22,596 (15-16 PPWCMA)	1 new property, 2 Ha and 1 previous property, 5 Ha
Stage 7 - \$3,301 (16-17 PPWCMA)	2 new properties, 13 Ha and 3 previous properties, 12 Ha

# Woody weed control

The invasion of native vegetation by woody weeds is one of the major threats to the quality of native forest and woodland habitat in Christmas Hills. Species such as Blackberry, Boneseed, Sweet Pittosporum, Cootamundra Wattle, Sallow Wattle and Radiata Pine can form dense infestations that alter the vegetation structure and restrict natural regeneration of native species thereby reducing its suitability as habitat for native fauna.

**Total to date:  
\$115,332 to treat  
woody weeds on  
46 properties  
covering  
628 hectares**

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group helps landholders tackle these weeds in several ways - seeking funds to engage a skilled contractor to do larger scale weed control works, holding weeding working bees with the Christmas Hills Tool Trailer to help neighbours, and developing landholder skills in weed identification and simple control methods.

This is an ongoing program that leading into the year had undertaken weed control work on 44 properties covering 615 hectares. During 2017 Indigenous Design Environmental Services were engaged to do weed control work on 2 additional properties treating another 12.8 hectares, and a further 12 hectares on 3 previously treated properties. This was funded through a grant secured through the PPWCMA's Community Grants.

The involvement of additional properties to help fill the gaps is typically sought through an expression of interest process.



**Blackberry after treatment on  
Chris and Tina's property**

# Projects



Eastern Pygmy Possum nest box installed amongst dense shrubs



Two Powerful Owl nest boxes made from large hollow log ready for installation



Ross Coupar from Indigenous Design installs one of the owl nest boxes



Brush-tailed Phascogale nest box provided by VicRoads

# Nest boxes

A wide range of fauna that occurs in Christmas Hills are dependent on tree hollows for shelter and in many cases breeding. This includes owls, parrots, kingfishers, ducks, bats, possums, gliders and phascogales.

Given the history of tree clearing for firewood and farming, much of the remnant forest and woodland we recognise today in Christmas Hills is largely regrowth less than eighty years old. It is likely that the dominant tree species in Christmas Hills will typically need to be in the order of 150+ years old before they naturally provide suitable hollows (and much older again for the large hollows that owls need). Consequently, we have assumed that our local native fauna populations would benefit from supplementing their habitat with nest boxes designed for specific species.

Following the discovery of the Eastern Pygmy Possum we researched nest box design to suit this species and then engaged volunteers at the Yarra Glen Men's Shed to construct 64 boxes for us. 21 participating landholders then collected and installed their boxes (3 per property).

In addition, and after observing the felling of large old hollow-bearing trees along our roadsides by Nillumbik Council in the name of 'fire safety', the idea of creating large nest boxes for owls from a resulting hollow log emerged.

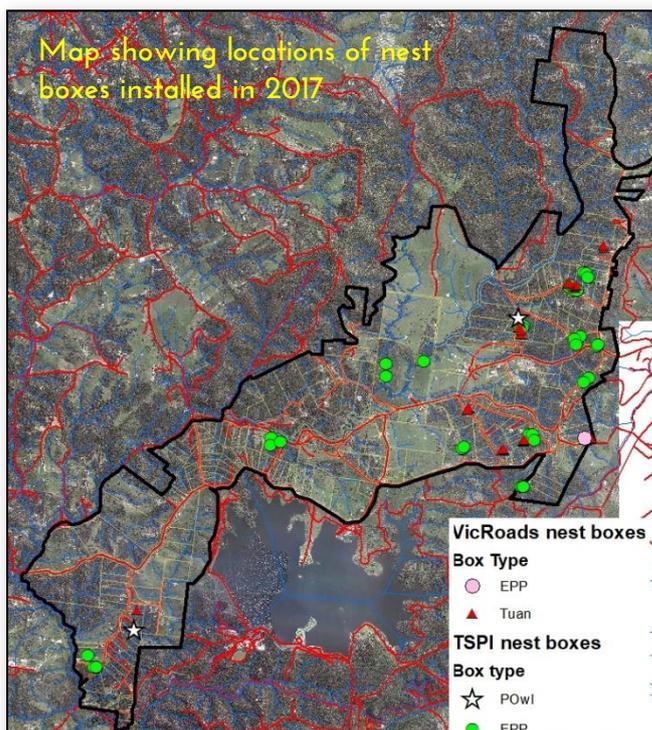
Two large nest boxes with dimensions to suit the Powerful Owl were created from one such hollow log, and these were fitted with an internal camera to enable inspection from the ground, and then professionally installed over 10 metres up a tree on each of two properties in Christmas Hills. The pygmy possum and owl nest box project was funded

by the Victorian Government's Threatened Species Protection Initiative.

In addition, VicRoads approached us with an offer of 20 nest boxes for Brush-tailed Phascogales as part of their offset for tree removal associated with the safety barrier works along Eltham-Yarra Glen Road.

Following negotiations to involve the Men's Shed in the construction, VicRoads ended up providing 25 phascogale nest boxes, and 25 pygmy possum nest boxes, and professional installation of the phascogale boxes.

*...the idea of creating large nest boxes from a resulting hollow log emerged*



## Projects



Darren Wandin and Tyler Tweedie from the Wurundjeri Narrap team collect invertebrate samples as part of pre-burn monitoring



Uncle Dave Wandin and Victor Steffensen assess a potential traditional burn site



Lighting up of grass tussocks during community event "Return of the Wurundjeri Firestick"

# Firescape to Wyendabool

Over the last couple of years, the CHLG, along with the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade and the Bend of Islands Conservation Association, have been working to build the capacity of local landholders to use fire as a management tool on their property to achieve ecological benefits. This was initially built off the CFA's Firescape program, but more recently we have begun exploring the idea of traditional burning to see what benefits this can provide. In doing so, we have adopted the term 'Wyendabool' which is a Woiwurrung (language of the Wurundjeri people) term for the Christmas Hills and Bend of Islands area that means 'hills of fire'.

*...we have adopted the term 'Wyendabool' which is a Woiwurrung term that means 'hills of fire'*

Traditional burning is about keeping Country healthy and ensuring food and other resources continue to be available. It relies on knowledge to be able to recognise the signs that indicate Country is 'sick' and needs to be burnt, as well as knowledge of the signs that indicate that Country is ready to be burnt safely.

The Wurundjeri people have expressed their desire to regain this lost knowledge and have chosen Victor Steffensen, a highly respected indigenous fire practitioner from Cape York, as their mentor in this regard. The Wurundjeri also need places to practice applying this knowledge as they acquire it to refine their understanding and skills, and this is where the CHLG has offered to help.

With funding provided by the Nillumbik Conservation Futures project, Victor Steffensen



was brought down, and together with Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Dave Wandin, six potential burn sites were assessed, with a site at Gad's place selected to host a community event and demonstration burn (see page 11, 'Return of the Wurundjeri Firestick').

Four sites were selected, and a grant application was submitted to engage the Wurundjeri to conduct the burns in 2018. Two members of the Wurundjeri's Narrap Team (land management team) were also supported to undertake pre-burn monitoring on all four sites.

# Management committee

At the AGM held on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2017, the 40 or so members in attendance voted in the 6 incumbents, and one newcomer, to the Management Committee for 2017:

Doug Evans - Chair  
Nicole Noy - Treasurer  
Sally Corrigan - Secretary  
Mark Gardner - Vice Chair  
Tina Keene - Membership Officer  
Nev Ragg - ordinary Committee Member  
Judith Ellerton - ordinary Committee Member

The committee met six times during the year and its decisions are guided by the group's vision, mission and strategic pathways established in August 2011 (see pages 4 & 5).

In 2017 the committee focussed on:

- organising the 2017 program of events
- assessing funding opportunities and determining projects to pursue funding for
- financial management
- strategies for recruiting new members
- ideas for 'freshening up' the camera program
- working closely with the Nillumbik Landcare Network and its Conservation Action Planning work, in particular options for forest and woodland condition monitoring
- Preparing a response to Melbourne Water's planned land disposal



# Membership

Membership numbers have declined slightly compared to 2016 numbers (note: due to a few late renewals, the 2016 figure in the graph below has been revised upwards from the version in the 2016 Annual Report). We had one new membership (welcome Tony and Anna), but several 2016 members had not renewed by the time of printing this report. The following were the financial members for 2017:

Bridget Bainbridge  
Chris & Tina Keene  
Colin & Denise Berry  
Darren & Narelle Trippett  
Darren Bennet & Vanessa Reid  
Diane & Ray Marsh  
Doug Evans & Pip Charlton  
Douglas & Helen Bell  
Fran & Graham Jennings  
Greg and Angie MacMillan  
Helen Richards  
Jackie Hamlet  
Jan Cranwell & Phil Styles

Jane & Peter Russ  
John Devling  
John & Moira Robertson  
Judith Ellerton  
Kay & Rod Armstrong  
Kaye and Hugh McRae  
Kevin & Margo Heeley  
Liz & Peter Laver  
Liz Clarkson  
Mark Gardner  
Michael Shead & Nicole Vallack  
Mick & Suzanne Craine  
Neroli Merridew

Nev Ragg & Janet Meade  
Nicole Noy & Ross Coupar  
Paul & Jenny Mitchell  
Paul Danelutti  
Peter Benda & Sonja Pedell  
Sally Corrigan  
Tony & Anna Gleeson  
Tony & Brigid Bell  
Tim Lang & Tina McCarthy  
Viv Murphy  
Warwick & Carol Leeson  
Veronica Holland

Joining the Christmas Hills Landcare Group means meeting neighbours, building relationships, gaining knowledge and skills, accessing projects designed to assist you, helping each other, working together, and showing your support for what we do.

If you own or manage land in Christmas Hills, we would love you to join us! It only costs \$20 for your first year - you get a member's gate sign, a community benefit card for the Yarra Glen IGA, and are added to the email list to get you in the communication loop - then it is only a \$10 annual renewal fee.



Please encourage your neighbours to join, and don't forget to renew your membership!

# Group Health

Each year the Christmas Hills Landcare Group undertakes a group 'health check'. This is a self-assessment based on feedback from members, typically conducted at the AGM.

Group health element	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	10/11	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>1. Vision / direction</b> – How clear is your group about where it is going and what it is trying to achieve in the longer term?	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
<b>2. Purpose / role</b> – How clear is your group about its purpose and the role it plays in achieving its goals?	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5
<b>3. Action Planning</b> – How good is your group at planning, designing and delivering activities that help it achieve its goals?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>4. Leadership</b> – How good is your group at attracting, inducting and changing over people in leadership roles?	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4
<b>5. Management structure and systems</b> – How effective is your group's management structure and its internal systems? (such as decision-making, managing finances, communicating to the rest of the group)	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
<b>6. External profile</b> – How well known and respected is your group and its goals by your local landholders and wider community?	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3
<b>7. Financial resources</b> – How strong is your group's financial base and how good is your group at attracting financial support when required?	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>8. People resources</b> – How good is your group at attracting and retaining members?	4	3	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	4
<b>9. Information resources</b> – How good is your group at accessing the information it needs, either its own knowledge base or finding it out from external sources?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>10. Networks</b> – How well-connected (eg partnerships, regular contact, etc.) is your group to other groups and organisations that can help it to achieve its goals?	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4
<b>11. Confidence</b> – How confident is your group to try new approaches or methods, and/or tackle new issues?	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>12. Human capital</b> – How good is your group at using and developing the skills and experience of its members?	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5
<b>13. Social capital</b> – How strong are the social relationships between members of your group, and how good is your group at building and maintaining these relationships?	3	3	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5
<b>14. External support</b> – How easy is it for your group to access external support when it needs it?	3	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	5

(Rating scores are based on a 5-point scale where 1 = "Very poor", 3 = "OK", and 5 = "Excellent")

# Partnerships

The CHLG aims to form mutually-beneficial partnerships with others who share our objectives.

### **Nillumbik Landcare Network**

CHLG is one of eleven Landcare groups that form the Nillumbik Landcare Network (NLN), which is supported by a part-time Landcare Facilitator, Colin Broughton, employed by Nillumbik Shire Council. After doing some strategic conservation planning in 2014, the NLN identified a need for a simple and cost-effective way of measuring the ongoing, long-term health of the remnant forest and woodlands that are prevalent in Nillumbik.

The idea of using motion-sensing cameras and sound recorders at a number of fixed monitoring sites across the shire to collect data on some of the fauna present emerged, from which it is hoped to generate 'forest health indices' that will provide us with a measure of forest condition. The CHLG has supported this project with the provision of cameras and sound recorders by including their cost in some of our grant applications. A philanthropic grant has enabled the NLN to engage a person to deploy and retrieve the equipment and the first years' data has been collected ready for analysis. Another application is being prepared to continue the project for another three years.



The NLN has also initiated regular meetings with the three councillors that cover rural Nillumbik, with the view to securing council actions that support the efforts of the network and its member groups.

### **Nillumbik Shire Council**

The Nillumbik Shire Council (NSC) hosts the Victorian Government-funded 'Nillumbik Conservation Futures' project, which in 2017 funded the traditional burn site assessments, as well as the 'Return of the Wurundjeri Firestick' event. The council also contributed the expertise of their Land Management Officer, Julia Franco, to the pre-burn monitoring.

### **Christmas Hills Fire Brigade**

During 2017 CHLG continued to work closely with Peter Mildenhall from the brigade on the Firescape program, with a focus on finding a suitable location for a community event focussed on traditional burning.

### **Wurundjeri people**

With the 'Wurundjeri Tanderrum' and the 'Return of the Wurundjeri Firestick' events, 2017 saw the CHLG consolidate its relationship with the Traditional Owners of Christmas Hills, and this is expected to continue into 2018 and beyond.

# Promotion

The Christmas Hills Landcare Group maintains its profile through five main means:

**Website** - where we post newsletters and project and event details:

<http://portphillipwesternport.landcarevic.org.au/Christmashills>

Our website is hosted on the Victorian Landcare Gateway which underwent a major overhaul in 2016. We have endeavoured to update the new version and details of projects, and copies of previous annual reports, are now available.

**Facebook** - where we post items of interest and reach out to a new audience. At the end of 2017 we had 92 people who like our page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Christmas-Hills-Landcare/151667101570175?sfrm>

**Newsletters** - occasional emails to all members to keep them informed of upcoming events, project opportunities and other news of relevance.

**Gate signs** - for each member to illustrate their support and to show the extent of our membership in the community.

**Sandwich board** - to show passers-by that an event is on and demonstrating we are an active group.



The Summer edition (January 2017) of the Victorian Catchment and Landcare Magazine featured an article on the approaches that the CHLG take to connect people to nature.

# Finances

	Opening balance 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2017	Plus receipts	Less expenses	Transfers*	Closing balance 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2017
<b>Group funds</b>					
Memberships and donations	1,294.91	280.00	-280.00 <sup>1</sup>	-181.96	1,183.95
Ritchies	277.23	139.92		0.00	417.15
Admin	1,314.90	2,743.00	-508.20 <sup>2</sup>	-1,297.59	2,252.11
Events	1,593.01	7,337.00	-3,637.35 <sup>3</sup>	0.00	5,292.66
<b>Group funds total</b>	<b>4,480.05</b>	<b>10,499.92</b>	<b>-4,354.55<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>-1,479.55</b>	<b>9,156.92</b>
<b>Project grant funds</b>					
Pest animal control <sup>4</sup>	3,162.50		-4,631.00	1,468.50 <sup>5</sup>	0.00
Fauna monitoring	1,761.43	3,700.00			5,461.43
Orchid project	2,534.00	4,676.00	-2,534.00		4,676.00
Firescape	734.34	1,096.00	-1,118.12	22.12	734.34
Pygmy Possum & Owl boxes	3,340.00		-2,461.66		878.34
Nillumbik-wide monitoring	3,750.00	2,609.00	-5,438.93	-11.07	909.00
Woody weeds stage 5	1,692.79		-881.50		811.29
Woody weeds stage 7		3,836.00	-1,058.31		2,777.69
Woody weeds stage 8		26,178.00			26,178.00
<b>Grant funds total</b>	<b>16,975.06</b>	<b>42,095.00</b>	<b>-16,655.02</b>	<b>1,479.55</b>	<b>42,415.04</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,455.11</b>	<b>52,594.92</b>	<b>-22,478.07</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>51,571.96</b>

Cash book balance 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 51,571.06  
 Bank balance 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 51,571.06

\* Transfers represent minor over/underspend on projects transferred between similar projects or Group funds.

Group funds expenses include:

- <sup>1</sup> Member gate signs
- <sup>2</sup> Insurance, postage, membership of Landcare Victoria Incorporated (LVI) and tool trailer registration
- <sup>3</sup> Catering, welcome to country, Djirri Djirri dancers and presenter costs for 2017 AGM and Birds of the Night events

<sup>4</sup> 'Pest animal control' combines 'Rabbit control', 'ACUP 1080 subsidies', and 'Fox project' funds from 2016

<sup>5</sup> Group funds were transferred in to enable purchase of the Rodenator unit



**Christmas Hills  
Landcare Group**



*Neighbours caring for our place.....*

<http://portphillipwesternport.landcarevic.org.au/Christmashills>

*(Cover photo: Damien Nicholson and Dharna Nicholson-Bux by Nev Ragg,  
Back page photo: moth and sun orchid by Nev Ragg)*