

## **Victorian Landcare Magazine**

**Issue 2, Summer 1996**

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### **From the Editors**

Welcome to the second issue of the Victorian Landcare Magazine

The magazine was launched amidst much excitement by the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan at the State Landcare Conference held in Ballarat in early October.

We have been delighted by the positive feedback on the magazine we received at the conference, (see our special conference feature on pages 16 and 17) and from readers in general.

In this issue we have tried to include more stories from the farmer and the landcare group perspective. This magazine belongs to the landcare community, to be successful we need your comments, news, stories and letters.

There have been some hiccups with the merging of databases to create the magazine's mailing list. We apologise if you received multiple copies, or maybe none at all. Please let us know so we can make the necessary corrections.

We look forward to hearing from you!

The editors,

Paul Crock, Greg King and Carri Tiffany

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### **Sharing the cost of rural restoration**

An attempt is being made by one of Australia's major natural resource managers to address the vexing question of who should pay to fix Australia's growing land degradation.

The Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) has prepared a discussion paper which it hopes will provide a basis for better informed debate on whether paying for sustainable natural resource management is a private, public or shared responsibility among landholders, the community and Governments.

The paper provides one option for a principled and objective approach to determining the public and private benefits of on-ground works, such as revegetation and fencing-off sensitive areas.

The President of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, Professor John Lovering says that experience in irrigation areas has shown that agreement to cost sharing for on-ground works can be a powerful catalyst to drive the large on-ground changes necessary to improve the quality of water flowing from irrigation areas into rivers.

He said that experience with some dryland Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Plans indicated that dryland landholders would support cost sharing negotiations based on a "beneficiary pays" approach which incorporates the principle that a government contribution to on-ground works would be made relative to the level of public benefit.

The MDBC wants individuals and organisations involved in developing and implementing ICM plans to comment on the Cost Sharing Framework so it can determine whether to endorse it as a preferred approach to cost sharing for ICM plans within the Basin.

Copies of the report are available from the MDBC, GPO Box 409, Canberra, ACT 2601 Tel: (06) 279 0100.

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### **Minister announces \$3m boost for Landcare**

#### ***Photo Illustration***

*Minister for Conservation and Land Management Marie Tehan.*

The Victorian Government has announced a \$3 million funding boost for Landcare under the "Landcare Partnership Initiative 2000".

The funding boost coincides with the 10th anniversary of Landcare in Victoria, celebrated in Ballarat last month.

Conservation and Land Management Minister Marie Tehan told 350 delegates at the conference that Victoria's prosperity was directly linked to the effective management of natural resources.

"Landcare plays a vital role in the management, restoration and protection of these natural resources, and the State Government is committed to supporting these programs through sustainable agriculture and land management policies, strengthened by on-ground funding."

Mrs Tehan said the \$3 million included \$1.55 million for on-ground community projects on a sub-catchment, catchment or regional basis.

"Victoria's 10 catchment and land protection boards have recently announced their draft regional catchment strategies which will help set directions and priorities for integrated natural resource management. This funding will assist Landcare groups to target priority issues identified in the strategies."

A further \$1.2 million would be available to fund the appointment of community-based regional Landcare group coordinators, Mrs Tehan said.

"These people will assist with group formation, skill development, information exchange and develop networks with other programs and organisations."

She called on business to get behind Landcare and contribute through Landcare Foundation Victoria to sponsor projects.

Mrs Tehan said \$110,000 would be allocated to the Landcare Victoria Foundation 1996-97 and 1997-98, including \$50,000 to match private sector funding and \$60,000 to fund the secretariat during the next two years.

The Landcare Foundation is the Victorian Committee of Landcare Australia Limited and has a charter to obtain sponsorship funding for Landcare projects in Victoria. The committee is lead by Melbourne City Councillor Wellington Lee and involves business and Landcare representatives.

"The Government relies strongly on its partnership with the community and by involving more private sector organisations we can continue to build on Landcare's success in rural and urban areas," Mrs Tehan said.

For further information about the Landcare Partnership Initiative contact your regional office of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

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## **Waterwatch Victoria best net site in the country!**

### ***Photo Illustration***

*John Steele from Mansfield Secondary College and Vera Lubczenko, the Victorian Waterwatch Co-ordinator with the Waterwatch Victoria Internet Awards.*

"It was like winning the Logies," Vera Lubczenko was raving after the Waterwatch Victoria Internet Site scooped the pool at the Australian Financial Review/Telstra Inaugural Australian Internet Awards.

From a total of more than 600 entries, Waterwatch Victoria won both the Community and Special Interest and Secondary Education categories. The awards recognise excellence in Internet design and application.

Vera Lubczenko, the co-ordinator of the Victorian Waterwatch Program brought the site to life in July 1996. It is another facet of the Victorian statewide Waterwatch program which provides technical, curriculum and funding co-ordination as well as co-ordination in communication.

Vera said the site provides information, and a forum area where groups are encouraged to share information about projects, events, findings, equipment. "It uses innovative graphics and animation, and has a state of the art 'chat' or forum area.

"Although we have only been live for three months, the site has attracted a huge amount of interest with around 3,500 visitors weekly. The Herald Sun highlighted it as a 'hot site' and it featured at a recent community water quality monitoring conference held in the United States," she said.

Vera said the awards were extra special because Waterwatch is a community project. "We have nothing to sell or promote expect our knowledge and the desire to get as many people as possible involved in water quality."

"The Victorian Waterwatch site is one of a number of Waterwatch Internet sites being developed, including a Waterwatch Australia parent site. The sites provide the potential

share information about community water quality monitoring, locally, regionally and internationally," she said.

Gregory Hywood, Publisher-Editor in Chief of The Australian Financial Review, said that the competition had been an enormous success, substantially raising the awareness of the Australian Internet community both locally and internationally.

"The Awards are an ideal outlet to pay tribute to the outstanding developments taking place in this country and the competition will now be conducted on an annual basis. The winners and all finalists in the inaugural competition were of world-class standard and are a credit to our local developers." he said.

The Waterwatch Internet site was launched by the Deputy Premier, Pat McNamara and the Treasurer and Minister for Multimedia, Alan Stockdale at the Interact Expo in October.

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### **Planning your National Landcare Program Application (NLP)**

Now is the time to start planning your National Landcare Program (NLP) funding applications for 1997/1998.

The call for NLP projects is likely to occur in January 1997 and applications will close 6-8 weeks later.

Some landcare groups already have goals and objectives and know what kinds of projects will help meet their needs. NLP applications should help meet the goals of your group and be consistent with your Regional Catchment and Land Protection Board's Regional Catchment Strategy.

Some of the projects that were successful in the 1996/97 NLP round included:

- Actions to protect and repair riparian vegetation.
- Demonstrations of sustainable farming management systems.
- Aerial photography as a basis for planning catchment management by a landcare network.
- Identification and management of saline soils.
- GIS for sub-catchment assessment of soil problems and weed infestations, as well as workshops to communicate the results to groups.
- Demonstrations on maximising crop and pasture water use.

Planning your application can also help with the problem of "getting the money too late."

At present it is not known what funding is available for 1997/98 but it may well be September/October or even November before the necessary agreements can be signed. Keep this in mind when planning your application. If your group wants to plant trees the funding may not be available until Autumn or the following Spring.

Assistance with preparing grant applications is available from local landcare group coordinators, and Department of Natural Resource & Environment Landcare Facilitators. Departmental NLP contact officers will be able to assist you in clarifying guidelines for eligibility.

Members of your local Catchment and Land Protection Board should also be able to offer assistance.

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## **Water Grants Launched Hills 2 Ocean**

The South Gippsland Region Water Authority has launched a grants scheme aimed at helping landowners within water supply catchment areas in South Gippsland.

The H2O grants scheme was launched at the South Gippsland Landcare Network meeting in July, by the Authority's Chief Executive Officer, Steve Evans.

Mr Evans said, "the idea is to make funds available for projects that will improve the quality of water running off the land into water supplied.

"The Authority is working with landcare and Waterwatch because these community-based groups share a common interest in water quality which relies on good land management. Revegetation, including tree planting, stabilisation of stream beds, fencing and off-stream stock watering systems are examples of projects that could attract one of these grants."

Two grants of \$500 each will be announced at the quarterly South Gippsland Network meetings. Applications for grants will be judged by the Authority with representatives from Landcare, Waterwatch and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

For a grant application form or more information, contact the Authority's Environment Officer, Max Thomas on 056 821 222.

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## **Donald's flying eye**

### ***Photo Illustrations***

*Trevor Campbell became involved in the aerial video project through his love of flying.*

*Trevor Campbell from Donald, (L) and John Boadle from St Arnaud have been working together to get the aerial video system ready for landcare groups.*

Three friends from Donald, in north west Victoria, are on the lookout for a Cessna - 172 plane door. Trevor Campbell, and Neil Postlethwaite, cropping farmers, and John Boadle, from Natural Resources and Environment at St Arnaud, have been working together over the past four years to get an aerial video system up and running.

Having spent much time perfecting the technical aspects of the system, and choosing a digital video camera, Trevor, John and Neil now need a plane door to fix the camera to.

"Then the camera and door can be attached to any plane," said John. "Most country airports have a Cessna available for hire and any landcare group can easily use our system."

Trevor, Neil and John say their aerial video approach goes hand in hand with precision farming and they will use the video images in conjunction with yield mapping to detect crop variation.

### **trial and error**

The inspiration for the system was ignited about ten years ago. Neil Postlethwaite had been wanting to do crop monitoring for a long time.

"Dad and I flew up to Moree in the mid eighties to buy a header, and when we came home we flew over the farm. We were surprised by what you could see. We hired a plane and started taking photos in different ways. First we took them out the plane window which was no good and then we tried taking them using a plane with a hole in the floor, which was better."

Trevor continues, "I'd been looking at the farm from the air for twenty years, and my memory just didn't do the job. I started to get interested in taking photos from the air, and that's when I got together with Postlethwaite. In 1992 our local discussion group went on a trip to Neville Sharpe's in South Australia. He was using video and infra-red and that started us thinking about it."

The flying video camera project is driven by the Avon-Richardson Salinity Management Plan Implementation Working Group. Trevor, who is Chairman of the group, explains the philosophy behind the project.

"Our group's aim is to use the rain where it falls. Up here, we must grow the best possible crops we can, so we can keep the watertable down. This also makes economic sense."

Funding for the purchase of the equipment will come from a number of Landcare Groups. Donald Landcare Group, together with Landcare Groups from Charlton, Swanwater, Birchip, and Watchem West are all willing to put money in to set the project up. These Landcare groups will then hire the outfit to other interested groups.

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## **Landcare from the AIR**

by Tess Goodwin

### ***Photo Illustration***

*An aerial flight picked up this outbreak of flowering raddish missed by a spray contractor.*

### **Trouble Spots in the paddock**

The beauty of the flying video camera, is that it identifies trouble spots in a paddock. "Usually when you have a look at your paddock, you go in the gate or get over the fence where the barbed wire is broken, or at the side of the road where you stop your car, and you end up looking at the same spot every year," Neil said.

We had a paddock with a bad infestation of pasture lufers the other year," said Neil. "The lufers wiped out the crop in an area that we hadn't walked. More recently we spotted an infestation of aphids by looking at an infra red photo and so we got a plane out the next day to spray them."

John predicts big savings for users of the aerial video technique in the future. "By targeting spraying or fertiliser application to the areas that can be identified from the photos, the costs will drop enormously," said John. "This will also have add on environmental benefits."

The optimum time to use the aerial video technique is in the growing season, once the crop is establish. Around October it can be used to check for insect attacks, and it has also proved very effective to assist with soil mapping in the summer months. "A lot of farmers in

the past who used conventional cultivation had a good understanding of what their soils were like," said Neil. "But in our situation, using minimum tillage, we aren't involved with the soil as much, and so we need to take a look at it from the air."

**Aerial video - how does it work?**

A TV viewer is mounted on the plane's dashboard, next to a Global Positioning System (GPS). Two people are needed in the plane - one to fly it and one to record their position and keep an eye on the video equipment. Usually the farmer will also go up for a ride and let the pilot know exactly where his paddock is.

Once the required paddocks are captured on video, the tapes are either viewed through a VCR, or individual frames can be scanned, and prints produced through a computer.

The technique is a very flexible tool and can also be used to look at soil compaction, stubble burning, soil fertility, and salinity.

Work has already been done on identifying salinity trouble spots along channels. It has huge potential for mapping fox dens and rabbit burrows. It even shows how stock graze a paddock.

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**Powlett Volunteers play the tune**

***Photo Illustrations***

*The blustery conditions lifted for an enjoyable BBQ lunch for the orchestra provided by Wonthaggi Rotary.*

*Scott Brain discusses species selection on the banks of the Powlett River with Landcare Australia board member Margaret Scott from Western Australia and volunteers from BHP.*

*Martin Fuller, Bass Landcare Coordinator points out the magnitude of the project to Sir James Hardie, Chairman of the National Landcare Foundation.*

*The Powlett Patron and Minister for Transport the Hon. Alan Brown presents Michael Power president of the Bass Valley Landcare Group with a copy of the new Telstra Landcare Communications Pack.*

The second weekend of November saw the start of what will become a regular event on the Landcare calendar. Over 200 volunteers from across the state and the world congregated in the Powlett River Catchment in South Gippsland to plant nearly 30,000 trees from the upper reaches of the catchment to the sea.

Kate Walsh, Greening Australia's Gippsland facilitator summed up the efforts of the organisers and volunteers in her speech following a lavish BBQ lunch on the Sunday:

"We are very fortunate in Gippsland. We have the National Landcare Primary Producer Award winners, Tom and Sue Loughridge.

Tom and Sue and the Jeetho West Landcare Group, have shown us that conservation can be combined with highly productive dairy farming.

With other pioneering Landcare groups such as Archies Creek, they have set a theme, written a tune. A theme of agricultural productivity, water quality, habitat and a friendly co-operative community.

Now, with the Powlett Project, covering a whole catchment, we have brought in a full symphony orchestra to play the theme.

During our planning meetings, I couldn't help thinking what a brilliant conductor Rob Youl is. Rob did a magnificent job bringing us all together, facilitating, catalysing and incorporating our different melodies.

But someone has to make sure that everything actually happens on the ground. Bass Landcare coordinator, Martin Fuller, along with other local Landcare coordinators, Scott Brain and David Zeibell and other Department of Natural Resources and Environment staff, have been working on all the details - making sure chairs and musicians are in the right place and the instruments are finely tuned. There has been an enormous amount of behind the scenes work.

Singing the song we have the nurseries who have cooperated to produce a range of local forest and understory species suitable for each site - including our own Gippsland Mallee and the Strzelecki Swamp Gum. These nurseries are all dedicated revegetation specialists and invaluable assets to the Powlett Project.

Then there are our talented and dedicated musicians - all of you and many more besides have been involved - farmers, volunteers - both local and international, local Shires, Powlett Primary School, Water Watch, Fly Fishermen, NRCL, Tree Project, Rotary, and other community groups - and very importantly, Landcare Australia and the sponsors who have supported us so well.

Are they violins playing in the Korumburra hills? Wind instruments perhaps? Brian Enbom and his team are planting back the Blue Gum forests in gullies and on landslips. This is Giant Earthworm country - did any volunteers hear them gurgle?

Archies Creek Reafforestation Group are continuing their superb riparian planting. I've walked through this baby forest with Mick Bolding and Paul Speirs and, where there was once a degraded stream, I've seen fish swimming in crystal clear water.

In the Mid Powlett the river is being renovated with willow removal, fencing and planting. For farmers it's been a long wet winter with frequent flooding and this Powlett project is a fitting way to celebrate the spring. Hopefully Robert Atkinson will once again see platypus in the river.

At Lance Creek there has been more planting as well as Ragwort control. Weed control is crucial in maintaining production and conservation values.

I guess we're getting into percussion once we reach the coast. This site is in the flight path of the threatened Orange Bellied Parrot as it migrates between Tasmania and the mainland. The parrots rely on coastal saltmarsh and grasslands. Coast Action and ATCV have been planting, removing litter and collecting seed for future dune stabilisation.

Clive Hollins and the Angling Club have been planting salt tolerant melaleuca around the wetlands at the mouth of the river.

That is only some of the orchestra.



The Powlett Project has catalysed enormous action within the catchment and will inspire further work - not only here but statewide, perhaps Australia wide. It has brought city and country together and has benefited the entire community. Thank you for all you have done and for being a part of this symphony orchestra.

For more information contact: Martin Fuller (056) 743 516.

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## **Camels Trek for Water Week**

### ***Photo Illustration***

*Students from Shepparton South Secondary College testing water from the junction of the Murray and Goulbourn Rivers.*

So what's the link between camels and Water Week? As a lead up to National Water Week, October 20-25, and the 40th anniversary of the construction of the Eildon Weir, seven camels travelled from the junction of the Goulbourn and Murray Rivers, just east of Echuca, to Eildon Weir.

The trekkers stopped at schools along the way for activities relating to water with 2,000 local students. They collected water from the Goulbourn River and tributaries and tested it for salinity, turbidity, pH and temperature.

The students report on each day's activities and the test results were posted on the Internet by the Shepparton Science and Technology Centre for waterwatchers and others to follow the progress of the camels.

The Minister for Land Management, Marie Tehan met the trekkers when they arrived at Eildon. She tipped a water sample that had been collected from the start of the trek into the weir and thereby officially launched National Water Week.

By all accounts the trek was a huge success. It raised awareness in the whole community of water quality issues and the wonderful work of students who monitor their local waterways. The camel trek showed how the old world can meet the new. The camels, water carters from ancient times were broadcast around the globe by the technology of the future, the Internet.

To visit the site on the Internet go to <http://www.netc.net.au/stc/camel.html>. Here are some extracts from the Internet diary of the camel trek:

### **Day 1 - 9th October, 1996**

#### **MORNING - Stewart's Bridge, near Echuca**

The Camel Trek started this morning near the confluence of the Goulbourn and the Murray River. The Principal of the Science and Technology Centre in Shepparton, Mr Ralph Shaw took a water sample from the Goulbourn River. It was tested by students from Shepparton South Secondary College and then loaded onto the camels to be carried back to Eildon Weir.

The students entered the test results directly onto the Internet with a laptop computer and a mobile phone then the camels were waved off on their journey.

### **Confluence of Goulbourn and Murray Rivers**

Turbidity 42NTU's (Nephelometric Turbidity Units)  
Conductivity 100 EC's  
Temperature (degree's C) 17.5

### **AFTERNOON - Wyuna, near Kyabram**

The Camels visited the property of Peter Bedford of Wyuna where Goulbourn Murray Landcare Network were running a field day for local farmers, demonstrating the achievements of the Watertable Watch Program and other community monitoring programs.

The arrival of the camels stopped the field day in its tracks, irrigators from right across Australia were fascinated by the spectacle.

Students from Echuca tested water from the Campaspe River and compared it with the water Quality in the Goulbourn River. The students found the Campaspe River to be more saline than the Goulbourn River, but less turbid.

### **Campaspe River**

Turbidity 25NTU's  
Conductivity 230 EC's  
Temperature (degree's C) 16

### **Day 2 - 10th October, 1996**

#### **AFTERNOON - Mooroopna Primary School**

Today we were visited by the camels from the Water Week trek. The camels come from Steve and Lise who own a camel farm near Mansfield called High Country Camel Treks.

A camel has 8 toes, two on each foot and carry fat in their hump. They weigh 300 kilos and it takes 12 months to have a calf. Humans live twice as long as camels. In the desert they live longer than in captivity. There are 220 varieties of food they can eat in the desert. Their top teeth are very sharp so they can eat grass in the tree tops.

The camels are camping near the swamp and are giving rides for \$3.00. Abdul the oldest, has been around for 16 years, Hannah for 8 years and Humphrey for 3 years.

David Hodgkins gave a talk to six groups of children at our school about water catchments. We did a turbidity test for the water from the Goulbourn River near Mooroopna. It was 30 NTU's.

By Alana Hellwege and Mathew Garthwaite from Mooroopna Primary School.

### **Goulbourn River Shepparton**

Turbidity 29 NTU's  
Conductivity 90 EC's  
Temperature (degree's C) 16

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### **Salinity, another challenge for North east Victoria**

By Gib Wettenhall

### **Overview**

Fine wool merinos and black beef cattle grazing on lush, green hillsides, framed by the snow-covered peaks of the Victorian Alps. Such idyllic, picture postcard, pastoral scenes are a common sight in the Ovens, Kiewa and Mitta catchments of north east Victoria.

But there is a serpent lying hidden in this Eden. Below the surface, groundwater levels are rising between 20 cm and 100 cm per year.

"The highest known rates of rise in the state," says Denis Martin, the regional facilitator for Greening Australia and the chairman of the North east Salinity Working Group.

North east Victoria wasn't supposed to have a problem with salinity. It was high rainfall country with over 600 mm annually - enough to leach the salt away, or so the theory went. But with the removal of vegetation coverage over the last century the groundwater has risen as steadily as water rising in a bath. Salt patches are starting to pop up all over the region.

"The area of salt affected land has increased tenfold over the last five years, from 250 ha in 1993/94 to a current estimate of 2,500 ha," says Denis.

A bore on a knoll near the Everton Upper Primary School exposes the story hidden below ground. In 1987, the groundwater was 10 metres below the surface. Today, it is four metres and still rising.

Twenty members of the Hodgsons and Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Groups are gathered at the Everton Primary School. They have just taken part in a meeting to distribute chemicals for roadside weed control.

Many are immediately on their guard when Denis Martin arrives and says he has brought a journalist along to see what steps they are taking to reverse the creeping salinity.

"We're sick of doom and gloom from the media," a voice from the surrounding ring of landholders says with feeling. "Salt is just another challenge to be overcome," another voice asserts. "It's just one of many," they chorus.

The 50 members of the Hodgsons and Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Group, along with similar numbers in surrounding landcare groups, constitute the frontline in the battle against salinity.

Close as a too-small rural school, the Upper Everton Primary School has gained a new lease of life as the headquarters for the Hodgsons and Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Groups, which covers an area of 18,000 ha stretching from Beechworth to Wangaratta.

The demise of the Upper Everton Primary School is symptomatic of the decline of community facilities in the country. Its continuity as a headquarters for one of the last rural networks linking landholders has a sense of symbolism which is not lost on the landcare groups' members.

A man of wry humour, Landcare coordinator Royce Sample comments that there are a lot of needs "out there" with precious else left to fill them other than landcare. A mid-western American by birth, he's seen it all before in the dust storms of Oklahoma.

In Oklahoma, the community pulled together and turned the land degradation around. "Victoria's very similar to Oklahoma in many ways," says Royce. "We can do it here too."

Landcare projects have encouraged and resourced many demonstrations aimed at halting salinity. Some of these projects are highlighted in this special feature of Victorian Landcare.

"We hope to have a snowball effect from demonstrations like these," says Denis Martin.

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### **Lindsay Humphry: Agroforestry on a recharge site**

Lindsay Humphry's father knocked the trees down. Lindsay's planting them. It's an increasingly common tale.

Chairman of the Springhurst and Byawatha Hills Landcare Group in North east Victoria, Lindsay estimates that there are 90 landholders in the district planting trees compared with only two or three 15 years ago.

With Land Protection Incentive Scheme (LPIS) funding, Lindsay put in a 15 ha agroforest block on a hilltop recharge site. "I couldn't see the sense in just growing trees for their own sake," he remarked.

The vigorously growing agroforestry belts stretch down either side of the paddock. Three rows wide, Lindsay planted a mix of tube stock from local provenance as well as native imports, with the dominant species being Red and Yellow Box, Red Gum and Ironbark.

Acacias on the outside rows provide habitat and their root systems are less invasive of the pasture. The acacias were direct seeded by adapting a vegetable seeder.

Three piezometers on site demonstrate there has been a substantial two meter lowering of the watertable.

Conventional fencing is needed to keep out stock in the early years. "If they get in the wrong time, they can do a lot of damage," Lindsay remarked.

Even when the trees have reached sufficient height, allowing sheep into the agroforestry belts for more than a week or so will spoil their shelter effect, Lindsay pointed out. Sheep will eat the trees to knee height, creating a wind tunnel at ground level. Although Lindsay has found through experience that there are some trees - such as the Golden Wattle, (*Acacia pycnantha*) and Varnish Wattle (*Acacia verniciflua*) - which sheep won't touch.

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### **Ron Briggs: Revegetation from remnants**

A mountain cattleman who bought into the plains country, Ron Briggs, has learnt to value trees. Plentiful as they were in the high country, he had always taken the ready availability of trees for granted. His attitude changed with the discovery of salt patches on his property in 1993.

"Denis took me under his wing," remembers Ron, who is now treasurer of the Hodgsons and Horseshoe Creek Landcare Group. As a previous coordinator of the landcare group, Denis Martin sourced funds to plant out a recharge area of some 20 acres on the hilltop with indigenous species. Funding through Land Protection Incentive Scheme (LPIS) also helped

fence off four remnant patches of Red Box and Red Stringybark for regeneration as plantations. Removing stock grazing pressure by fencing seems to be the key to widespread regeneration. "All I had to do was fence it off," was how Ron described his success.

In areas reclaimed from pasture or areas fenced to protect trees, it is important to control weeds and vermin. "You can't just fence and forget," Ron said. Ron has sown the remaining area to a mixture of phalaris, cocksfoot and clover. The combination of trees and deep-rooted pasture helps dry out the soil profile and prevent excess water reaching the watertable.

Ron has found that the shelter offered by the trees helps his cattle: "Especially in winter when its dirty and cold, and the wind would cut you in two."

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### **1996 State Land care Conference**

#### **Comments**

"We started planting trees on our property for cattle, however we kept on going, realising the benefit of tree planting for countering erosion." - Tome and Sue Loughridge.

"People in the wool industry need to take control of their own future, not rely on things out there to change." - Heather Shaw.

"when we were farming traditionally our farm became like a drug addict. The more we put in the more the land demanded to achieve a satisfactory yield." - Bill Twig.

"Landcare has always been good business. Good farmers don't have landcare problems and the markets are moving towards rewarding them through QA systems." - Russell Sully.

"Our biggest task is to modify grower attitudes through education and training." - Lionel Ward.

"We arranged for an explosives technician to give a very dramatic demonstration on the only method to destroy burrows under large granite boulders." - Mark Lee.

"If it is a question of increasing milk production versus environment and natural resource management restraints what would be your response?" - Ian Wood.

"through landcare we have a valuable network giving access to the best information and programs available to landholders for a sustainable future." - Peter Miles.

"The challenge is to repackage the art of technology transfer to make it palatable to all growers regardless of their level of skill." - Greg Rankin.

"At the conference I discovered some new things that are working in landcare that have not been tried in my area." - Landcare Group member, Gippsland.

"We need to create some mess and confusion on the otherwise ordered landscape if we are to quickly attract the range of birds, animals and insects to commence to long haul back to a balanced ecosystem." - John Fenton.

"Participation is now at 68% up from 38% in 1993. Yet in the big picture we've only just started implementing what we need to do." - Kevin Knight.

Proceedings from the conference will be sent to all participants in December. Jo Safstrom from DNRE is co-ordinating the preparation proceedings, she can be contacted on (03) 9412 4382.

### **Conference Outcomes**

This is a summary of the key outcomes and comments made by participants at the State Landcare Conference in Ballarat during early October.

The Participants recommended that the outcomes of the conference should be published in the new Landcare magazine. Here they are, there is plenty of food for thought.

The Victorian Landcare Magazine would value your suggestions on how we can follow-up these comments and outcomes with useful stories and articles.

The Conference Management Committee is currently drawing together the outcomes of the conference for action by the Catchment and Land Protection Advisory system.

### **OUTCOMES**

Edited by Mal Brown

- Tourism is an opportunity waiting to happen to landcare.  
We need a costed 100 year plan for landcare. We need to understand the scale of the problems and solutions.
- Diversity makes farms both happy and healthy.
- Values need to be brought back to our wastelands, roads and remnant vegetation.  
A positive dynamic peak body is needed for landcare.
- Safeguards are needed to ensure that a production focus doesn't obliterate landcare outcomes.
- Provide each area with professional signs giving a 1800 number for access to regional landcare information.
- Know your community - they are not homogeneous.
- Create the landcare ethic in urban communities. Get urban communities involved in eco tourism. Increase urban publicity.
- Facilitators can be a force to bring in new players.
- Communication is a two way process. Where are we going to, and why? How can I get there?
- To get corporate sponsorship, the sponsors need to know what's in it for them.
- Corporate sponsorship is good because landcare groups become more responsible for money rather than expecting it from government.
- Change the extension model. We can no longer assume that everyone is a full time farmer.
- Training keeps the group fresh and skilled up. It helps better planning and communication.
- Incorporate messages through projects or themes like Project Platypus.
- Encourage Property Management Plans and integrate landcare into the natural resource management component.
- Local government should be more involved in landcare; but it is up to us to make it happen.
- Simple incentives, like rate rebates, can produce big results.
- New people to the district should be treated as an opportunity not a problem.

- Local government should maintain and promote information on land capability and land use zones.
- The focus in the wool industry should be to manage the farm as a system, and the sub-systems within it.
- Quality assurance is a positive force for change.
- There are many dimensions to sustainability: finance, succession, landscape.
- We don't understand sustainability.
- When adopting best management practices, accept that we will make mistakes. But, keep on making progress.
- Cannot avoid each individual's cold hard learning curve, but you can make it less damaging to the environment.
- Realistic dreams are the first thing needed by small scale farmers.
- Use structured adjustment funds to allow buy back so that families can exit rural ghettos with dignity. This will reduce the social, environmental and economic costs.
- Enforcement must be available as an option.
- Does the dairy industry really understand the productivity vs sustainability dilemma?
- The Government needs to communicate its commitment to landcare, particularly given the reductions in services and staff.
- Stop wasting time in National Landcare Program funding and get jobs on the ground.

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## **Landcare Links - Bringing Landcare and Schools Together**

By Tarnya Kruger

### ***Photo illustration***

*Students from Ballarat High School fulfilling a 'work requirement' on a farm near Creswick.*

Landcare Links is a project proposal which aims to match the needs and priorities of landcare groups with skills, enthusiasm and curriculum of local educational institutions. The coordinator is Gayl Morrow, a past participant of the Landcare for Education Course working with Tarnya and Trish from the Creswick Landcare Centre.

Gayl is currently surveying landcare groups and schools in the Ballarat area to find out what they are doing in the landcare area, what needs to be done and to begin planning for the future. The survey will provide data on the current levels and types of involvement which will help with evaluation down the track. We would like to see the centre operating as a catalyst, assisting schools and Landcare groups in working together on projects for the region.

### **Landcare Centre a catalyst**

A good example of the way the project would work came about just recently. The Creswick Landcare Centre was approached by three Year 11 students from Ballarat High School hoping to be able to fulfil a work requirement for English, a 'communication project'. The girls were interested in organising a tree planting day, they would 'recruit' a class if we could suggest a farm or location that needed assistance in such an activity.

Six weeks later, the school bus rolled up to Colin Loader's farm near Cattle Station north-west of Creswick - with 16 'volunteer' Year 10 students, two enthusiastic teachers and the three instigators.

The three students demonstrated to the group the finer parts of tree planting. The ground was very wet at the time so we all squelched around in teams of three busily planting. In

around three hours two major shelter beds and a rocky section of the farm were planted - over six hundred trees!

**"that was cool..."**

The day was a great success. Without any prodding the students came out with statements like "that was cool", "had a terrific time", "great to do it again", "it will be good to see the trees grow", a couple of students even talked about agriculture and conservation as career options.

The Year 11 students undoubtedly completed their work requirement and positive interaction resulted amongst the students, teachers, the farmer and us. The school is keen to follow on in the future with similar activities.

We hope to see many more of these events happening. The Landcare Links project will endeavour to map out possibilities for increasing involvement throughout the Ballarat community. This information should prove to be useful and adaptable for other regions around the state.

For further information contact Tarnya Kruger at the Creswick Landcare Centre on (053) 452 200.



**Regent Honeyeater Project Takes off at Lurg**

By Ray Thomas

After months of intensive effort, the on-ground action to save the Regent Honey Eater is really starting to show at Lurg and surrounding districts. Landholders in the Molyullah-Tatong and Greta Valley Landcare areas are committing themselves to a major project to protect and restore the last fragments of the Ironbark forest which once covered the entire foothill slopes from Gelnrowan West to Kilfeera.

Despite the serious dieback and mistletoe infestations, this district is one of three critical habitat areas in Victoria for the endangered Regent Honeyeater. The birds arrive in winter each year to feed on the flowering Ironbarks but we are losing the old habitat trees at an alarming rate. With only 1000 to 1500 of these birds left in the world, it is a really important issue.

**LEAP people spread the word**

Nine local schools, a group of unemployed young people, the Young Landcare Project and DNRE's Land For Wildlife program have all been involved in an effort to assist local landholders with the work. It is a nationally significant project which will show the way for other communities to help endangered wildlife while at the same time improving farm productivity.

During the first half of 1996, the schools and young people on a LEAP scheme propagated thousands of indigenous trees and shrubs to create a better habitat for the local wildlife, including several species which are endangered. The LEAP members also became expert fencing contractors and developed skills as community educators through their efforts to spread the good news around and get others involved in the action.

To ensure strong community participation, all activities during 1995/96 have been aimed at addressing issues that the landholders or teachers themselves see to be important. Rather



than asking already busy people to help the poor honeyeaters, the focus is essentially "What's in it for me?" By tackling issues which local people care about, this project is demonstrating the way to stimulate large scale community participation; ... and this has major importance for endangered species.

### **Serious Dieback Problems**

Visits to properties on a one to one basis have given me every opportunity to address farmers' concerns and present ideas on how the Regent Honeyeater project will be of benefit to farm productivity and sustainable agriculture. Assisting people to understand and address the serious dieback problems throughout the district is giving an open door to protect old trees for habitat because farmers don't want to lose the trees they still have left.

And the approach is working well! Generous responses from almost 100% of local landholders in the district have led to many projects to fence and restore Box-Ironbark remnants on private land. As at June 1996, about 25 km of fencing is either completed or in progress on 35 properties, and there are many other landholders still to visit.

At present the project is gearing up for 6 major planting days involving the local Landcare group, 8 local schools, a new LEAP group, university conservation groups, church groups from Melbourne, service clubs, scouts and guides, retired people, and the Shire is helping with free accommodation for the city visitors. It's a fantastic response from a whole community and we have nearly 15,000 student -n grown indigenous plants to put in the ground in the next few weeks.

For more information contact Ray Thomas or Fran Sorenson on (057) 611 680.

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### **New Powerline Vegetation Management Code for Victoria**

By John B Mewton

Powerline vegetation management in Victoria entered a new era in October this year when the Code of Practice for Powerline Clearance [Vegetation] 1996 came into operation.

The Code seeks to achieve a balance between electrical safety and fire prevention, whilst retaining and enhancing conservation and environmental.

The dimension required for the Clearance Space, which must be maintained clear of vegetation at all times, has not been altered from the previous code.

A new term 'Regrowth Space' has been introduced. Pruning and clearing within this area is subject to consideration of growth patterns of individual tree species, soil conditions and the local environment.

Roadside vegetation adjoining farms is now subject to consultation and negotiation with the adjoining landholder in a similar way to vegetation on the farm. Written agreement from the landholder should be obtained before any vegetation is cut or removed.

In emergency situations a distribution company may cut vegetation if it is encroaching into the Clearance Space, but only to remove the vegetation from the Clearance Space.

Landholders must give approval before any chemicals are used, this is essential to protect on farm quality assurance programs and to prevent chemical residues entering the food chain.

The new Code requires consideration of alternative engineering solutions, if and when appropriate, to tree pruning and/or removal. In most cases a 'common sense' approach to vegetation management in the vicinity of a powerline will deliver the required result.

If agreement cannot be reached the electricity supply distribution company has a dispute resolution process mechanism in place. This in effect means that the complaint should be referred to a senior member of the company and if resolution cannot be achieved then the matter may be referred to a member of the Powerline Clearance Consultative Committee [PCCC] or the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector [OCEI].

Copies of the Code can be obtained from Powercor, Eastern Energy, United Energy, Solaris and City Power, or from Information Victoria on 1800 136 762.

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### **Woorndoo Group tackles salinity**

Dryland salinity management and prevention and the improvement of waterlogged pastures is the focus of the Woorndoo Land Protection Group.

"Rising water tables and dryland salinity across the landscape has been our concern," said Mrs Flora Richardson, secretary of the group.

"We have seen increasing waterlogging and hillside seeps in our pastures," she added.

The President of the landcare group, Mr David Allen, said that the National Landcare Program had provided funding to assist in developing effective farm practices that reverse this degradation and improve the carrying capacity of the land.

The group has received the assistance of scientists from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), and the Co-operative Research Centre for Soil & Land Management (CRC).

Drs Jim Cox and Rob Fitzpatrick from the CRC in Adelaide are using their experience from similar investigations in South Australia and Western Australia and have installed a set of piezometers and data loggers at the property of Barry and Judy Veale at "Glen Eynord", Woorndoo.

The data on water levels together with sampling, soil assessment and analysis will provide an understanding of hydrology in the landscape as a basis for long term drainage and management strategies.

The CRC scientists, in consultation with local landcare members, will prepare a soil assessment manual to assist land managers identify and manage saline and waterlogged layered soils in the Salt Creek catchment, Woorndoo.

The manual is expected to indicate options such as sites for surface interceptor drains, where to establish deep rooted perennial pastures, locations for tree planting, and sites for salt tolerant grasses and fencing in relation to grazing management.

Mrs Richardson said that the Landcare group had already examined a range of local soils to gain a better knowledge of what lay below the surface and would be running field days early in 1997. Visitors were welcome to attend or to seek further information.

For further information contact Lee-anne Minten at DNRE, Hamilton (055 730700) or Mark Seeliger at the CRC in Adelaide (08 9303 8672).

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### **"Robinson at Large"**

By Jim Robinson, Greening Australia Victoria (With Apologies to "Wheels")

#### ***Photo Illustrations***

*Wattle trees produce many potential cash crops, including tannings for leather and wood adhesives, gums, seeds as human food, cut flowers, timber - all potentially value adding industries for regional Victoria.*

*Native wild flower industry based farm production has tremendous potential.*

*Which harvest will bring in the greatest nett returns in 2006?*

A fanciful musing on where we and "sustainable agriculture" may be in 2006??

A fly on the wall in the year 2006 recently sent in this report of a conversation overheard between two farmers, Dave and Ron, in a pub at Donald one morning:

Ron: "Giddy, Dave. How are the crops looking?"

Dave: Great - it's funny but I reckon this year my 10 hectares of Banksia and Drumstick (*Craspedia globosa*) flowers, 3 hectares of Old Man Weed (*Centipedia cunninghamii*) and 15 hectares of Broombush will earn me a greater bottom-line nett cash return than my 700 hectares of wheat, barley, weeping grass, chick peas, glycine and canola!

Ron: But that's only because you have taken that 350 odd hectares out of production and planted it Bulloak, Cypress Pine, Sandalwood and Ironbark timber plantations to help with the salinity recharge. And that Dillon Bush orchard in the salt scalds - I ask you!

Dave: Yeah, I know. And what's more, I'm planting another 30 hectares this year with that new Alcoa planter! It's great - put in 100,000 per day. But, gee, the watertable's continuing to drop on all my bores. We're only monitoring them every six months now, the trend is so solid. Look, I can't yak for too long - in a few minutes, I'm dropping off another load of wattle seed, muntries and yams from my alley farm blocks to the carrier to go to the new Bush Foods and Pharmaceutical's factory at Charlton.

Ron: They make biscuits and bread from the wattle seed for the Japanese export market, don't they?

Dave: Yeah.

Ron: Where the hell is the new factory?

Dave: In the industrial estate between the Kangaroo abattoir and the Native Timbers Furniture factory and across the road from the Woollen Knitwear mill, the solar power engineer, the wattle tannin factory and the Eucalypt oil distillery. Bill Twigg, wearing his Minister for Sustainable Agriculture hat, officially opened it a couple of weeks back.

Ron: They tell me Bill's heading to Canberra - going for PM.

Dave: Yeah, Terry Simpson and that Walsh woman from Strzelecki are fighting over the state job.

Ron: Did I tell ya Les from the Aboriginal Co-op is helping to manage my 50 hectares of NVI Mk2 Conservation Reserve Levy bush blocks and to handle the landcare tourist buses.

Dave: Hey! That's the idea - my Conservation Reserve monthly payments are really adding to my tax problems these days! I should take on someone too, to help manage my remnant bush and reduce my tax at the same time! How's the horehound, smilax, foxes and rabbits?

Ron: All gone now I reckon. A bit of work each year by all members of the Southern Mallee and Wimmera Landcare Networks co-ordinated by the Department and the Shire Landcare Liaison woman, and bobs you're uncle! I've got stacks of Mallee Fowl now - they've bred up like mad. And mounds everywhere. The tourists like 'em though. Look, I must dash too - I'm taking the wife to work; she's nursing at the new hospital. Then I have to pick up the daughter from the Vineland - Donald TAFE term starts next week. Then talk to the bank manager - they're hoping to borrow some money from me to fund the tourist trail extension. Then off to footy training.

Dave: You're playing for the Rovers now - who'd of thought they would be two footy teams in town a few years back, eh!

Ron: Hopefully another flag this year - then I'm giving it away - too old! How's the new ferrari going?

Dave: Great - better mileage from the Eucalypt-tea tree fuel blend than with the old petrol engines. That high oil yielding cultivar developed by the Department at Walpeup did the trick, I heard. The wife's a bit cheesed off though; she wanted to go on a round the world trip instead of getting a new car. It'll have to be next year now.

Ron: Bit different to things a few years back, eh, like in the 1980's and 90's. And workin' half the hours too! Who'd of thought, eh??"

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## **New Chemical Regulations UPDATE**

By Dr Catherine Hollywell, Manager Chemical Standards Branch, Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

### ***Photo Illustration***

*DNRE staff member demonstrating responsible spotspraying practice*

Issue 1 of Victorian Landcare contained a report on new agricultural chemical control of use regulations which were introduced 1 August 1996. The article implied that users must have an insurance policy of at least \$30,000, including liability cover, for property damage and bodily injury. This is not so.

The new controls only require users who are commercial operators to have insurance (commercial operators are defined as persons in the business of applying chemicals for fee or reward).

Victoria is the first state to have reviewed old chemical control legislation and introduced a new control system. Part of the new system requires users of a specific group of chemicals, ie, Schedule 7 dangerous poisons and ester formulations of 2,4-D, MCPA, Triclopyr and 2,4D-B (although no currently registered formulations of 2,4D-B are available), to gain training in the use of agricultural chemicals, have an Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP) and keep records of use of these products.

The chemicals that are being controlled under the new system have been targeted for several reasons. For example, the Schedule 7 dangerous poisons because of the level of concern raised in spraydrift cases. The ester formulations because of their inherent volatility and propensity to drift. Demonstrating to the broader community that these chemicals are being used carefully and safely will improve the chances of such chemicals remaining available in agriculture in the future.

### **Furthering good chemicals management**

Part of DNRE's role is to work with farmers to further their good chemicals management practices. During the first 12 months following the introduction of the new controls the emphasis on activity by Department staff with farmers will be on education and information. It is highly unlikely that during this period any person will be taken to task by DNRE about not having an ACUP. It is however important to understand why a new control system has been introduced.

Farmers being able to demonstrate good farm chemicals management practice helps Victoria promote its clean green image within Australia and overseas. The preservation of this image has enormous trade benefits. Today, community concern about chemicals in the environment and in food puts ever-increasing pressure on farmers to prove they have used chemicals safely and responsibly. The responsible use of farm chemicals, as a pest and disease management tool, is an important feature of agricultural production systems.

This new control system has been designed to recognise the need for farm chemical users to be able to prove they are doing the right thing and employing good chemicals management practices. It has also been designed with the flexibility to recognise that persons may work under the direction of others, ie: a person who holds an ACUP can directly supervise others who do not have an ACUP. When this occurs it is the responsibility of the ACUP holder to ensure that records of use are made and kept.

### **New control system flexible**

This new control system also has the flexibility to exempt persons, who are part of a recognised quality assurance (QA) program, from certain requirements, such as the need to hold an Agricultural Chemicals User Permit (ACUP). Any such QA program would be required to have a chemicals management component that achieved the minimum standard established in the control system.

As a result of discussions about the new control system a number of issues have been raised by those involved in landcare work about their activity, particularly with respect to the spraying of roadside verges. Chemical spraying activity on roadside verges is technically under the control of the Human Services Department. Persons conducting landcare activity are not required to be licensed, so long as the person is not a commercial operator. If, however, the person is conducting spraying activity for fee or reward they will need to meet

the requirements of the Human Services Department and obtain a Pest Control Operators licence.

Commercial ground operators are required to be licensed by either the Department of Natural Resources & Environment (if the work is on agricultural land) or by the Human Services Department (if the work is on municipal or public land). In both cases licensing is only required if the operator is in the business of applying chemicals.

Chemical applicators who are licensed pest control operators under the Human Services Department will not be required to obtain another licence, or an ACUP, under the new agricultural chemical control system. They will however be required to comply with the standards for operation determined under the new control system when applying chemicals on agricultural land.

For further information contact the Chemical Information Service on (03) 9651 7317.

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### **Landcare on the Web**

By Tess Goodwin, Landcare Consultant

Welcome to review of World Wide Web sites for landcare. This column will profile Internet sites relevant to Landcare from Australia and around the world, each issue will focus on a different landcare theme.

Our first review looks at landcare in general, with an overview of landcare's Hot Topic - the Rabbit Calicivirus.

### **Manaaki Whenua**

***<http://www.landcare.cri.nz/>***

An interesting parallel to our own Landcare movement in Australia, this site is managed by the Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Crown Research Institute - NZ. The institute helps to manage land resources for conservation and primary production. Highlights of the site include a list of Landcare Groups in New Zealand, an online bookshop, and a Landcare Research library. Read Landlink, the online newsletter for New Zealand Landcare Groups. Check out the image of the Ruapehu volcanic ash plume.

### **Landcare Web**

***<http://www.agfor.unimelb.edu.au/LCWeb/>***

No surf of the net would be complete without visiting the Landcare Web site. Based at the University of Melbourne's Department of Agriculture and Resource Management, Landcare Web provides an opportunity to share Landcare information with audiences in Australia and around the world. Browse through the list of Landcare group's home pages. Find out the latest weather forecast, and satellite map. Use the conference centre to trade information on what's new in Landcare. This site also has a Landcare library to finetune your wanderings on the Net.

### **The CSIRO RCD home page**

***<http://www.csiro.au/communication/rabbits/rabbits.htm>***

All you ever wanted to know about RCD, CSIRO's home page features questions and answers on RCD, the latest Rabbit News, and background on the virus. Choose from the dozens of press releases on the subject of RCD from the fate of Truffles, the pet rabbit, to descriptions of RCD's spread in places such as the Flinders Ranges.

### **RCD in WA**

**<http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/bunnies/rcd.html>**

This site uses colour images to highlight the history of RCD in WA as well as details on the local rural community's co-ordinated response to the 'once in a life-time' opportunity RCD offers.

If you've found a Web site that would interest Victorian Landcare readers, send me an email on [forland@ozemail.com.au](mailto:forland@ozemail.com.au) and watch out for 'Landcare on the Web' in the next issue.

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### **Trees, Grass and Insurance - are you fully covered?**

By Rob Youl

As a Landcare member, you can't afford not to know about insurance. The easiest way to do this is to work through the VFF by contacting Greg King on (03) 9207 5560.

In the past, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) extended its personal accident and public liability insurance policy to registered Landcare groups and other voluntary bodies with which it worked.

To ensure your group was covered by this policy, you needed to maintain a list of members, inform your DNRE contact officer of group activities well in advance and notify the department immediately of any incidents.

BUT almost no-one ever did this. It required more reporting than most groups could sustain, and would have generated an impossible paper load for DNRE.

Today we use landcare groups to insure themselves. We list two options below, and believe that the other companies could offer this type of insurance.

It's up to your group to decide what option you want to follow, but don't delay.

You can still use the DNRE policy for Good Neighbour activities on public land. However you will need to contact your Good Neighbour project manager at least ten working days before you start. That person will need a map, a description of the activity, detailed timings, names of participants and an assurance that you will employ safe practices.

#### **Option 1 - MMI**

If your group insures with MMI - five percent of the premium goes to Landcare Australia.

For more information contact:

Peter McPherson  
MMI Insurance  
31 Queen Street  
Melbourne 3000

Phone: (03) 9630 0333

- Minimum \$75 per annum cost to group
- Simple policy with little paper work - covers herbicide use

### **Option 2 - QBE**

Your group insures itself with QBE Insurance, which has developed a policy with the VFF, offering landcare groups a Public and Products Liability Policy. This has a liability limit of \$5,000,000 for any one occurrence; for product liability this sum would be the aggregate.

Coverage includes group meetings, social gatherings and Landcare activities.

For more information contact:

Greg King  
VFF  
Farrer House  
24-28 Collins Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Phone (03) 9207 5560  
or Rob Lishewski, QBE, (03) 9246 2222.

Cost to the group is \$1 per member with a minimum premium of \$55 depending on activities, (herbicide and pesticide use are not covered).

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## **Clydebank's Wungum Trials set to teach reclamation techniques**

By Heidi Florissen

### ***Phot Illustrations***

*Salinity has taken a little more land away from farmers with each passing year.*

*Clydebank Landcare Group have installed numerous piezometers and monitor salinity constantly.*

Educating farmers and the broader community is one of the objectives of a new and exciting demonstration site being set up by the Clydebank Landcare Group in Victoria's East Gippsland region.

The demonstration trials will educate farmers about the most appropriate ways of rehabilitating degraded land, through the investigation of the effectiveness of different pasture and tree species, and fertiliser applications on land with varying levels of salinity.

"Salinity has taken a little more land away from farmers with each passing year," explains the Clydebank Landcare Group President, Phil Dijs. "But at last, the opportunity has come for the farmers to reclaim some of that lost land."

"And a working demonstration is one of the best ways to teach people techniques on how to go about reclaiming land," he said.

The project will cover approximately 1 hectare, and will be known as the Wungum Demonstration Trials, named after the paddock on the corner of Hughes Road and



Bengworden Road where it is situated. This land was kindly donated by Clydebank Landcare Group members, Libby and Andrew Thomson for the life of the project.

Works on the site have already begun, with marking out of the area and soil sampling. Fencing will take place over the coming months, in readiness for ground preparations early next year.

“The site contains a representation of the different land types in the area, from very productive to severely degraded land,” Andrew Thomson said.

Libby Thomson said, “We will be looking forward to seeing results from the Wungum Demonstration Trials Site in the new year.”

The site will be monitored and maintained for a period of five year, to gather valuable information about the long-term viability of certain species, and their adaptation to changing salinity levels as the site is influenced by two nearby groundwater pumps.

The Clydebank Landcare Group is currently seeking corporate sponsorship to conduct the Wungum Demonstration Trials.

Further information about the Wungum Demonstration Trials or the Clydebank Landcare Group can be obtained by contacting Heidi Florissen, Landcare Facilitator on (051) 451 556.

Educating farmers and the broader community is one of the objectives of the Wungum Demonstration Trials.

### **Clydebank Landcare**

The Clydebank Landcare Group was set up in 1992 to raise community awareness about land degradation caused by increasing salinity levels, and to discover ways of addressing this major problem.

Since 1992, the Clydebank Landcare Group’s activities in the community have included: the installation of piezometers; Whole Farm Planning workshops; experimental pasture and tree species plots; grazing trials; and the involvement of local schools in Landcare.

These activities, and the Clydebank Landcare Groups involvement in the implementation of the Lake Wellington Salinity Management Plan, have assisted in the identification of areas in which five groundwater pumps have been installed to allow farmers to reclaim previously unproductive areas of their properties.