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Victorian Landcare & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



Landcare Awards Feature

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From the editors

Despite devastating bushfires and a severe drought the commitment to Landcare in Victoria is stronger than ever. This was proved beyond doubt at the recent Victorian Landcare Awards hosted by John Landy, Governor of Victoria, and Mrs Lynne Landy in the Ballroom at Government House.

Over 300 members of the Landcare community attended the splendid ceremony. The Government House car park was unusually full of four-wheel drives and the odd driazabone hung proudly in the cloakroom.

A busload of children from the Edi Upper Primary School undertook the six-hour return trip to Melbourne to collect the Westpac Landcare Education Award for their Seed to Tree Project. The children were clearly amazed when their win was announced and flocked to shake hands with Governor Landy.

The Governor and Mrs Landy are extremely enthusiastic about Landcare. They chatted with entrants during afternoon tea and opened the State Apartments of Government House for the Landcarers to enjoy.

The organisation of the Awards was a massive task and congratulations are due to Joanne Webber of the Department of Sustainability and Environment for doing a fantastic job.



The many faces of Victoria's Landcare community enjoy the celebrations in the Ballroom at Government House.

Thanks are also due to the many sponsors and judges of the Awards who generously donated time and funds.

This issue contains stories on all of the Victorian Award winners. Our winners will be travelling to Canberra next August to represent Victoria in the National Landcare Awards.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment's Landcare Team chat with the Governor at the Landcare Awards. From left, Joanne Greenwood, Mike Gooley, Governor John Landy, Joanne Webber and Mark Costello.

We are always interested in hearing from our readers. If you have a story, a letter, a comment or a suggestion please don't hesitate to get in touch. This will be our last issue for 2003. We look forward to providing you with some more great Landcare reading in April next year.

Mike Gooley, Mathew Guy and Carrie Tiffany

Four days

in the Top End

By Mark Costello

Sunny Darwin was the venue for the 2003 National Landcare Conference. In late April over 100 Victorians made the trek to the Top End to participate in 'Respecting Values – Working and Learning Together'. We joined with 700 other participants including 57 international delegates from 10 countries.

The conference provided a diverse and challenging program and was a great opportunity for attendees to learn from other regions, States and countries.

In keeping with the Northern Territory's reputation for informality and hospitality there were also many social events including a function at Parliament House and a barbecue at Stokes Wharf sponsored by Bundaberg Rum!

The conference raised some key questions about the future of Landcare, including:

- How can Governments most effectively support community-based movements?
- What is the best way to provide funding and other resources?
- What are the most effective ways of building capacities in communities and agencies?

While there are no easy answers to these questions the conference provided an important opportunity for networking and the exchange of Landcare stories and experiences.

Victoria was well represented with presentations from the Victorian Landcare Network, the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group, Conservation Volunteers Australia, CMAs, DSE and DPI.

Support from the CMAs and DSE ensured that the majority of representatives were from the community including many of our hard-working co-ordinators and facilitators.

The Victorian contingent included 'regional delegations' where participants used a team approach to capture and share as much information as possible from the different conference sessions. Many delegates then presented this information to their groups and networks on their return.

One of the key messages I took away with me was the need to maintain communication to ensure that co-ordinators, facilitators and grass-roots community groups are kept informed –

without information overload.

It was encouraging to note that Landcare is becoming recognised as much as for a social, as a natural resource management movement. For me, the conference confirmed how important it is to celebrate our achievements without losing sight of the challenges ahead.

The innovative presentation of Coral Love, the National Landcare Facilitator, given in a diary format attracted a great deal of interest.

But I'll leave the last words to Jenny Blake from Dashwood. Here's an excerpt from her well-received presentation:

"We can either continue as we are, or do a U-turn and go back to where it all began with the grass-roots leading the way, setting the direction and priorities with targeted assistance. Landcare must resume its own destiny!"

For further information, including conference abstracts, visit <http://www.landcareconference.nt.gov.au/>

The Victorian delegates soak up the sun and the ideas at the 2003 National Landcare Conference in Darwin.



Thrips join the battle against gorse



By Sarah Holland Clift

The army battling gorse gained a new weapon earlier this year with the release of tiny but mighty insects called gorse thrips.

Gorse thrips are the latest development in biological control to help curb the spread of this noxious weed. In very large numbers, these tiny, one-millimetre-long insects can cause severe damage to gorse by eating the plant cell material.

The thrips are unleashed by members of Landcare and other environmental groups, together with DPI staff from the Keith Turnbull Research Institute (KTRI). The release sites will be used as 'nurseries' where gorse thrips can breed and multiply. Further distribution by local communities to other gorse-affected areas will increase their impact in the shortest possible time.

Primary school students are also participating in biological control of gorse through KTRI's Weed Warriors program. As 'weed warriors', students will turn their classrooms into miniature scientific



The tiny gorse thrip.

institutes where they will learn about weeds and rear gorse spider mites for eventual release at local gorse infestations.

Native to Europe, gorse thrips were introduced into Victoria in April 2001 after extensive and rigorous testing. As they pose no threat to any native or economically important plant species,

the thrips are now being mass-reared at KTRI. Over the next few years they will be released throughout gorse-infected areas across the state.

The release of gorse thrips will complement other biological control agents – gorse seed weevils and gorse spider mites – already widely established throughout Victoria. Like thrips, they will not eradicate gorse, but will weaken growth and seed production and slow the rate of spread into new areas.

Biological control will help suppress gorse over a long time, assisting future generations in their battle against the weed. However, it is only one component of a suite of gorse control methods. More conventional methods such as chemical spraying and mechanical removal are also needed to achieve the desired level of control.

For any further information or to become involved in the gorse biological control program contact Sarah Holland Clift on 9785 0188.



Releasing gorse thrips at Ashborne.

In Brief



Scouts get down and dirty for Greenfleet.

Greenfleet and scouts help the Murray

A total of 100,000 native trees were planted around Lake Hume in June by hundreds of scouts and community volunteers.

The project is part of Murray Darling Rescue – a partnership between Greenfleet and scouts to help bring life back to this failing river system. Millions of trees will be planted over the next ten years.

The trees are funded by individual motorists and corporate fleets who have joined Greenfleet in order to reduce the impact of cars on the environment.

The 17 trees planted on the motorist's behalf will absorb the 4.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide that the average car produces each year.

For more information go to www.murraydarlingrescue.com.au

To sign up your car visit www.greenfleet.com.au

Conference focuses on farm forestry benefits

A national tree-growing conference will be held in Ballarat next May. The Australian Forest Growers' 2004 Conference will look at the benefits farm forestry can bring to farms,

communities and catchments.

The conference is being hosted by Ballarat Region Treegrowers who have thrown down the challenge to presenters to demonstrate how their tree-growing endeavours not only enhance their farms or enrich their investors, but add value to their rural communities and catchments.

Run over three and a half days, the conference will be a practical exercise with daily field tours as an alternative to paper and workshop presentations.

For further information contact Gib Wettenhall on 5334 4643 or email gib@netconnect.com.au

Top Team training for Yarram Yarram Network



Peter Bowden and Liza Price from the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network participated in the Top Team training course.

How do you get your team working well? Sometimes it's hard to bring all the different individual threads of the group together. The Yarram Yarram Landcare Network Executive recently took up the challenge and participated in a Top Team training course, subsidised by FarmBis.

Peter Bowden, president of the Landcare Network, said that the program showed them how to implement more effective meeting procedures.

"We realised that our meetings were going on too long and we weren't achieving what we wanted to do. We have now changed meeting procedure and our communication has improved," Peter said.

"It was great to have the time to sit down and think about how the

executive was working. It really got us thinking about ways of doing things."

Since the training course the network is now making more use of the Internet.

"Many of us are farmers and we are not always at the end of the phone, but an email is always there, whatever time of the day or night you read it. As I get more familiar with the Internet and the computer I can see that that will also help me in my farming business," Peter said.

As president of the network Peter often finds he has information that he wants the rest of the executive to read. He now simply forwards it on as an email to the rest of the group. This is a great time saver and ensures that everyone gets the chance to keep up to date.

The course facilitator, Jenny O'Sullivan, said the training focused on how a group of people perform as a team and how they can improve their effectiveness.

"There are many different skills and capabilities within a Landcare network executive such as this. The course gave the network the chance to identify what skills and values the people within the group had and how we could make best use of them," Jenny said.

FarmBis provides subsidies for group or individual training for farmers in order to improve their business and natural resource management.

For more information contact Glenn Digby on 5662 9900.

EMS

Action Plan

By *Greg Smith*

The way ahead for EMS is now clearer after the Action Plan for EMS Adoption in Victoria was launched earlier this year. The plan has been developed by the Victorian EMS Policy Group, which was established in 2002 as an industry-Government partnership between the VFF and DPI and DSE.

An Environmental Management System (EMS) is a voluntary, systematic approach that can be used by farmers, land managers or catchment authorities to identify and manage impacts on the environment. EMS helps to achieve continuous improvement by attention to

best management practices, codes of practice and relevant legislation.

EMS can help draw diverse management issues together under a common approach. There is general agreement that EMS must be industry-led and voluntary.

Linking responsible environmental management to the demands of burgeoning agricultural production is a major, current concern. EMS offers a promising means of linking sustainable agricultural production with responsible environmental management.



The Action Plan sets out the following goals:

1. Improve scientific resources available to those wishing to quantify their environmental impacts by:
 - Developing metrics.
 - Establishing and articulating environmental objectives, targets and performance standards.
 - Establishing the nature of any impacts of management on the environment and determining how these might be mitigated as part of an EMS.
 - Undertaking research into the benefits and costs associated with EMS, including co-operative work with the National EMS Pilot Program.
2. Develop training and educational resources available to farmers wishing to improve environmental performance by:
 - Providing information on the state of the environment, Government programs, legislation and other information relevant to EMS.
 - Providing a 90% FarmBis subsidy for appropriate EMS training.
 - Developing VFF-endorsed training about EMS and facilitating widespread awareness of, and participation in, EMS by farmers.
 - Providing material as appropriate to disseminate results of research and other relevant environmental information.
3. Improve the recognition and rewards that farmers receive for environmental performance by:
 - Addressing impediments to efficient operation of ecolabelling markets.
 - Facilitating development of ecolabelling markets.
 - Developing a recognition and rewards system for people engaging in EMS.
4. Collaborate with CMAs to identify how EMS can contribute to environmental goals by:
 - Addressing potential confusion about the variety of environmental quality assurance schemes.
 - Increasing consumer understanding of environmental quality assurance.
 - Ensuring that existing Regional Catchment Management Strategies incorporate farmer-driven EMS initiatives where appropriate.
 - Working in partnership with CMAs to conduct trials of EMS.
 - Providing policy leadership by collaboration with industry groups to facilitate consistency across EMS systems regarding environmental, economic and social policy goals.

Copies of the EMS Action Plan are available from Greg Smith on 9207 5564.

Two years of



Students from Devon North Primary School release leaf hoppers they have bred for the biological control of Bridal Creeper.

and wormeries, wetland development, an indigenous environmental mural, weed identification and control, biodiversity environmental games and farm walks. Partnerships were forged with the West Gippsland CMA, DSE, Land for Wildlife, Waterwatch and Coastcare, WasteWise and many local groups and individuals.

She found that many young people are concerned about the state of the natural environment.

“During open discussions in classrooms students always raise a variety of environmental problems and welcome the opportunity to share their concerns and search for answers. Young Landcare provides a supportive and much needed forum where their feelings can be acknowledged. The challenge isn’t just about creating healthy ecosystems, but also strong and loving communities.”

June was especially busy for Carol as she co-ordinated World Environment Week activities at local schools. Here’s a taste of the action:

Older students at Woodside Primary worked on their frog bog by placing rocks and logs on site to encourage frogs to move in. Mulch has been spread in the area and more wetland planting is planned once the weather breaks.

According to Carol, the Woodside pupils already have an assortment of frogs sharing their school grounds in damp weather and the frog bog is one way of enhancing this situation and allowing students to learn about the amphibians.

Involving younger people in Landcare is an obvious step towards caring long term for our environment. Young people are interested to learn, enthusiastic to improve the natural world around them and they need environmentalists as mentors for support and inspiration.

In 2001 the Yarram Yarram Catchments Network adopted this philosophy and employed a Young Landcare Co-ordinator to work with young people in the area. Carol Crowe was appointed to the position and immediately took up the challenge.

Carol says that young Landcare activities provide a great way to develop awareness of how we interact in the living world.

“During a planting session at Alberton Primary School, the youngest children became completely focused on caring for the many worms they encountered as we dug holes for the shrubs. Suddenly the plants didn’t matter and the issue needing attention was that these worms weren’t chopped in half or squashed. So we examined and talked about these gorgeous wriggles. The kids found safe

ways to relocate them and eventually we got the plants in the ground as well.”

Carol says this has been one of the most enriching aspects of her interaction with young people – their ability to stop and explore things along the way to a particular goal.

“These were the moments when we best developed a Landcare philosophy and learnt interesting things about ourselves as well as the earth.”

During Carol’s two years she co-ordinated many different programs including seed collection and germination, plantings, frog bog creation, recycling composting

A Land for Wildlife day at Seaford Primary School.



Young Landcare



Students at Devon North Primary School weeding Sweet Pittosporum.

St. Mary's Primary School worked at minimising resources and waste as part of their Waste Wise program. Grass clippings will now be turned into compost and food scraps put in the wormery as a first step in developing garden beds around the school grounds. Carol worked with the young compost-makers as they built their first 'pile' and learnt about microbes.

Wetland activities and ponding were a big hit at Welshpool Primary School. Last spring 800 wetland plants and over 500 indigenous trees and shrubs were planted as part of a wetland project

behind the school oval. During World Environment Week maintenance work was carried out on the tree guards. Carol gave a talk about weeds and the need to control pests in areas of revegetation and the students took great delight in digging out thistles and cleaning up the site.

Poor Possum was the game of choice at Longford Primary School. Carol explains this game as being a bit like musical chairs with role-playing.

"We talk for a bit about tree hollows – what lives in them, how they are formed and how long that takes – then the children turn into trees and possums. The woodcutter saws down the old trees one by one and the possums scamper around looking for a new home. Much discussion takes place afterwards."

Carol also spent time with older students who are learning about biodiversity to prepare for a whole-school roadside planting activity along a new section of the South Gippsland Highway.

A group of students from Yarram Secondary College were given a farm tour



A student at Alberton Primary School enjoys a role play activity.

by local Landcarer Neil Collins at Hunterston. Students discussed sheep management, planting methods and examined a lucerne crop. On the way back to Yarram they stopped to inspect patches of Bridal Creeper along the roadsides.

Students at Devon North Primary School are also concerned about Bridal Creeper. The students are working with DPI on a biological control program for the weed. They have bred leaf hoppers at the school and released them on to Bridal Creeper infestations at Woodside.

Carol says she will never forget her time working with Young Landcare.

"I hope I have opened some eyes, minds and hearts to inspire respect for the world around us and encourage action towards creating a sustainable environment. I also hope that networks around the State take on the challenge of developing Young Landcare in their catchments. This is essential and exciting work."

Youngsters from Welshpool Kindergarten assist with wetland planting at Welshpool Primary School.



A smart approach to farm

By *Gib Wettenhall*

Many farmers and small-scale landholders are growing a wide range of wonderful native trees and shrubs to bring back the bush, create a sense of balance on their properties and, in some instances, produce new income opportunities.

A group of farm foresters in central Victoria have combined to set up a co-operative called SMARTimbers to market small quantities of their unique eucalypts and wattles, casuarinas or cypress, for high quality furniture or appearance products.

SMARTimbers field officer John Reed explains that SMARTimbers stands for Sustainably Managed Australian Regional Timbers.

“The name reflects our interest in long-term, careful management of farm plantations or forest resources.”

SMARTimber’s initial focus is on Sugar Gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*). Originally from South Australia, it has been grown as a plantation species by western district farmers for over 100 years. Sugar Gum is known for providing shelter for stock and some 40,000 cubic metres of firewood it produces annually.

Grossly underrated as a specialty timber, John Reed’s brief is to pursue value-adding opportunities in furniture, flooring, decking and veneer for Sugar Gum, as well as seeking out prospective members who own Sugar Gum plantations.

Niche market approach

SMARTimbers came about as the result of a marketing study undertaken by the Central Victorian Farm Plantations Inc

SMARTimbers chairman Andrew Lang (right) with fellow director Phil Kinghorn inspecting trees in a Sugar Gum plantation, attempting to determine which trees could become fine furniture, rather than firewood.

(CVFPI), the regional plantation committee covering central west Victoria. The study identified an opportunity for the region’s small-scale landholders to combine and market native hardwood specialty timbers to architects, interior designers and furniture manufacturers. Sugar Gum was seen as the local species with the greatest potential for taking advantage of a value-added, niche market approach.

“We want to raise Sugar Gum from a lowly firewood species to become the ‘belle of the ball’ as a premium, high quality timber,” says John. “Not only does Sugar Gum cut a fine figure, but it is also easy to machine, has high strength and density, and a class one durability rating.”

Sugar Gum is one of the few native hardwood species that can be found in mature form in Australian plantations. The suitability of Sugar Gum to low rainfall areas also means it has valuable environmental benefits for the arid zone, which makes up 70% of Australia’s land mass.

The co-op has produced a technical information sheet on Sugar Gum that identifies it as ideal for outdoor applications and in situations requiring a hardwearing surface. Architects have already placed orders for Sugar Gum decking, which provides a gross return of approximately \$2000 per cubic metre.

A kitchen fitted out in Sugar Gum.



forestry

Projected returns for flooring are even higher at \$3000-\$4000 per cubic metre. And SMARTimbers is currently undertaking trials on producing Sugar Gum veneer, which promises the highest level of returns – up to \$14,000 per cubic metre – as well as the most efficient use of the timber.

In contrast, the stumpage for Sugar Gum logs paid by firewood harvesters to western district landholders ranges from \$5-\$20 per cubic metre. While it is true that the co-op's projected returns for decking, flooring and veneer all involve harvesting, haulage, storage, handling and processing costs, the net returns for those willing to make the investment show every prospect of, at least, doubling returns to landholders.

Advantages of aggregation

“Operating alone, a landholder can expect little more than a low stumpage return at harvest time,” says John, “while membership of a co-operative achieves economies of scale by aggregating members’ wood and non-wood products within a single desk marketing structure.”

SMARTimbers is putting in place a chain of custody that will ensure the delivery of a quality assured product. A series of strategic alliances is being established between the co-operative and other like-minded, small scale, local processors, ensuring that control is maintained over quality, while boosting job creation in regional areas. SMARTimbers has just completed a kiln drying feasibility study, which recommends establishing a joint venture in association with a local sawmill.

SMARTimbers is undertaking a survey of western district farmers in an effort to identify the number of interested farmers and the volume available for producing millable Sugar Gum for value-added products.



Chairman of SMARTimbers Andrew Lang is the great great-grandson of John Lang Currie, one of the pioneers who introduced Sugar Gum to the western district of Victoria. Andrew and his daughter Eleanor stand in a Sugar Gum plantation on their property, Titanga.

Members of SMARTimbers will be able to take advantage of group certification guaranteeing that their plantations or forest are sustainably managed. This offers a significant competitive advantage, highlights John: “While timber is one of the few renewable material resources, people are increasingly concerned about whether or not the timber they buy can be traced back to a well-managed plantation or forest.”

The co-op is taking part in a group certification pilot project as part of the introduction of the Australian Forestry Standard. Instituting an Environmental Management System (EMS) plan for each member's plantation or woodlot will be a condition of membership of SMARTimbers.

“We will offer training and support, enabling best practice management of either plantation or farm forest,” points out John.

“Most native farm trees never rise above becoming a post, pole, pallet or woodchip, yet so many of them have an unrealised potential – like Sugar Gum – for significant value adding.

“Over and above value adding, SMARTimbers is dedicated to treating Australian farm trees with the respect and care they deserve.”

For further information contact John Reed on 1300 360 368.

Weed Update!



Karoo Thorn is a thorny tree from South Africa that has recently been declared a noxious weed in Victoria.



Mexican Feather Grass has been declared a noxious weed in Victoria. It is a highly invasive grass promoted overseas for gardens and has been found on sale in Victoria.



Left and below: Japanese Knotweed has been declared a noxious weed in Victoria. This compact variety has been found in a garden at Falls Creek Village from where it could escape into the surrounding Australian Alps National Park.



New noxious weeds proclaimed

Victoria has recently proclaimed ten new noxious weeds under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. They have been declared in the State Prohibited category because they do not occur in the State, or because they occur in small enough populations that it is reasonable to expect that they can be eradicated. The new noxious weeds are:

- *Acacia karroo*, Karroo Thorn
- *Acacia erioloba*, Giraffe Thorn
- All species of *Equisetum*, Horsetails
- *Fallopia japonica*, Japanese Knotweed
- *Fallopia sachalinensis*, Giant Knotweed
- *Fallopia x bohémica*, Japanese Knotweed hybrid
- All species of *Hieracium*, Hawkweeds
- *Nassella charruana*, Lobed Needle-grass
- *Nassella tenuissima*, Mexican Feather-grass
- *Orobanche ramosa*, Branched Broomrape

All of these weeds are priority weeds for the Weed Alert Rapid Response Program run by DPI and DSE. To report any of these weeds, please call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Look down for Branched Broomrape

Branched Broomrape (*Orobanche ramosa*) is a very small parasitic plant that grows on the roots of various crop and pasture plants. Because it is so small (up to 20 centimetres tall, rarely to 30 centimetres tall) and only comes above the soil surface to flower for a short period each year, you have to look down and have hawk-eyes to see it.

Branched Broomrape has recently been declared a State Prohibited Noxious Weed in Victoria and although it has not been found here yet, properties in this State have been linked to infested properties in South Australia. DPI will be conducting surveys of linked properties this spring/summer.

New weeds reported

Two new weeds found recently in Victoria have turned out to be new records for Australia. The first is a pretty blue-flowered herb called Perennial or Mountain Cornflower (*Centaurea montana*). It has escaped from a garden at Falls Creek in Victoria's high country potentially threatening the surrounding Australian Alps National Park. It is closely related to the declared noxious weeds, Black Knapweed (*C. nigra*), Star Thistle (*C. calcitrapa*) and St Barnaby's Thistle (*C. solstitialis*).

Perennial Cornflower is grown and sold as a garden plant and its invasiveness in Victorian gardens indicates that it may have weed form in both natural and agricultural areas.

By Kate Blood

The second new record is of a shrub called *Erica versicolor* from South Africa. It has been found invading private property near the Grampians National Park in western Victoria. It was originally planted for cut flowers. The long narrow

flower tubes are red with a yellow tip.

The Victorian Weed Alert Rapid Response program is working towards the management of these newly reported weeds before they become widespread.

Branched Broomrape is a parasitic plant that could have a big impact on agriculture in Victoria if it invades here. It has recently been declared a noxious weed. It flowers mainly in spring and summer.



Erica versicolor is a new weed for Australia recorded on private property near the Grampians National Park. There are a number of already widespread invasive *Ericas* in Victoria.

Broom goes boom

An invasive shrub called White Spanish Broom (*Cytisus multiflorus*) will be targeted this spring around Creswick in central Victoria. It looks similar to the very common yellow-flowered English Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) except the White Spanish Broom has smaller white flowers.

Apart from being invasive, White Spanish Broom also has the ability to hybridise with the English Broom and produce more vigorous and invasive offspring. Both brooms are common around the Creswick township and bushland, and will be a focus of the Dirty Half Dozen project in Victoria this year.

If you would like to become a Weed Spotter contact Kate Blood on 5349 2833 or email Kate.Blood@dpi.vic.gov.au



Young Victoria Campbell accompanied her grandparents Sue and Sandy Campbell, winners of the Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award.

A celebration

The Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, joined John Landy, Governor of Victoria, AC, MBE, and Mrs Lynne Landy to present the 2003 Victorian Landcare Awards at Government House in late August.

“Everyone nominated for the Landcare Awards is an ambassador for Landcare, promoting sustainable management of Victoria’s natural resources. The winners are innovators and leaders and their efforts are inspirational,” Minister Thwaites said.

Award winners were announced in 12 different categories including education, local government, catchment management, research, nature conservation, sustainable production, facilitation/co-ordination, and primary production, as well as individual Landcarers and community groups.

The Awards ceremony was held in the Ballroom at Government House where over 300 members of Victoria’s Landcare community gathered to celebrate their achievements.

From left, Peter Greig from the Corangamite CMA, Alice Knight from the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group and Chris McRae from DSE.



Awards



of Victorian Landcare

Minister Thwaites acknowledged that Landcare started in Victoria in the 1980s to help restore degraded land and water environments and is now an international community-based movement.

Governor Landy commented on how Landcare has stayed true to its community approach while increasing in professionalism.

“It is through this community approach and with a shared vision that truly significant results can be achieved,” he said.

Governor Landy and Mrs Landy hosted an afternoon tea at the conclusion of the Awards ceremony and chatted with the assembled guests.

The winners of the Victorian Landcare Awards will become the State’s representatives in the National Landcare Awards, announced in Canberra in August 2004.

Each Victorian winner received a certificate and a trophy made from 10-year-old Shining Gum (*Eucalyptus nitens*) grown along an eroded creek on the Bambra Agroforestry Farm in the Otways.



Ross and Wendy Horner from Inverloch were joint winners of the Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award for West Gippsland.

Governor Landy congratulates the children of Edi Upper Primary School and Principal Howard Gibson on winning the Westpac Landcare Education Award.



Burgoigee Creek Landcare Group representatives Judy and John Griffiths, James Neary and John Rauch in the grounds of Government House.



Karen Jones and Dennis Gallagher from Indigo Shire Council, winners of the Landcare Australia Local Government Award.



Dorothy and Robert Inchbold. Dorothy was highly commended in the National Landcare Individual Award.



Alcoa Landcare Community Group Award

Winner: Burgoigee Creek Landcare Group



The Burgoigee Creek Landcare Group was launched in 1988 on the top of a bare hill. The group's founding members looked down over the 12,800-hectare basin beneath them and saw just about every land management problem imaginable.

The early years of the group were taken up with encouraging landholders to complete whole farm plans. Many field

days, speakers and community education activities were run and by the mid 1990s 80% of the group area was covered by a whole farm plan and 51 out of the district's 57 landholders were members of the group.

According to Judy Griffiths, one of the group's founding members, success came from supporting individual members to achieve their goals.

"When each member has a whole farm plan and is working away in their own time the group can then look at opportunities to assist them. It might be information or funding for revegetation, remnant protection, recharge control, erosion control, pest control, animal health, pasture improvement, or growing our own trees."

Group members potting trees.



Awards



A soil health field day.

The group is in a priority area for salinity, water quality and rabbit action. Its achievements in these areas are too numerous to list but they all feature a collaborative approach. The group has worked closely with other local Landcare groups, the Ovens Landcare Network and regional catchment strategy, salinity and water quality committees.

Recent activities include gully stabilisation works and a scarab beetle (dung beetle) program. The group is working with researchers to breed and release three varieties of beetles in a bid to improve water quality and soil condition.

Judy Griffiths says the group has always looked at the sustainability of the land as well as the sustainability of those who manage the land. The results of this approach can be seen from the hilltop where the group was launched. It is no longer bare. The view shows thriving native pastures, no visible rabbit warrens, fenced and treed creeklines and gullies and extensive shade and shelterbelts.



Before. The Burgoigee Creek area is a high priority for gully erosion. This photograph shows a severe gully before rehabilitation works.



After. A rock chute has been built and extensive revegetation works undertaken. The gully now delivers clean water downstream.

Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award and



Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award North East Region



Winner: Sandy and Sue Campbell



Andrew Jenkin from Hi Fert with Victoria, Sue and Sandy Campbell, Minister John Thwaites and Governor John Landy at the Landcare Awards.

In 1966 when Sandy and Sue Campbell bought their property 'Cooloongatta' in the Byawatha Hills it was known locally as 'the rabbit farm'. The name wasn't an exaggeration. When a bushfire came through in 1967 the paddocks were so bare it stopped at the boundary fence!

The Campbells quickly developed a whole farm plan and set out to increase the property's productivity and sustainability.

Sue and Sandy recognised that their aims could only be achieved over time and that the plan would evolve and change as the property developed.

Over a ten-year period the original five paddocks were progressively subdivided into 29 paddocks as they were cleared of stumps, logs and rabbit warrens. A central laneway was developed, pasture improvement was underway and shade and shelterbelts were created.

A major rabbit eradication program was started in 1967 with 80 kilometres of trail laid. The length of trail laid has been progressively reducing each year, as has the follow-up fumigating, warren ripping, harbour destruction and spotlighting. The Campbells have recently received 'rabbit free' status for the property.

The property has seen major revegetation works. Since 1966 over 200,000 eucalypts and understorey plants have been

Revegetation works on the Campbells property in the Byawatha Hills.



Awards



Sue and Sandy Campbell with their rabbit free sign and three very frustrated Jack Russell terriers.

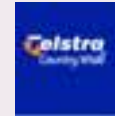
established. Before commercial nurseries were established in the area seed was collected from local species and propagated on the farm.

Around 13% of the property is now fenced off for revegetation. Dams on the property have been fenced out and revegetated and now support native fauna.

The Campbells were founding members of the Springhurst Farm Tree Group that later became the Springhurst and Byawatha Landcare Group. Cooloongatta has been used extensively as an education tool with Sue and Sandy hosting visitors from overseas, other Landcare groups, Government departments and universities. All who visit the farm are deeply affected by the story of its rehabilitation.

Sandy Campbell is keen to acknowledge the assistance the family has received with the property from many different groups, agencies and volunteers. He is especially grateful to local co-ordinator Sue Leovold who, according to Sandy, is a tireless worker and someone who really makes things happen.

Telstra Country Wide Landcare Research Award



Winner: Northern United Forestry Group

The Northern United Forestry Group (NUFG) is an incorporated community group of landowners working to develop a farm forestry industry in northern Victoria. The group formed in 1998 with the aim of establishing low-rainfall farm forestry as a commercially viable agricultural enterprise that provides forest products, environmental services and community benefits.

The group's members own and manage a large area of cleared agricultural land and have the silvicultural expertise needed to propagate, establish, market and harvest the trees. Group members also have skills in milling on-farm logs, adding value to products and sourcing markets for end products. The practical knowledge and experience of the group has made it a key source of technical information on farm forestry in low-rainfall systems.

The group works in partnership with CSIRO, Victoria's Forest Science Centre, universities and Government agencies to undertake research evaluating the species best suited to Victoria's northern plains. The group hosted an expo on farm forestry in the northern plains earlier this year to communicate the results of their research to the local community.

The strong farmer base of the group ensures that plantations are managed as part of existing farming systems. NUGF members have expertise in managing farm forestry alongside cropping, fodder production, prime lambs, wool, dairying and beef cattle enterprises.

The NUGF undertakes research for farmers, by farmers and promotes permanent systems that bring about sustainable land use change.

Northern United Forestry Group member Darren Kerr inspects freshly sawn redgum from a portable mill at the group's recent expo.



Westpac Landcare Education Award

Winner: Edi Upper Primary School



Edi Upper Primary School's Seed to Tree Project gets children involved in growing trees for local Landcare projects and raises money for the school.

The project started back in 1997 when the school formed a partnership with the Black Range Landcare Group. The school and the group worked together to build a shade house and a greenhouse on the school grounds. Around 18 months ago the children started going out on excursions to collect seed from indigenous native trees. Teachers, parents and a tree biologist run the excursions. The seed collecting is great fun and a terrific opportunity for learning.

The children take the seed back to school where it is prepared and stored ready for

planting. The seed is then planted in seed-raising trays and stored in the greenhouse. The children monitor the progress of the seedlings and decide when they are ready to be transplanted into tubes and put in the shade house for toughening up. Once the trees have reached a certain height they are sold to the Landcare group and the local community.

The care and skills of the children can be seen in the very high germination rates they are achieving. Tree Violets, for example, are a difficult species, but the children had close to a 100% germination rate and ended up with nearly twice as many seedlings as they expected!

The Seed to Tree Project has made the school and local Landcare projects a focal



Students from Edi Upper Primary School hard at work in the greenhouse.

point for this small community. While the project gives children an opportunity to learn while doing something worthwhile, it also involves a host of parents and volunteers who work with the children sharing their skills and knowledge.

The scale of the project keeps increasing – there are currently 1000 seedlings in the shade house. The original investment of the Landcare group in helping to build the shade house and greenhouse has certainly paid off – the group now has a good, constant supply of locally grown trees.

Murray-Darling Basin Commission Rivercare Award

Winner: City of Ballarat – the Yarrowee River Trail



Over 20 years the Ballarat community has transformed the Yarrowee River Valley from a mined-out weed-infested dumping ground into a valuable community asset. The project commenced in 1982 when the Friends of Yarrowee was formed.

Geoff Forest lives adjacent to the Yarrowee River. With help from the LINC'S catchment crew he has planted over 2000 plants along a section of the river.



The restoration works have seen an extensive, long-term collaboration between various local and State Government agencies and the community. The official opening of the Yarrowee River Trail took place in March this year and was a major event for the people of Ballarat.

A Yarrowee River Landscape and Development Master Plan was developed and adopted by the City of Ballarat in 1995. The project is a component of the LINC'S (Linear Networks of Communal Spaces) Strategy which aims to maximise the recreation and conservation aspects of linear reserves within the City of Ballarat.

The master plan for the river involved the creation of a 14-kilometre walking and cycling track from Gong Gong Reserve to

Yuille Station Park plus another 20 kilometres of trails along the Yarrowee tributaries. Over 145,000 trees and other terrestrial plants have been established throughout the reserve and 100,000 aquatic plants established in the various wetlands.

The creation of the Yarrowee Redan wetlands – which are designed to improve water quality in the Yarrowee River – has been a major achievement, as has the huge job of removing massive weed infestations. Over 80 community groups and 1500 individuals have been involved in the project. The Yarrowee River Trail is now a major environmental, water quality, recreational and public health asset for the City of Ballarat.

Awards



Sensis Landcare Catchment Award



Winner: Woody Yaloak Catchment Group

The Woody Yaloak catchment is home to around 220 farm families and 1000 small block owners. The catchment covers some 115,000 hectares which starts at the headwaters of the Woody Yaloak River and flows south through Cressy. The river outflows into Lake Corangamite – a RAMSAR lake of international significance. The catchment is affected by poor water quality, salinity, erosion, rabbits, weeds and biodiversity decline.

The catchment group started ten years ago and is now finalising its third five-year plan. The group embraces the idea of continuous improvement and sees the process of planning and reporting as an important way of reinvigorating their actions.

The group's major achievements to date include the creation of neighbourhood groups, the development of Geographic Information Systems and the involvement of schools, local government and sponsors. Over the past decade more than four million dollars has been invested in the project, with 65% coming from landholders.

The establishment of neighbourhood groups has encouraged a multi-issue, across-farm-boundaries approach to planning in the catchment. Groups of between two and ten neighbours work together with a facilitator on five-year projects that link in to property priorities. The process has been very successful. In a 1990 survey only 15% of landholders in the area thought neighbours were important in deciding what Landcare works to undertake. By 2000 90% of landholders believed they could work with their neighbours to develop subcatchment Landcare plans.

The work of the neighbourhood groups is supported by a simple, low-cost, geographic information system that records future plans as well as historical records. The system allows for each local plan to be amalgamated and create a broader catchment picture. This technology has now grown into a not-for-profit business that provides its services to other Landcare groups across the State.

The group's third five-year plan aims to deliver a range of priority outcomes in the catchment including pest plant and animal control, land class fencing on highly erodible land, treatment of active erosion areas, fencing and regeneration of riparian vegetation, revegetation of saline discharge sites and doubling the area of vegetation on private land.

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group has made an outstanding contribution to catchment management. It is a group that encourages planning and evaluation but is always open to innovation and new approaches.

Alice Knight, past chair of the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group, talks Landcare at a group Christmas party on the banks of the Woody Yaloak River.



Rokewood farmer Marion Walton inspects recent plantings on the Ferrars Creek.



National Landcare Individual Award

Winner: John Laing

In 1996 John Laing from Toolamba was concerned about leaking irrigation channels. He recognised that the problem couldn't be fixed until people started to talk to each other so he helped establish the Dhurringile and District Landcare Group. To say that John has been a mainstay of that group ever since would be an understatement. To establish the group's successful Watertable Watch program he visited each of the district's landholders individually and managed to get 97% of them involved. He worked as the treasurer of the group for many years and is now the president, sometimes riding his bicycle 20 kilometres to attend meetings.

John is passionate about Landcare and the local environment. He is someone who can see the big picture and the importance of sharing knowledge and resources through links and networks



while never losing sight of the on-ground priorities close to home.

John's vision and thirst for knowledge can be seen in his involvement with the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network where he chairs the Community Monitoring Project. John is responsible for the Saltwatch, Watertable Watch and Drainwatch monitoring projects. He is often on his feet talking to schoolchildren, visiting groups and agency staff. He speaks his mind but is also a good listener – someone genuinely interested in the ideas and opinions of others.

Through his involvement in the Urban Rural Links Program John has brought important issues like water conservation and sustainable farming practices to many urban children and adults. He runs a small non-profit plant nursery on his property



Rhonda and John Laing at the Landcare Awards.

and has organised numerous tree planting days. Since 2001 he has organised the planting of around 20,000 trees in the Dhurringile and Toolamba districts. When he works alongside planting teams like Work for the Dole, Greencorps or the local Dhurringile Prison Work Team his aim is always to educate and enthuse.

John's most recent project is the development of a Dhurringile and District Local Area Plan. The Local Area Planning Project is a partnership between the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network and DPI. The plan will be a living roadmap to help people overcome land management and social problems through community action. It has a 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' approach which reflects a great deal about John Laing. His own achievements are numerous, but his work in motivating and exciting can never be measured.

John Laing doing what he does best – educating people and getting them enthused about Landcare.



Awards



Landcare Australia Local Government Award

Winner: Indigo Shire Council

Located in north-east Victoria, Indigo Shire Council prides itself on being an environmentally aware and proactive small rural shire. The shire has 15,000 residents and covers a range of landscape types from sub-alpine foothills, to Box Ironbark woodlands and the River Red Gum floodplains of the Murray River.

The council's Roadside Management Plan, completed in 1999, was the first of its type in north-east Victoria and has led the way for other councils. The plan includes annual environmental training for roadside contractors, a project improving roadside habitat for the endangered Grey-crowned Babbler, a weeds of national significance project on mapping and preventing the spread of Chilean Needle Grass, a stormwater

management plan and the targeted spraying of noxious and environmental weeds.

The council works with both Landcare groups and networks to create supportive links and facilitate greater co-ordination of projects. Labour support, in the form of council's Green Corps teams, conservation volunteers and the Community Jobs Program is also made available to groups.

Weeds are a big issue in the area and council has removed over 100 tonnes of noxious and environmental weeds from Lake Sambell and Isaac Park Reserves in the past year. A network of pathways and over 60,000 indigenous native plants have been established in these reserves. In partnership with the North East



Roadside contractors learn to identify weeds and value native vegetation at one of Indigo Shire Council's training programs.

Catchment Management Authority, Indigo Shire Council has developed and constructed a nutrient-filtering wetland to improve stormwater flow into Lake Sambell. Over 20,000 aquatic and indigenous native plants have been established as part of this project.

The Indigo Shire Council has a commitment to preserving and managing its local environment and encouraging both a Landcare ethic and Landcare action in the local community.

Bushcare Nature Conservation Award



Winner: Kowree Farm Tree Group

The Kowree Farm Tree Group set up its Biolink Corridor Project in 1999. The aim of the project was to revegetate roadsides and private land to create a link between Little Desert and the Glenelg River.

Don Forster of Edenhope in a remnant Buloke woodland protected by the Kowree Farm Tree Group's Biolink Corridor Project.



The group achieved its aims after four years of dedicated planning and hard work. Along the way over 350 people were involved in this inspirational project which concluded with a four-day celebratory horse trek over the 100-kilometre route.

The project has seen some 78,000 seedlings planted, 643 kilometres of direct seeding established and 168 kilometres of fencing erected. It has also protected and rehabilitated 696 hectares of existing remnant native vegetation which was in relatively good condition including two large areas of Stringy Bark forest and several small areas of Buloke woodland. Seventy farmers now have corridors on their properties which link into the

project to a total length of 252 hectares.

Most of the participants in the project had never worked on a revegetation or remnant protection project before. The project has greatly increased knowledge and awareness of the intrinsic value of remnants and the need to manage and protect them.

While the project was funded by the Natural Heritage Trust it attracted strong voluntary and in-kind support. The biolink has had a very high profile in the area. It has put environmental improvement on the map as a key component of farm management and the local community has witnessed a substantial improvement project carried out in their backyard.

Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award Goulburn Broken Region

Winner: Geoff Campbell



Geoff Campbell is one of the leading primary producers in the Wilby/Boomahnoomoonah district. Geoff and his family have worked tirelessly to improve their cropping property at Wilby over many years.

Continuous weed management, minimum tillage and stubble retention are some of the key features of the operation. Some areas of the property are left ungrazed and uncropped, others are managed for conservation and biodiversity. A recent priority has been the fencing out and

revegetation of gully lines in an attempt to control erosion.

The farm has extensive shelterbelts and the family is working to fence off remnant native vegetation on rocky hilltops and unproductive areas.

The Campbells were one of the first families in the district to carry out direct seeding of native trees and shrubs. They have demonstrated the technique to the local Landcare group and the wider community by holding field days



From left, Angus and Geoff Campbell with judges Alex Arbuthnot and Tony Plowman.

on the property and encouraging people to give it a go.

Geoff leads by example. He is an active member of the area's local Landcare groups and is currently serving on the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Implementation Committee.

Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award Glenelg Hopkins Region

Winner: Richard Stevenson



Richard Stevenson and his family have spent the past 25 years improving their property 'Coroona', near Branxholme. The mixed farming enterprise includes merinos for wool, prime lambs, some cropping and an agroforestry plantation.

Richard has made many changes on the farm. He has moved from ploughing to direct drilling crops and pastures, stubble retention, fencing to soil types and ridge lines, introducing laneway systems, fencing out creeks, installing more watering points, fencing off wetlands and dams and planting and encouraging the regeneration of native vegetation.

A whole farm plan adopted in the 1980s has shown Richard how to link

his Landcare practices with the farming operation. An example of this is the use of native vegetation for biodiversity but also for stock refuge in times of bad weather and feed when the understorey species need managing.

Richard estimates that over 10% of the property is now covered by trees and believes this has been a major factor in an increase in carrying capacity from 12 to 18/dse per hectare.

All non-arable land on the property is managed for conservation purposes. Three Trust for Nature conservation covenants have been placed on the property ensuring the permanent protection of the remnants Richard



Richard Stevenson on his property 'Coroona', near Branxholme.

and his family have worked hard to rehabilitate.

The Stevenson family provides a great example for the local community. They are active members of the Lyne, Camp and Arrandoovong Creek Landcare Group, organising field days to raise people's awareness of significant native grasslands, spreading knowledge on direct seeding and participating in local rabbit buster programs.

Awards



Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award Wimmera Region

Winner: Alan and Matthew Staples



Alan and Matthew Staples run a 2400-hectare minimal tillage cropping enterprise on sandy loam country at Rainbow in the Wimmera/Mallee. They see themselves not as traditional farmers but as 'conservation farmers' although tradition has played a part in the operation as Alan's father George was one of the earliest users of direct drilling in the area.

The current farming operation is based on causing the least possible disturbance to the soil. By leaving the soil in a more natural state they reduce compaction which allows the microbial activity in the soil to work more effectively. It also disturbs fewer weed seeds which cuts down on the need for chemicals.

Alan and Matthew believe they need to have a system of farming that is both sustainable and under sound management in regards to salt areas and erosion from wind and water runoff. As a farming enterprise that supports two families with minimal off farm income profitability is crucial.

Part of the property, which is near the edge of Lake Hindmarsh, contains large fragile sand dunes. The Staples have fenced out these areas and sown a mixture of native grasses and perennials to protect the dunes and prevent erosion.

The Staples are board members of the Wimmera Conservation Farming



Rachel, Matthew and Alan Staples on the family cropping enterprise at Rainbow in the Wimmera/Mallee.

Association and are also involved in the Birchip Cropping Group. They are always keen to find out more about best practice in farming and to share their own knowledge and experience with others. The property has been used for numerous field days and as a trial site.

The family has also been heavily involved with the Werrap Rabbit Action Group. The group's rabbit ripper lives at the Staples property where they maintain it and lend it out.

Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award North Central Region

Winner: Keith and Lynn Impey



Keith and Lynn Impey run a fine wool merino farm on the Bet Bet Creek at Lexton. They have been in the area since 1960 and are well known for their passion for farming and for helping others.

The Impey property is run on a rotational-grazing system based on available feed, with set stocking during lambing. The property has been completely sown down to perennial pasture with re-sowing of the original paddocks underway in the last five years. Phalaris and Cocksfoot have been the grasses of choice, with other perennials also being experimented with.

The 1980s and '90s saw a great deal of conservation-related work on the property including the control of saline areas, trials of saltbush, recharge tree planting, planting of trees for shelter, erosion control and the fencing out and planting of streambanks.

A very distinctive five-hectare hill block in the centre of the property was planted with trees in 1989 and 1990 and has been effective in reducing saline recharge.

In 1988 a steering committee was formed to establish a local Landcare group.



Keith Impey on his fine wool merino property on the Bet Bet Creek at Lexton.

Keith was an original member of the group and served on the committee for seven years. Keith has also been involved with the Grasslands Productivity Program and the Landcare for Educators Program at the Creswick Landcare Centre. He is always keen to share his knowledge with the many interested people who visit the property.

Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award West Gippsland Region

Joint Winner: Ross and Wendy Horner



Ross and Wendy Horner are commercial Angus breeders at Inverloch. They became involved in the family farm in the early 1990s and have faced up to many long-term challenges such as pest plants and animals, salinity, soil acidification and vegetation decline.

The property was suffering from a lack of shelter with stock being blasted by severe coastal winds. One of their first tasks was to subdivide the seven existing paddocks into a total of 24. A massive revegetation program came next with around 15% of the property now covered by indigenous native vegetation.

The farm is a flat clay pan with overlying sandy rises which causes problems with

drainage and waterlogging of paddocks over winter. In 1999 they laser graded the main drain that weaves through the property. The drain was then fenced off and revegetated to improve water quality and prevent erosion. This process has now been repeated on all of the secondary drains on the property.

An annual weed control program has been developed which involves broad leaf pasture weeds, noxious and environmental weeds. Vermin control is also a big issue. Ross and Wendy have successfully reduced rabbit populations by 70% across the farm by an integrated program of fumigating, baiting, ripping and shooting.



Ross and Wendy Horner's property at Inverloch was suffering from a lack of shelter. They have completed a massive revegetation program with 15% of the property now under native vegetation.

Ross and Wendy are innovators in their industry. They have recently built new 'bugle' type stockyards designed by the Rutherglen Research Institute to enable them to manage their stock in a more natural way and reduce stress levels. The Horners' hard work and effective planning means they are now able to manage their farm in a more productive and sustainable manner.

Joint Winner: Daryl and Fay Sinclair

Daryl and Fay Sinclair purchased their Stony Creek dairy farm in 1986. Sustainable land management was on their mind and they set themselves some long-term goals for creating their ideal landscape vision. Ten years later they are reaping the rewards of their efforts and enjoying vastly improved productivity.

The Sinclairs' strategy has been to use proven techniques and a pragmatic approach. They have maintained natural resources by fencing off remnant vegetation, created wildlife corridors that provide shade and shelter for stock, managed fodder conservation and a cropping program, focused on better farm management practices and kept a close eye on costs.

The farm was a local 'focus farm' for three years and the Sinclairs have also been involved in a number of Target 10 programs such as pasture management, fertiliser application and feed nutrition. The family has been actively involved in the Stony Creek Landcare Group for many years and have inspired others to attempt best land management practices.

In 1995 the dairy was milking 180 cows; they are now happy to be milking 240 cows and hope to maintain this level as it provides a sustainable business and enjoyable lifestyle.

Daryl's main plan for the future is to continue with his revegetation work. With four boys in the family there are



Daryl and Fay Sinclair on their Stony Creek dairy farm.

many hands to help with planting which is a major feature of the family's work each autumn and spring.

Awards



Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award

Winner: David Boyle

Just over ten years ago David Boyle took a position in pest control in the Geelong region. His predecessor warned him to 'stay away from the tussock', saying it was just too hard and there was nothing that could be done about it.

The tussock referred to was Serrated Tussock, one of Australia's greatest threats to its pastoral lands. David Boyle has spent the last decade working out new and better ways to tackle this environmental nightmare, along the way creating one of the most successful weed control programs seen in Victoria.

Serrated Tussock was estimated to cost the Australian wool industry 12.9 million dollars a year. Frustration was high, but knowledge and action was low. In 1994 David Boyle arranged a community

meeting which brought about the formation of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Taskforce. The taskforce came up with a model for tackling Serrated Tussock which involved increasing awareness of the problem, carrying out property inspections and developing a comprehensive extension program. The goal was to increase the wider community's ownership of the Serrated Tussock nightmare.

The taskforce has now become a key driver of land management and landuse change in infested areas. Over 75% of landholders now view Serrated Tussock control as a high priority for control, understand the importance of co-ordinated control and work to control infestations on an ongoing basis.



David Boyle (right) with Scott Chirnside, the chair of the Serrated Tussock Working Party.

David Boyle's often behind-the-scenes work has changed the way the DPI tackles weeds. His passion and focus achieves results and his respect for the input and opinions of others ensures truly co-operative outcomes. He is highly respected by his peers and by landholders and while he is happy to sing the praises of the taskforce, he would never be heard singing his own!

Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship

Winner: Mal Thompson

Mal Thompson has a passion for the landscapes of the Mallee and puts nearly all of his waking hours into working to restore them. Mal has the special ability to find the connection between planning and implementation. His knowledge of the Mallee and its many local groups and organisations means he is always on the lookout to link projects together and to get as many people as possible involved.

Mal has co-ordinated the Nyah West Landcare Group for over seven years. More recently he has supported the Waitchie, Swan Hill West and Ultima Landcare Groups. He has worked with many youth and indigenous groups within

the mid-Murray area on numerous conservation and cultural heritage projects. He is a capable planner and organiser, but also someone who loves to get in and do something – whether it is collecting seed, fumigating rabbit warrens or working to reclaim an old landfill site. He is well known and highly respected by all of the Mallee Landcare community.

Mal plans to use the fellowship to strengthen his years of practical experience by undertaking some formal study. He would also like to undertake a feasibility study on developing a local Landcare Environment Centre.



Former Heather Mitchell Fellowship recipient Glennis McKee from Murrayville with this year's winner, Mal Thompson.

TreeProject – an urban nursery for rural trees

TreeProject is an urban-based, non-government organisation that believes we are all responsible for repairing our land. TreeProject has been doing just that, with a huge team of volunteers, for 15 years.

Through its Re-Tree Scheme, TreeProject recruits urban and regional volunteers to propagate and plant out thousands of indigenous seedlings each year.



A TreeProject volunteer planting out the seedlings he has grown.

Since 1988 over 1.3 million trees, shrubs and grasses have been grown and planted on farmland in Victoria. The trees have created shelterbelts, repaired creeks, rivers and erosion gullies and improved wildlife habitat.

TreeProject kicks into gear when farmers and Landcare groups order local indigenous seedlings to be grown for them. To ensure the seed is local, landholders can provide their own seed, or TreeProject will provide appropriate local provenance seed sourced from an indigenous seedbank.

This seed is then packaged and included in a growing kit — which contains materials such as potting mix, forestry tubes, fertiliser and mulch, and is taken home by a volunteer grower. Growers set up their backyard nursery, propagating and caring for the seedlings until they are ready to be planted out.

TreeProject has been using this system for 13 years. It has been made as easy as

possible so most people can participate. Volunteer growers are given propagation training and ongoing support and advice.

Many of the volunteer growers will go out to the farm and help plant their seedlings. It gives people immense satisfaction to see the fruit of their labour take off in the field. TreeProject encourages volunteers to grow for the same landholders year after year, so they can see the long-term progress of the seedlings.

Participating landholders get low cost seedlings and the much needed help to undertake what is usually a big job. They also get to see the support from city people for the good work they are doing.

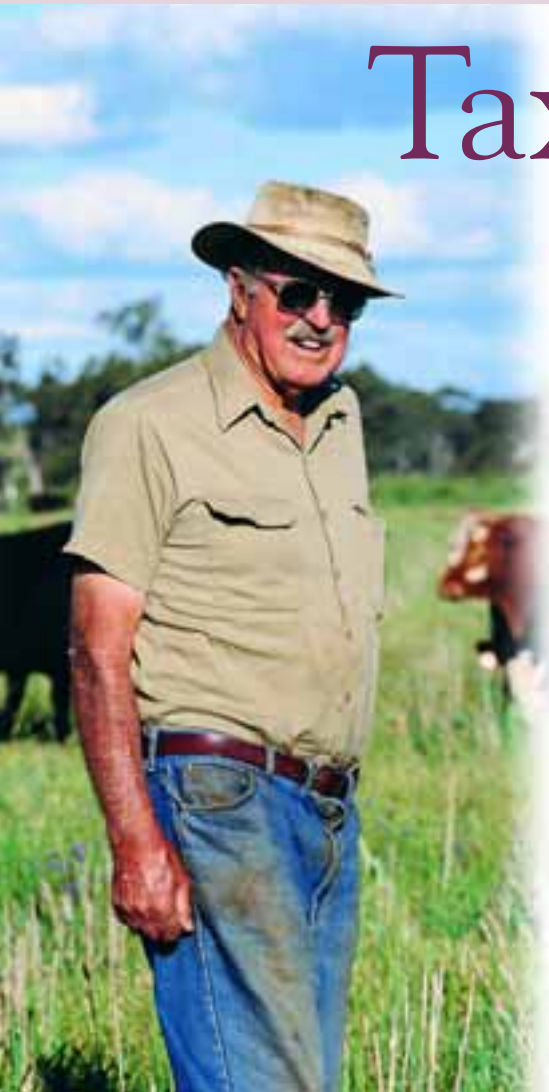
TreeProject are taking their orders now until the end of October. They are grown from November, and will be ready for planting in either autumn or spring 2004. The minimum order of 500 seedlings costs \$100.

For more information contact TreeProject on 9650 9477.

A group of happy volunteer planters at Bullengarook.



Tax and primary producers



The Tax Office aims to deliver quality information products and services to the small business community. These include information products that have been developed to help Landcare groups and primary producers with tax.

There are publications such as *Tax basics for small business*, *Record keeping for small business* and specific guides to GST, FBT and PAYG. These publications can be ordered by calling 13 28 66.

The Tax Office website has been redesigned to help primary producers find relevant information. Topics on record keeping, PAYG, tax averaging, Landcare and livestock valuations are now in the one area. There is also the latest news on the farm management deposit scheme, bushfire assistance and a range of other tax issues.

To find the primary industry area on the website go to ato.gov.au, choose the 'Businesses' option in our search engine and type in 'primary producers essentials'. There is a full range of other industry and business types on the Businesses home page.

E-record

E-record is a free record keeping software package provided by the Tax Office to help business people start keeping records electronically. It can also help with electronic record keeping for GST, BAS and Simplified Tax system obligations.

E-record can be downloaded from www.ato.gov.au/erecord or a free CD can be ordered by calling 1300 139 051.

A Fax from Tax

Tax information can be easily faxed to you. Call 13 28 60 and follow the instructions to order a catalogue or to be sent information.

The Tax Office has also been active in attending recent forums on bushfire and drought issues to explain relief measures provided by the ATO. The Tax Office regularly attends field days to provide a range of publications and individual assistance with taxpayer enquiries.

Education and legislation

for Serrated Tussock control

Education and community stewardship, when combined with legislation, is strengthening efforts to control Serrated Tussock in Victoria.

Chairman of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Scott Chirnside said that community empowerment is essential for successful Serrated Tussock management, but the availability of enforcement ensures that everyone is part of the solution.

"Many Landcare and environment groups actively participate in Serrated Tussock control projects," he said.

"They do a fantastic job for their area. They provide useful advice and guidance

to individual landholders and also manage to disseminate practical information out to empower the broader local community."

Scott Chirnside stressed that all landholders should acknowledge their obligations and make every effort to treat Serrated Tussock on their properties.

"This will reduce the impact on their own and neighbouring properties. Landholders failing to meet their community obligations are now seeing contractors entering offending properties and having infestations treated at their cost."

An Inverleigh landholder recently pleaded guilty to failing to comply with a Land Management Notice in the Geelong Magistrates Court. In exchange for his

guilty plea the magistrate ordered the landholder to enter into a three-year undertaking to control his Serrated Tussock and pay \$200 to the court fund. No conviction was recorded.

Staff from DPI had conducted a compliance entry to control the weed on the property at a cost in excess of \$20,000 which the landholder agreed to reimburse in an out-of-court settlement.

Scott Chirnside says that strategic Serrated Tussock management principles have been known and understood by landholders for a long period of time and that the enforcement process managed by DPI can work as a catalyst for advancing the control effort.