



**2017**  
**VICTORIAN**  
**LANDCARE AWARDS**

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**WINNERS**

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## From the Minister

It is a great honour for me to be involved in the 2017 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony at Government House.

The awards celebrate the incredible efforts and valuable contributions of esteemed individuals, community groups, schools and organisations across Victoria that protect and enhance the natural environment and improve sustainable agriculture.

Environmental volunteers are some of the most inspiring and important people in our communities; promoting health and well-being by connecting with nature while restoring and protecting Victoria's precious landscapes and natural assets.

It is wonderful to see how the Landcare movement has expanded to our urban areas and cities, reinforcing the connection between the built and natural environment to our health and well-being as well as the quality of our lives.

Liveable places support healthy, happy people. Sustainable, liveable cities provide confidence for businesses to invest and economies to grow.

That is why this year we introduced the Urban Landcare Award in recognition of those who are encouraging people in urban areas to improve their local environment.



In many ways, the success of environmental volunteering has inspired the Victorian Government's plan for *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*. The Plan aims to encourage more Victorians to value and protect nature and help them to connect with and enjoy the natural environment; including the importance of connecting to Country – which Traditional Owners have long known and practised.

On behalf of the Andrews Labor Government, I thank and congratulate all award nominees and winners in their respective categories. I also acknowledge the time, commitment and dedication of every single person acting to care for Victoria's natural environment, so that it is healthy for current and future generations.

**Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP**  
**Minister for Energy, Environment**  
**and Climate Change**

**Minister for Suburban Development**



## Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victorians

*We proudly acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pay respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country and acknowledge their contribution in the management of land, water, the natural landscape and our built environments.*

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## Victorian Landcare Awards

**Every two years, the State and Territory Landcare Awards are held to acknowledge the success and achievements of community landcarers, groups, networks and organisations who have been working to protect and restore our environment and improve agricultural productivity.**

In 2017, 85 nominations were received from across Victoria in the 14 award categories. The winners of the nine national award categories will go on to represent Victoria at the 2018 National Landcare Awards.

The Victorian Landcare Awards include five state-specific awards: Joan Kirner Landcare Award, Landcare Network Award, Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship, Dr. Sidney Plowman Study and Travel Award and a new category in 2017, the Urban Landcare Award.

To assess each of the entries, a selection of judges from community, government and sponsor representatives were invited to participate in the award judging process.

Judges were selected based on their experience and knowledge of the category areas.

The many high calibre award nominations received are testament to the hard work and commitment of Victorian landcarers.

We congratulate the winners for their outstanding achievements and commend all nominees for their efforts and commitment to Landcare.



## Joan Kirner Landcare Award

**Terry Hubbard**



Terry Hubbard lives Landcare. Terry is the chair of the National Landcare Network and Landcare Victoria Inc. He served as President of the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network for 12 years, is an active member of the Strath Creek Landcare Group and an inaugural member of the Friends of Yea Wetlands.

Terry's Landcare journey began in 1989 when he and his wife Janet purchased their property, 'The Three Sisters' in Flowerdale. Terry and Janet embarked on a long-term and ongoing restoration plan that has seen the once cleared, eroded and weed-infested property become a model of best practice sustainable farming.

Terry's Landcare ethic is built on two critical elements; recognising the value of Landcare for social connectivity, and an understanding of the importance of community partnerships.

Terry has fostered a partnership with Murrindindi Shire to work closely with the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network on blackberry action programs, roadside vegetation management, farm planning workshops for landholders and National Tree Day events.

Following the 2009 Black Saturday fires, the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network delivered an effective fire relief program. Terry made sure the program was inclusive and community-driven. The program is now used as a model by other Landcare networks.

Terry believes that when you bring the community together everything will fall into place. His passion for Landcare has been demonstrated at a local, regional, national and even international level. He inspires everyone he meets.



## Urban Landcare Award

### Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society

Highly Commended:  
Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek Inc



The Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society is one of Victoria's oldest environmental groups. The society has been fighting for the trees since the mid-1950s when residents of Blackburn, in Melbourne's east, questioned the relentless over-clearing of indigenous bushland for residential development.

Residents in Blackburn, then in the City of Nunawading (now the City of Whitehorse), believed that community action, political lobbying and perseverance was required to protect and enhance the environment.

The Society has promoted indigenous plants, opposed the destruction of trees through inappropriate development, published newsletters, plant guide booklets and indigenous plant posters and most recently a book on the Society's work going back to 1959.

The Society lobbied for the first Victorian government and council-sanctioned tree controls

which were introduced in the 1980s. These controls have now become overlays in the City of Whitehorse Planning Scheme for significant landscape, environmental significance, and vegetation protection. The Society also lobbied for the election of community councillors, a conservation officer and tree education officer.

More recently the Society has supported the establishment of community bushland parks advisory committees that are unique to the City of Whitehorse.

A recent satellite photograph showing Melbourne's metropolitan area taken at more than 100 kilometres altitude shows the suburbs of Nunawading, Blackburn North, Blackburn South and Forest Hill as bright patches of green surrounded by grey.

The energy, tenacity and perseverance of the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society has paid off.





## Landcare Network Award

### Connecting Country

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Connecting Country was established in 2009 and is a community-led landscape restoration organisation that operates as an informal Landcare network across Mount Alexander Shire and surrounds in central Victoria.

Connecting Country has a holistic approach to enhancing and restoring the natural environment and a commitment to biodiversity. The Connecting Country Landcare Facilitator works to link the efforts of the 31 Landcare and friends groups in the region and coordinate community education, citizen science and on-ground works.

Since 2010 Connecting Country has worked with the Landcare community to develop more than 240 land management plans with landholders and groups, protect 4,330 hectares of remnant vegetation, revegetate an additional 1,480 hectares and undertake pest plant and animal control across 6,080 hectares.

The organisation has also run 162 education events with 4,735 participants and implemented a long-term scientific monitoring program.

Connecting Country works to a biodiversity blueprint produced by a steering group of representatives from the Landcare community and government agencies to document the current health of the local landscape, and to guide its activities. A strategic plan developed for 2014 – 2024 details work plans and priorities.

Recent major projects include connecting landscapes across the Mount Alexander region, a reptile and frog monitoring program with 48 monitoring sites, a habitat restoration project for woodland birds and a project to boost bulokes and diamond firetails in Muckleford and surrounds.

Connecting Country has formed many successful and fruitful partnerships with agencies, organisations and groups operating in the region.



## Junior Landcare Team Award

### Penbank Campus – Woodleigh School

Commended: Bass Coast Landcare Network's Environmental Detectives Team

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Students from Penbank Campus – Woodleigh School on the Mornington Peninsula have swapped the classroom for the creek, where primary school aged children are actively involved with a Balcombe Moorooduc Landcare Group habitat project.

A day at school can involve researching, designing and creating habitat for indigenous fauna along a section of the Balcombe Creek at Mt Martha. Students start by researching the habitat requirements of their chosen species. This knowledge is reinforced with hands-on learning through habitat creation. Habitats include frog bogs, lizard lounges, nestboxes for birds, possums and bats, logs for bush rats, and bug hotels. The students work with different tools and materials to build the habitats.

The wider school community, including parents, grandparents and siblings is encouraged to attend revegetation days, where students share their knowledge and parents can offer expertise, materials and a helping hand.

The project is spreading the issue of habitat loss further into the community and providing the Penbank Campus students with rich opportunities to improve their communication, problem solving and teamwork abilities.

At the heart of this habitat project is a partnership between a Landcare group and a local school. It has produced a practical, positive way for students to take action on environmental issues and helped to involve the whole community in protecting their local creek.





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## Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award

### Woody Yaloak Catchment Group

Highly Commended: Simon Falkiner

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group has a long history of planning, implementing and measuring sustainable farm practices across its 120,000 hectare area.

The group was formed in 1993 out of a need to promote deep rooted perennial pastures to prevent wind erosion experienced in the 1983 drought, and to combat salinity.

Since then landholders have been supported in establishing perennial pastures, treating saline land and adopting minimal or no till cropping systems. Underpinning the pasture and crop work is a desire for greater understanding of the soil. Discount soil testing was made available to members and skills sessions run on how to interpret and use the results, which are available on a digital platform.

The group is committed to integrated catchment management and

revegetation, remnant vegetation protection, weed, pest, salinity and erosion control and waterway enhancement.

Since 1993 the group has supported the planting of 960,000 trees, 694 kilometres of fencing, 4,680 hours of erosion and rabbit harbour removal works, and 4,970 hours of weed control. Every project has been spatially mapped and recorded, some with time-lapse images.

The group has also conducted two ten-year outcome audits that show improvements in farm productivity and landscape condition. The less measurable, but equally important, outcomes are an increase in the skills and confidence of landholders. The group has brought people together and created a strong sense of shared purpose and achievement.



## Australian Government Innovation in Agricultural Land Management Award

**Simon Falkiner**

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Simon Falkiner manages a 240-hectare mixed enterprise family farm at Freshwater Creek near Geelong. The farm produces meat merinos, cereals and oilseed crops as well as hosting a number of long-term trials for soil acidification, soil biology and pasture cropping.

Simon values biodiversity and integrates it into the farming system. Soil health, diverse mixed species pasture systems, integrated pest management and crop and grazing management are all part of the mix. An 11 hectare site of critically endangered remnant plains grassland on the property is fenced and managed for biodiversity under the Victorian Volcanic Plains Tender program.

Simon has undertaken extensive riparian restoration works along Thompsons Creek to protect and enhance remnant vegetation and is involved in partnership projects to

monitor and increase populations of the threatened Yarra pygmy perch and growling grass frog. This work has the downstream benefit of improving one of the last mainland habitats of the endangered orange-bellied parrot.

Simon is also the President of the Surf Coast Rabbit Action Network where he is committed to achieving a coordinated approach to rabbit control through engaging stakeholders and recruiting grass roots support.

As Chair of the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Landcare Network, Simon helped to establish the Beach to Bush Biolink project. He is a Community Advisory Group member of the Corangamite CMA, has been a carbon farming advisor and mentors students from five different tertiary institutions. Simon is widely recognised as a leading farmer who is passionate about learning and supporting others.



## Australian Government Individual Landcarer Award

### Ian Higgins

Highly Commended: Ian Grenda, Jim de Hennin and Kaye Rodden

Commended: Penny Roberts and Ann Robson

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In the 1970s Ian Higgins started clearing weeds and tree planting on his parents' property along the Jim Crow Creek at Yandoit. In 1982, he carried out his first direct seeding experiment on his own property at Yandoit and went on to create an award winning stand of species-rich native vegetation on the roadside verge outside his house in Castlemaine.

When a group of locals started lobbying for funding to improve the condition of the local creeks, Ian led the first project, working with six people to remove weeds and revegetate creek-side public land.

Ian has continued with this work ever since, transforming Campbells Creek (which flows through the town of Campbells Creek near Castlemaine) from a degraded, weed-infested dump to a site rich with native vegetation and great beauty. The local childcare centre now holds bush kindergarten sessions in one of the 30-year-old revegetation patches that Ian established.

Ian has been a huge part of the success of the Friends of Campbells



Creek Landcare Group since it began in 2000. His knowledge and passion for the environment and his desire to share and engage with others has brought many people together to further the cause.

Ian has contributed significantly to environmental planning in the region with direct involvement in local, regional and statewide reports, action plans and conservation strategies. However, he has never stopped spending time on his first priority; almost every weekend Ian can be found with a spray pack on his back battling weeds along Campbells Creek and welcoming people to the site, keen to share its story.





Australian Government

National  
Landcare  
Programme



## Australian Government Partnerships for Landcare Award

### Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation

Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation are the owners of the historic property Coranderk in the Yarra Valley.

Coranderk was an Aboriginal Reserve of almost 5,000 acres between 1863 until its forced closure in 1924. In 1998 the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) purchased 80 hectares of the original property and handed it to Wandoon Estate. However, without funding for farm equipment and lacking the necessary land management skills, the property was leased and poorly managed for the past 20 years.

The restoration of Coranderk has come about through the desire of Wandoon Estate, volunteers from the local community, Yarra Ranges Council, and partnerships with organisations including Melbourne Water, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA and the ILC. The goal is to

rejuvenate Coranderk as a working farm, as important habitat for native fauna, and as a place to bring Wurundjeri people together on Country.

The partnership has introduced sustainable farming practices for productive beef cattle grazing, and conservation advice and expertise on habit restoration and waterway management.

The partnership has enabled Wurundjeri people; through the Narrap land management team, to be employed to work on traditional Country while gaining new skills.

The judges of the award were impressed by the innovative, powerful partnerships that the project has fostered. They judged the project to be an outstanding example of leadership in Indigenous natural resource management that is delivering tangible on-ground outcomes as well as social and economic value too.



## **Austcover Young Landcare Leader Award**

**Kathleen Brack**

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Kathleen Brack is the Regional Landcare Program Officer for the West Gippsland CMA. After just three years in the role Kathleen has changed the way the Landcare story is being told in the region. She has created new messages and found innovative ways of engaging with her community.

Keen to attract more young people to Landcare, Kathleen ran an Intrepid Landcare Retreat at Wilsons Promontory for 20 people aged from 18 to 35. The participants learnt about Landcare, and talked, hiked and worked with the local friends group. Retreat graduates have gone on to form the Gippsland Intrepid Landcare Group.

Kathleen has demonstrated how social media can benefit Landcare. In just a year as administrator of the Landcare in Victoria Facebook page she has increased its fans by 35 per cent.

A podcast she produces that tells the stories of Landcare in West Gippsland was selected as a new and noteworthy podcast by iTunes Australia.

With the aim of explaining the social and community benefits of Landcare, Kathleen recently conducted a social return on investment study on a Merriman Creek Landcare Group project. This study found that for every dollar spent on a Landcare project, there is at least a \$3.41 return in social value.

Kathleen has also driven the implementation of a new iPad mapping system for the five Landcare networks in Gippsland, and has organised a huge number of workshops, training courses and field days. Kathleen's energy and enthusiasm are infectious. She is an impressive role model and a true young Landcare leader.





## SureGro Coastcare Award

### Friends of Beware Reef

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The 220 hectare Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary is situated off Cape Conran in east Gippsland. The sanctuary encompasses a series of granite pinnacles rising 30 metres from the sea floor. The reef is rich in marine life and habitat, with a unique mix of warmer and cooler temperate species.

For the past 15 years the Friends of Beware Reef have made hundreds of boat trips to monitor and conduct underwater surveys of marine life at the reef and other sites in the sanctuary.

Their contribution to scientific knowledge has played an important role in assisting Parks Victoria to understand and better protect the reef and other marine environments.

The friends are citizen scientists, gathering high-quality data at scales impossible for other researchers to achieve. They share their knowledge through public lectures, videos and identification books and posters.

All data is contributed to Reef Life Survey, an international database that links volunteer divers, scientists and managers in marine research and conservation.

In recent years the friends have recorded the emergence of marine species generally found further north that are now appearing in eastern Bass Strait, possibly as a result of rising water temperatures. They have also discovered introduced marine pests including the seven-armed sea star and Northern Pacific sea star, and alerted Parks Victoria to a devastating population explosion of sea urchins.

The Friends of Beware Reef are a small, high-achieving group of dedicated volunteers. Their commitment to the marine environment and the volume and scope of the work they have undertaken is truly outstanding.





## **Fairfax Media Landcare Community Group Award**

### **Tarrangower Cactus Control Group**

Highly Commended: 3 Creeks Landcare Group

Commended: Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare Group

Over the last decade volunteers from the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group (TCCG) have formed an army of cactus warriors who have destroyed millions of wheel cactus plants in their local landscapes including many historic gold mining sites.

Wheel cactus is an extremely resilient plant and is difficult to destroy due to its thick, waxy skin. TCCG members have spent years researching different techniques to eradicate the plant and have developed a specific injection tool which effectively delivers herbicide directly into the plant.

TCCG has developed a successful community-based approach to wheel cactus control. They have raised awareness of the weed within their community with newsletters, brochures, media releases and an informative website. The group maintains its high profile by participating in the annual Maldon Easter Parade and through market stalls, sausage sizzles and selling cactus warrior t-shirts.

Landholders are educated on how to treat wheel cactus infestations



on their properties with regular community field days. The group then assists landholders with free equipment loans and plant disposal.

TCCG has a strategic action plan that is reviewed annually. The plan helps the group to manage its priorities and organise its many relationships with volunteers, landowners, work crews, tertiary students, scouts and contractors.

The TCCG has been a positive force in the community. It has linked townsfolk with their rural neighbours and involved people of all ages and abilities in restoring their local environment.



## **Rio Tinto Indigenous Land Management Award**

### **Angela Jeffery**

Highly Commended: Woka Walla Land Management Crew

Commended: Windamara Aboriginal Corporation

Angela Jeffery leads a project that is assisting Wadawurrung people and the broader Aboriginal community in the Corangamite region to participate in traditional fire practices. *Wyn-murrup Yangarramela* means 'fire spirit comes back' in the Wadawurrung language.

The project is part of the Corangamite CMA Indigenous Participation Program (supported through the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme).

As Indigenous NRM Facilitator for Corangamite CMA, Angela Jeffery has recognised the strong social and cultural needs of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people in Victoria to connect with Country through fire practice.

Fire practice provides a means of fulfilling cultural obligations to manage Country, as well as a way of maintaining wellbeing through traditions associated with the cleansing and healing of Country through fire.

Angela has coordinated trial sites for traditional burns and in April 2017 she organised a demonstration of traditional and CFA burning techniques



at Teesdale that was attended by more than 60 stakeholders.

Aboriginal people involved in the Indigenous Participation Program will have access to formal training in fire, flora and fauna identification, biodiversity monitoring techniques, experiential delivery of traditional burning practices and knowledge exchange between participants.

Uncle Byron Powell, a Wadawurrung – Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation Elder, said at the Teesdale event:

"We are breaking new ground, to see first-hand so many groups coming together to manage this land and heal Country together".





## **Victorian Farmers Federation/ Landcare Victoria Inc. Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship Award**

**Sandii Lewis**

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Sandii works with the seven Landcare groups in the Eastern Mallee Landcare Consortium. The groups she supports cover an area of approximately 500,000 hectares.

Sandii's first task when she took on the Landcare Facilitator role in 2014 was to find how she could best help her Landcare groups. Sandii identified governance as a major issue so she developed a series of instructions and policies for each group and assisted them with implementation.

Sandii's highly developed skills as a Landcare facilitator helped her to identify individuals in each group and to assist them with the task of group rejuvenation by building their skills in grant writing, reporting and project management. This has led to all of the groups performing better and becoming more stable and confident when looking to the future.

Sandii has a proactive approach to environmental issues. She has assisted the Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group with a project to tackle the invasive Hudson pear cacti, arranged for a recycling facility to collect used grain bags from farmers and has ensured her groups are more successful when making grant applications by streamlining administration and compliance requirements.

Sandii will use her fellowship to undertake training in Natural Sequence Farming. Climate change predictions for the Mallee are for warmer temperatures and less rainfall but increased risks of flooding, erosion and waterlogging. Sandii believes that bringing the Natural Sequence Farming model of managing water flows to the Mallee will provide farmers with a valuable tool for sustainable farm and environmental management.





## **Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award**

### **Bret Ryan**

Highly Commended: Tony Gardner and Kate McWhinney



Bret Ryan is the Land Health Manager with the Corangamite CMA. He has worked as a professional scientist and project manager for 17 years. Bret has experience as a local government biodiversity officer, an environmental consultant and as a Landcare facilitator.

Under Bret's management, the Corangamite CMA's Land Health Program has seen 204 farming entities adopt sustainable practice change across more than 75,000 hectares of land. In the area of soil acidity 92 per cent of participants have indicated a change in management practice.

Bret attributes the success of the program to the use of local knowledge produced from local trial data. This means farmers are able to closely relate to the soil types and farming systems under investigation.

Bret has demonstrated exceptional abilities in natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, project management, policy and planning and government and community relations. He works closely with a variety of different groups from federal agencies to industry bodies, Landcare groups and landholders.

Bret will use the Dr. Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award for a study tour of the Murray Darling Basin. He will look at the lessons learnt and innovations applied when trying to balance environmental, agricultural and social needs around water allocation and modernisation across the basin.

Bret aims to apply the knowledge and experience gained from the study tour to an innovative pilot project to modernise on-farm water capture and storage in dryland farming areas of the Corangamite region.

We would like to thank the nominators for putting in the time and effort to submit nominations. Thanks also to the nominees for their inspiring stories and ongoing contribution to improving our natural environment.

We thank the judging panels for their significant contributions of time and effort in evaluating all of the entries and undertaking the difficult task of choosing winners.

We would also like to acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors:



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## Celebrate National Landcare Week 4 – 10 September 2017

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Printed on 100% recycled paper

ISSN 2205-5843 (print)

ISSN 2205-5851 (online)

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