

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

WINTER 2024 Issue 87

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



VICTORIAN LANDCARE AWARDS FEATURE

Celebrating Victoria's Landcarers

Victorian Environment Friends Network's Awards

CARYA wins Australian Government Climate Innovation Award



Victorian
Landcare
Program



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

WINTER 2024 ISSUE 87

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Cover photograph

The cover's collage of images includes an image of each winner, highly commended and commended recipients at the 2024 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony.

Disclaimer

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Acknowledgment

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

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



From the Minister

I am honoured to have been part of the 2024 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony. This event celebrates the immense contributions of individuals, community groups, schools, and organisations working tirelessly to protect and improve our natural environment, promoting sustainable farming practices, and mitigating the effects of climate change.

The spirit of environmental volunteering and the work ethic displayed by every nominee is truly inspirational. I would like to thank the people that took the time to nominate those who we celebrated at the ceremony, and the many dedicated judges who assessed the record numbers of award nominations this year. It was a difficult task to consider the contribution of each nominee and decide on the winning entries.

This feature issue of the magazine includes fascinating stories on the award winners. Groups and individuals were recognised for bushfire recovery, revegetation, regenerative agriculture, improving biodiversity corridors,

coastal protection, weed control, citizen science, school and community education, partnerships, and Caring for Country.

Mallacoota local, Bryce Watts-Parker is the winner of the NextGen Landcare Award. Bryce stepped up after the 2019-20 bushfires in East Gippsland and became the youngest member of the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association. He helped to search the bush for injured wildlife, caring for them at the Mallacoota wildlife shelter and distributing food and water for surviving animals. After the fire, Bryce helped establish the Mallacoota Endemic Garden, which features more than 150 species of native flora and is a seedbank and insurance population for local endangered plants.

The Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group is a fantastic example of what a community group can achieve and has won the Landcare and Environmental Volunteer Group Award. The group has extended its reach and is committed to fostering broad community participation in Landcare, and

over the past two years more than 800 people have volunteered for their projects.

Lisa McIntyre is one of the many long-term Landcarers acknowledged in the awards. Lisa has had a remarkable 23-year tenure as the secretary of the Panyyabyr Landcare Group. A champion of sustainable farming, Lisa will use her fellowship for a study tour led by the Regenerative Agriculture Network of Tasmania, with the aim of sharing her new knowledge with members of her Landcare network.

Our winners of the nine National Landcare Awards categories will go on to represent Victoria at the 2025 National Landcare Awards. I wish them all the best of luck.

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

2024 Victorian Landcare Awards nominees

There were a record number of 146 nominations for the 2024 Victorian Landcare Awards. See the list of all the nominees below.

Abbotsford Riverbankers	Coleraine Primary School	Global Village Learning	Lakes Entrance Community Landcare Group	Otway Ocean Care	Tavish Bloom
Adrian Tyler	Dale Smithyman	Graeme Stockton	Lillian Maher	Our Lady Star of the Sea Primary School	The Blackwell Family
Aileen Banfield	Daniel Frost	Graham Cockcroft	Lisa McIntyre	Pam Maple	The First People of the Millewa Mallee (Safe Haven Team) and Trust
Allira Kliver	Darraweit Guim Primary School	Granite2Goulburn Network	Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc	Patricia Corbett	For Nature
Amy Simpson	Darryl Clune	Harsimran Kaur	Marie Jones	Paul Fleming	The Urban Bushland Initiative Inc.
Andrew Borg	David Bateman	Heytesbury District Landcare Network	Marissa Shean (3 nominations)	Paul Slayerter	Timor Primary School
Angus (Gus) Gould	Doris Razeng	Huib Ottow	Marney Durie (2 nominations)	Penny Roberts	Tony Brindley
Anna Ridgway	Douglas Evans	Ian Arney	Mary Dracup	Peter Ronalds	TreeProject
Annaleigh Thurtell	Doug Small	Ian Chisholm	Melissa Ainsworth	Reservoir East Primary School	Warby Range Landcare Group Inc. and Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation
Annette Cavanagh	Dr Greg Holland	Ian Clarke	Merri Creek Management Committee (2 nominations)	Richard Case	We Love Aintree
Annette Lambert	Eastwood Landcare Group	Jackson Cass	Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group	Robert Belcher	Wendouree Primary School
Ardeer South Primary School	Eliza Lee	Jacqueline Overmars	Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare	Roger Brown	Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation
Bacchus Marsh Grammar	Elizabeth Ross	Jan Healey	Mornington Peninsula Koala Conservation	Ron Litjens	Wodonga Urban Landcare Network
Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group	Endeavour Hills Early Learning Centre and Kindergarten	Janet Hagen	Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network	Rowan Wallace	Woorndoo Chatsworth Landcare Group
Blairgowrie Friends of Mornington Peninsula National Park (2 nominations)	Friends of Daly Nature Reserve (with Gisborne Primary School, Macedon Ranges Shire Council and Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork)	Jocelyn Reid	Mount Korong Eco Watch	Sally Day	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation – Narrap Unit & Darebin Creek Management Committee
Bryce Campbell	Friends of Mallee Conservation	John Gilson	Mt Alexander Regenerative Agriculture Group	Sandra Dillon	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation – Narrap Unit & Yarra Valley Water
Bryce Watts-Parker	Friends of Merbein Common	John Laing	Nature Network Bendigo Region	Seeds and Weeds Group, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Inc	Wyndham Early Learning Centre
Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project	Friends of Organ Pipes National Park	John Walter	Newham Primary School	Sienna Cross	
Cannibal Creek Catchment Landcare Group Inc. (2 nominations)	Gabriele Hogg	Jonathan Starks	Nicholas Sibly	Simon Davies	
Canopy Accelerator Co-operative Limited	Gecko Clan Landcare Network	Julie Andrew (2 nominations)	Nicole Middleton	Southwest Woody Weed Action Team	
Cavendish Primary School	Gisborne Primary School	Julie Dunmill	Norm and Yvonne Dinnage	Springsure Hill Landcare Group	
Christie McIntosh		Julie Thompson	Norman Borg	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	
Cliff Unger		Karen Garth		St. Anne's Primary School	
Climate Adaptation Requires Youth Action (CARYA)		Kas Kreun		Shine Heights Primary School	
		Kate Lee		Tambo Bluff Landcare	
		Kate Leslie			
		Kevin Nolte			
		Kevin Willersdorf			

Landcare and Environmental Volunteer Group Award



Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group

The Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG) was established in 1989 by the local farming community around Ballan with the aim of returning native trees to the landscape, supporting landholders, and improving riparian vegetation along the Moorabool River.

The region has a diverse landscape, rich in cultural heritage and biodiversity. Brisbane Ranges National Park to the south, and the new Wombat-Lerderderg National Park to the north, contain valuable remnant vegetation, with many fragmented patches of important grassland and bushland in between.

Now, more than 30 years on, MCLG's area, membership and activities has grown significantly.

According to MCLG Coordinator, Jackson Cass, a commitment to fostering broad community participation in Landcare and partnering with others has been a cornerstone of the group's success.

"We can see the benefits of getting everyone involved – including people not typically drawn to Landcare or environmental volunteering," Jackson said.

School project also engages parents

A project at Ballan Primary School is a good example. The group was keen to increase wildlife habitat in the school grounds and foster conservation values in students by involving them in revegetation and decorating and installing nestboxes. The activity was focused on the students as well as targeting their parents.

A pole camera was used to monitor the nestboxes and the activity of the local wildlife is now the talk of the playground.

MCLG's collaboration with CSIRO's National Koala Monitoring Program has attracted a diverse range of participants including private landholders, Federation University students and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC). More than 150 people have contributed to this major national project.

The project uses a diverse range of data including First Nations knowledge and citizen science to collect high-quality data on koala populations and habitat within the region which will inform future decision making, while building community and making people feel valued for their contribution.

According to Jackson, Landcare faces many challenges in the region.

"At each stage of planning, developing, and implementing projects we are up against financial constraints, disengaged or absentee landholders, wider community engagement difficulties, and a lack of baseline data about local flora and fauna. To tackle these issues, we need to be aligned with the plans and objectives of our major partners including Corangamite CMA, Barwon Water, and WTOAC's Paleert Tjaara Dja Healthy Country Plan."



MCLG members with other participants at the Co-Design Workshop for the National Koala Monitoring Program held at the Ballan Neighbourhood House in July 2022.

Working with absentee and disengaged landholders

The group uses a targeted outreach program to work with absentee and disengaged landholders. Working alongside the local council, landholders are encouraged to join the group which then helps them to develop an achievable plan of action, so they are not overwhelmed by the task.

Jackson says communication is critical.

"We use social media, newsletters, free events, seminars, workshops, emails, our website, blog posts, newspaper articles, phone calls and property visits. It's worth remembering that relationships take time. It can take several years for genuine, meaningful relationships to flourish."

The group's efforts to increase community awareness are strategic. This has produced a notable boost in participation. More than 800 people have volunteered for MCLG projects over the past two years.

Since 2021 MCLG has delivered more than 40 hectares of revegetation (approximately 33,000 plants), 450 hectares of weed control, 345 hectares of rabbit control, 30 educational events and secured more than \$260,000 in funding.

By building genuine relationships and diversifying funding, MCLG provides an inspiring example of how to build a sustainable future, one property at a time.

Highly commended

Cannibal Creek Catchment Landcare Group Inc.

The Cannibal Creek Catchment Landcare Group (CCCLG) has been working to improve the Cannibal Creek Catchment for more than 30 years. The initial farmer-focus has expanded to see the group develop partnerships with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Cardinia Shire Council, schools, and local businesses. Each year CCCLG identifies, plans and seeks funding for environmental projects that have a high local priority. The group's community planting days attract large numbers of people, often involving other local Landcare groups. CCCLG is working with Charles Sturt University on a dung beetle project and is an active member of the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network.



Veteran weed buster Carolyn Ferguson inspiring the crowd at Springsure Hill Landcare Group's community engagement day in 2022.

Highly commended

Springsure Hill Landcare Group

Springsure Hill Landcare Group was established in 1997 to control ragwort and other priority local weeds around Buln Buln, Shady Creek and Crossover, north east of Warragul. The group was committed to enhancing the environment through community action. The recipients of a Weedbuster Award in 2004, the group's area remains mostly ragwort free. In the last eight years changing demographics and the challenges of COVID lockdowns put the group under threat, with the committee reduced to just two members. Tireless efforts to engage landholders and build community partnerships have seen an impressive revitalisation. Membership is now 80 strong with a Junior Landcare program, a new directions statement and several grants to further engage the local community and implement revegetation and weed control works.



A Cannibal Creek Catchment Landcare Group planting day which included participants from Windana Drug and Alcohol Recovery involved in Western Port Catchment Intrepid Landcare Group and Bessie Creek/Ararat Creek Landcare.

Joan Kirner Landcare Award



Marie Jones

The Joan Kirner Landcare Award honours a long-term Landcarer in Victoria who has forged partnerships and inspired, encouraged, and mentored others to undertake on-ground action.

Marie Jones was born in Rutherglen and worked as a primary school teacher and assistant principal in inner suburban Melbourne for many years before moving to Central Victoria in 1994.

"I knew nothing about the environment when we first arrived, I'm certainly not a botanist, but it was clear the environment needed help, and I was willing to learn. Teaching gave me a social conscience and skills at organising and multitasking," Marie said.

In 1995, Marie was a founding member of Golden Point Landcare Group, making connections with members, overseeing projects, and mentoring other members. She has driven many projects within the Forest Creek Valley, working in partnership with Parks Victoria within the Castlemaine Diggings National Park, and caring for Golden Point Reservoir – a highly valued conservation asset in the region. She has contributed to the planting of over 15,000 indigenous plants and many hectares of pest management in disturbed gold-mining country.

Marie became involved with Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests in 1998. She is currently president of this active group that runs monthly walks, organises photographic exhibitions, and develops educational materials to promote and advocate for the box-ironbark forests of the region.

In 2007, Marie was instrumental in the creation of Connecting Country (Mount Alexander Region) Inc, a community conservation organisation driving landscape-scale restoration in the region and operating as a Landcare network for 30 Landcare and environmental volunteer groups. Marie has worked tirelessly to ensure that Connecting Country is successful and sustainable, serving for many years as secretary or president and being involved in multiple sub-committees.

Under Marie's guidance, the network has successfully protected, restored, and enhanced over 13,000 hectares of the region's landscape.

Marie has spearheaded several major community campaigns, including successfully fighting the proposed Calder Freeway upgrade in 1995 to protect the local environment of Chewton, and as a founding member of the Post Office Hill Action Group, which was

granted the right to manage a 22.5-hectare site proposed for residential and commercial use as a bushland reserve.

Marie believes Landcare has become even more important in smaller communities since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Getting people together to do something for the environment is so positive. It's a way of creating community. We need this every day, and it is essential in times of crisis. Landcare is such fun and you meet fantastic people. The first time someone called me a greenie I was taken aback, but now I wear that hat with pride," Marie said.

Marie has now been involved in Landcare and environmental projects for more than 30 years. She is acknowledged in her community as an exceptional grassroots environmental leader. Marie is the person who people want to talk to about new ideas, project funding possibilities, how to partner with other groups and working on new issues.

Marie has a constructive and positive approach to her community work. She treats everyone with respect and is always keen to listen and learn even when there is disagreement.



Marie Jones at Forest Creek, Golden Point in 2021. Marie's approachability, inclusiveness and reliability have seen her support and instigate many Landcare activities across her local shire.

Marie was especially honoured to be nominated for the Joan Kirner Landcare Award as she was Joan's neighbour in Williamstown for many years.

"I remember her fondly," Marie said. "Joan was a very compassionate woman."

Commended – Bruce Campbell, John Gilson, Nicole Middleton, Rowan Wallace, John Walter

Highly commended Penny Roberts

Penny Roberts has been involved in Newham and District Landcare Group (NDLG) since its inception in 2004. Penny is known fondly by members of the group as 'a force of nature' due to her commitment, energy, and ability to get Landcare projects done. Penny served as NDLG president for more than seven years and has undertaken many other leadership roles. She is the group's contact for new members and general queries and has seen membership grow from 40 to 100 families – more than 35 per cent of the district's population. She has hosted dinners for new members every year which lead to networking, friendships and increased participation in the NDLG's many projects. Penny has been a stalwart of the group's roadside biodiversity projects and the ambitious Cobaw Biolink. She is the grant writer for the group and has secured 18 different grants totalling \$521,760 for Cobaw Biolink works since 2006.



Penny Roberts has shown outstanding leadership, drive, and commitment to Newham and District Landcare Group over the past 20 years.

Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award

Peter Ronalds

The Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award recognises a staff member who has made an outstanding contribution to practical on-farm achievement of soil conservation, including establishing indigenous vegetation, and fostering improved land management practices by farmers and landholders.

Peter Ronalds grew up in West Gippsland and spent the first 20 years of his working life as a dairy farmer at Jindivick. Along with his family, he planted thousands of native trees on the farm, linking them through long corridors to neighbouring farms, protecting the waterways and significantly lifting productivity.

In 2005 Peter was instrumental in establishing the Jindivick Landcare Group and was still serving on the committee up until 2023. After some further training in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture, Peter joined the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network (WPCLN) in 2006, working with farmers on sustainable land management.

His passion for helping farmers achieve best practice has seen him deliver many large, regional-scale, multiple-year projects.

Farmers see Peter as a peer. This means he has been able to build strong relationships that are based on trust and respect. When the Black Saturday Bushfires tore through parts of the region in 2009, Peter immediately swung into action. He worked with the West Gippsland CMA, local government, churches and the local community to apply for grants to replace shelterbelts that had been destroyed, remove burnt cypress and pines, and assist with refencing Landcare projects. Of the 60 farms with damaged Landcare projects, all but one was able to be reinstated.

Peter supported community planting days to assist with the recovery effort and organised multiple field days on fire recovery for local farmers. His enthusiasm is inspiring. He has the ability to pull many partners together to achieve a common goal. In 2020 Peter was part of a popular seven-week regenerative training program for farmers led by scientists and experts.

An advocate for peer support and the importance of networking and discussion, the farmer discussion groups Peter established 10 years ago are still active.

Peter said he finds working with farmers energising.



Peter Ronalds is Sustainable Agriculture Manager with the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network. He is passionate about regenerative agriculture and committed to supporting farmers to continually improve their natural resources.

"I love the passion that many farmers have. They are great innovators so there's lots of bouncing ideas around and sharing experience and knowledge," he said.

Peter is an innovator, and always keen to test and trial alternate practices which can lead to increased sustainability and profitability. In recent years he has observed a number of Australian farmers using bioferts to maintain pasture or crop production, reduce pest and disease impact, and reduce input costs.

Bioferts are generally sourced on farm, using manure or milk, with trace minerals and other nutrients added. The biofert fermentation process metabolises the minerals to make them more available to soils and plants.

Peter will use his award to undertake a study tour of eight Victorian farmers who are using bioferts successfully. He will share the results with his local farmer discussion groups and with a written report.

Alongside his passion for Landcare, Peter also volunteers with Beyond Subsistence, a not-for-profit organisation that supports and trains subsistence farmers in Africa to make sustainable improvements in farm productivity, nutrition, and the environment. Peter has made many trips to Africa and provides online support to African farmers when he is at home.

Highly commended

David Bateman

David Bateman is executive general manager and Landcare facilitator with the Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN). He has worked for the BCLN for 16 years, spearheading change in land management and soil conservation practices among farmers in the region and delivering major revegetation projects. Under Dave's leadership BCLN has grown to become one of the largest and most active Landcare networks in Victoria. To tackle resistance to new practices BCLN established demonstration farms and runs an impressive variety of workshops, field days, and information sessions. Dave believes it is a collaborative approach that creates a sense of collective responsibility, reinforcing the notion that change is not just individual, but a shared journey toward a more sustainable and resilient future.



David Bateman speaking at the announcement of the Victorian Landcare Grants and Landcare facilitator funding in 2019.



Virginia Carter from MPLN introduces locals to the flora and fauna of Greens Bush in 2021.

Landcare and Environmental Volunteer Network Award



Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network

As the umbrella organisation for 13 Landcare groups and other affiliated environmental volunteer groups, the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network (MPLN) has a huge responsibility.

The network, which marked its 10th anniversary last year, operates in a richly biodiverse green wedge, across 750 square kilometres and 10 catchment areas within Mornington Peninsula Shire. Its mission is to protect and enhance the Mornington Peninsula's unique environment by promoting

responsible land stewardship, working mostly with private landholders, but also undertaking some projects on public land.

Secretary Peter Scott said the impetus for establishing the network was the opportunity to secure government funding for a Landcare facilitator, a role held by

Jacqui Salter from 2012 to 2020 when Chantal Morton joined MPLN.

"We thought that if we banded the Landcare groups together on the peninsula that would make it easier for us as a combined group to then get one of these funding positions. The network's there to help the groups, help them work together, apply for grants, and help them with governance," Peter said.

Five focus areas

MPLN's five main areas of focus are: reconnecting habitats, protecting soil and water, controlling pest animals, managing weeds, and preventing inappropriate clearing of native vegetation. A major project spanning the past decade, Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape was funded by a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation League.

The network has since been able to implement 10 biolink plans across the Mornington Peninsula with funding from various sources, including the Victorian Government, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Melbourne Water, and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council.



A smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country at Uncommon Folk Farm in Main Ridge held during NAIDOC Week in 2023.



Jeff Carter conducts a WaterWatch survey at Baldry Crossing.

This has helped reconnect fragmented remnants of native vegetation to create wildlife corridors, or biolinks, in each of the region's catchment areas, allowing safer passage for mammals, marsupials, reptiles and birds.

The network's flagship biolink project, the Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink, with its focus on revegetation, weed control and strategic fencing, is creating a corridor across private properties between the two largest core patches of remnant vegetation, Mornington Peninsula National Park and Arthurs Seat State Park. These landscape-scale links will benefit numerous threatened species, including powerful owls and swamp skinks. This project has received major funding from DEECA, Melbourne Water and other sources.

According to Peter, large swathes of the peninsula had been cleared in the past for farming, but since land values had risen, many areas have been subdivided into smaller farms and lifestyle blocks. This fragmentation has contributed to declines in native species due to habitat loss and predation by feral animals.

Workshops to encourage better stewardship by landholders have been run on a range of topics, including plant identification, rabbit control, integrated pest management, and whole farm revegetation planning for biodiversity, productivity and climate change.

Linking landholders with bushland restoration experts and Landcarers

To date, the network has engaged with 105 private landowners and contributed to almost 300 hectares of weeding and revegetation works. More than 22,000 native trees and shrubs were planted in 2022–2023.

The newest program, Meet Your Bushland, links landholders with a local bushland restoration specialist and a member of their local Landcare group.

They do a walk and talk on the property together, concentrating on areas with the highest habitat values, then visit another property to see what successful restoration works look like. The program was based on lessons from Linking the Mornington

Highly commended Merri Creek Management Committee

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has been bringing together volunteers from all over the Merri Creek catchment in a community effort to restore and conserve indigenous biodiversity for more than 35 years. From litter collection to bird diversity monitoring, water quality assessments, on-ground plantings and weeding, MCMC's stewardship of the creek has brought significant environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits. The activities of MCMC are made possible through the tireless ongoing contributions of thousands of community volunteers. During 2021–2022, despite lingering impacts from COVID-19, 1000 volunteers contributed more than 3000 hours to habitat restoration and protection in the catchment and MCMC delivered 333 education events connecting with 6775 people across the catchment.



A Merri Creek Management Committee Mothers' Day planting in 2022.

Peninsula Landscape, a project which highlighted the effectiveness of one-on-one, on-site interactions between landholders and bushland restoration specialists.

With about 600 member families, the network actively engages the community through monthly e-newsletters – with a readership of about 1000 people – social media, and local newspapers and newsletters. Property owners are also contacted by door knocking and letters, and emails are sent to businesses, schools and community groups. The Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink and National Tree Day events have attracted more than 1000 volunteers.

Securing landholder commitments to biolink works

Despite challenges in engaging landholders and finding experienced project coordinators, the network has successfully implemented biolink projects by securing landholder commitment through demonstrating both the productivity and environmental benefits and securing partial landholder funding.

For example, the Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink project introduced a 10 per cent financial contribution requirement from participating landholders, who also

signed a formal agreement committing to maintaining areas of on-ground works for five years.

This approach has been well-received. The contribution has since been raised to 20 per cent and adopted across all biolink projects.

Collaborations have been essential for the network, with strong partnerships developed with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Melbourne Water, Western Port Biosphere Foundation, local schools and TAFEs. Our Songlines tree planting events were held during NAIDOC Week in 2022 and 2023. The peninsula's Women in Business group also has been involved in working bees and planting days.

MPLN has made significant strides in reconnecting and restoring habitats through establishing biolinks in each catchment area. It supports member Landcare groups in conserving native vegetation and fauna, advocating for sustainable land management, and influencing policy issues. The projects focus on biodiversity enhancement through pest and weed control, educational initiatives, and raising Landcare's profile on the Mornington Peninsula.

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



Lisa McIntyre

After a remarkable 26-year tenure as the co-founder and secretary of the Panyabyr Landcare Group (PLG), seven years ago Lisa McIntyre transitioned to the role of Landcare facilitator. She now supports six neighbouring groups covering approximately 284,000-hectares of Western Victoria. Lisa sees herself as a collaborator – encouraging people to get involved in the big picture. In 1994 she encouraged PLG members to contribute ideas to a sub-catchment plan. This has paved the way for many impactful local projects.

Lisa's approach to Landcare is about balancing a dual focus on productivity and conservation. She is passionate about demonstrating the care farmers have for their land – showing that a productive farm and a healthy natural environment can co-exist. She has organised practical demonstrations and field trials on pasture management, whole farm planning, weed control, soil health, farm forestry, bioblitzes, integrated pest management, carbon accounting and direct seeding, which has stimulated lots of local interest and led to the adoption of new techniques.

Lisa's commitment to research and education underpins her work. She assists members of the group to run comprehensive long-term fox and rabbit control programs, and has sourced funding for community salinity mapping, catchment planning, farm-dam enhancement, protecting threatened species, biodiversity corridors and surveys. Lisa coordinated an extensive revegetation project along the Wannon River and its tributaries that spanned 12 farms.

Lisa serves as a vital link between agencies and the Landcare community in times of crisis and has been on hand for drought, flood and bushfire. Her holistic approach to community engagement is reflected in the events, farm walks, bus tours and group meetings that she organises. Everyone is welcome and there's always time for social interaction.

According to Lisa, Landcare is a point of connection in her rural community.

"We find, especially when people get older, that it can be easy to lose touch. Landcare events that are social and not just about getting work done are a way of checking in with people and building important social

connections. Then, in times of crisis, our knowledge of the community means we can help agencies and community groups make sure the help goes to where it is needed," Lisa said.

A seasoned writer of funding submissions, project reports and plans, Lisa has played a key role in securing resources for the group. She also writes an informative monthly newsletter that has become a must-read in the local area.

Lisa has observed a growing interest in regenerative agriculture across the region and will use her fellowship to undertake a study tour of Tasmanian beef, sheep, and dairy farms known for their cutting-edge sustainable agriculture practices. The tour will be led by a member of the Regenerative Agriculture Network of Tasmania and will also include training in monitoring techniques.

Regenerative agriculture practices, including agroforestry and water management techniques, contribute to the resilience of farms in the face of climate variability. Lisa is excited about the prospect of bringing this new knowledge back to her community.



Lisa McIntyre re-snagging her local creek with fallen timber. More than 15 per cent of the total farm area, including critical creek lines and wetland areas on her family property, Toorong, has been fenced and revegetated.

Commended – Jonathan Starks



Marissa Shean is proud of the achievements of community Landcare in the Mallee.

Highly commended Marissa Shean

Marissa Shean's love of Landcare runs deep – it was her first job when she finished university. More than 20 years later she's working with multiple Landcare groups in some of the most isolated parts of Victoria. Marissa started her Landcare journey in 2000 when she took on the role of Southern Mallee Landcare Facilitator, working out of a small office in Hopetoun. Since 2019 she has been the South-Eastern Mallee Landcare Facilitator working with eight Landcare groups from Nullawil to Sea Lake. She has played an instrumental role in planning, developing and delivering a wide range of Landcare projects, including the Uttwillock Wetland environmental study, and large-scale rabbit control works.

Victorian Environment Friends Network's Awards

The Victorian Environment Friends Network (VEFN) represents the common interests of all friends groups across Victoria. The VEFN's awards were established in 1991 to recognise and reward the extraordinary work that is performed by friends groups. These are the winners of the VEFN's 2023 awards.



Best Friend Award

Tony Castle, Friends of Mt Worth State Park

Tony joined the Friends group in 2013 and quickly became a pivotal member, serving as the publicity officer and later as secretary/treasurer. His involvement with Bushwalking Victoria enhanced the group's visibility and connections. Tony's diligent efforts streamlined administrative tasks, from managing finances to transitioning to electronic payments. Behind the scenes, he established efficient systems for reporting, inventory management, and membership maintenance. Tony's proactive approach extended to fostering relationships with external organisations and advocating for park improvements. He excelled in tracking expenditure and reporting on the financial requirements of many grants secured by the group for park enhancements, while also nurturing a supportive and inclusive community within the group. His dedication is a shining example to all.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Helen Langley, Timboon Field Naturalists

Helen Langley epitomises dedication and leadership in her longstanding commitment to the Timboon Field Naturalists (TFN). Since the early 1990s, she has tirelessly served as president, secretary, or treasurer, driving the club's activities. Helen's impact spans from organising diverse speakers and outings to facilitating larger events within the Field Naturalists movement. Her cooperative and pragmatic approach extends beyond TFN, as she actively engages with external organisations, reports environmental findings, and shares her expertise. Helen's influence is felt

throughout the community, where her name is synonymous with local natural history expertise and support. Her enduring dedication and contributions have secured TFN's future and earned her well-deserved recognition, embodying the spirit of stewardship.

Young Best Friend Award (15-21 years category)

Sophie Hart, Melbourne Girls' College

Sophie is a dedicated environmentalist who has championed the murnong revegetation project on the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra River) in Richmond. She demonstrates outstanding leadership and passion for nature. Her enthusiasm for conservation is infectious. Since 2018, as a year 7 student, Sophie has been enthusiastically teaching peers at Melbourne Girls' College and other schools about the story of the murnong. Sophie has made significant practical and creative contributions to the revegetation project over the past six years and developed an impressive knowledge of biodiversity and ethnobotany in this short time.

Outstanding Friends Group Friends of Kororoit Creek

The Friends of Kororoit Creek (FKC) aim to restore and improve the habitat corridor along the Kororoit Creek and surrounds while strengthening the local community. Activities range from extensive revegetation efforts – planting over 100,000 plants in the last eight years alone and restoring close to four hectares of creek with richly biodiverse species – to a variety of engagement activities including art projects and installations, workshops, excursions and the Walan-walan sculpture project.

Pictured from left 1. Tony Castle 2. Helen Langley 3. Sophie Hart (left) accepts her award from Carol Challis from VEFN. 4. From left, Olga Krasicky, Esme Tyson and Jessica Gerger accept the award for Friends of Kororoit Creek. 5. From left, Alison Richards, Pam Welsford and Graham Ross accept the Award for KooyongKoot Alliance.

Through consistent and creative communication FKC keeps the community informed and involved in its endeavours. With a vibrant committee, diverse membership, and innovative outreach efforts, FKC has become a fixture in the local landscape, creating a sense of belonging and pride among residents and supporters.

Habitat Connections Award KooyongKoot Alliance

The KooyongKoot Alliance (the Alliance) is taking a comprehensive approach to habitat connectivity across its catchment area. Beyond linking 20 independent groups, they are reimagining the relationship between these groups and the land they operate on, aiming for a cohesive, interconnected system. This holistic perspective includes flora and fauna, water management and community engagement. The Alliance's efforts have resulted in the establishment of more than 10,000 plants through grants, collaborative submissions to councils on multiple issues, and major habitat revegetation projects. Their initiatives extend to engaging diverse community groups and promoting revegetation on urban nature strips. The Alliance has a long-term vision for biodiversity conservation and community involvement. Their involvement in regional collaborations and data projects underscores their commitment to evidence-based conservation strategies and sustainable community engagement.

First Nations Landcare Collaboration Award

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation – Narrap Unit & Darebin Creek Management Committee

The Narrap Unit is a natural resource management business of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation – the peak body representing Wurundjeri people. Wurundjeri Country extends north to the Great Dividing Range, east to Mt Baw Baw, south to Mordiallic Creek and West to the Werribee River.

The Narrap Unit was established in 2012 and has expanded rapidly, developing skills in re-introducing cultural land management practices on Country which were recognised with a 2021 Victorian Landcare Award. The unit now deploys several crews to various sites on Country and works in partnership with different natural resource management agencies.

Narrap Unit rangers have forged a strong bond that includes knowledge sharing and skills exchange with Darebin Creek Management Committee (DCMC), an environmental network working around the reaches of the Darebin Creek. DCMC is involved in landscape-scale planning, revegetation works, citizen science and training for emerging natural resource managers.

In 2021 DCMC and La Trobe University were approached by Melbourne Water for a collaborative project to restore a 10-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland in Bundoora. Although La Nina conditions has reduced the window for when fire can be effectively used, a cool burn conducted by the Narrap Unit in May 2021, complemented by follow up weeding, pest management and direct seeding has seen significant ecological recovery. Matted flax lily and chocolate lily have been recorded at the site after a prolonged absence and kangaroo grass and tussock grass have been re-established.

A focus on First Nations Women

The project has also focused on increasing the representation of First Nations women within the Narrap Unit. Nine female rangers have worked on the project,

including two women who are working towards their Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management for First Nations/Traditional Owners.

All of the rangers from the Narrap Unit worked on the cultural burn, billabong surveys, installing and monitoring nestboxes, and direct seeding and assessment techniques.

In a review of the project one of the First Nations women trainees commented that the opportunity to monitor and survey the site had been a highlight of the project.

“This was my first exposure to a cultural burn. It’s been beautiful to see what’s come up pre and post burn – the comparison – and seeing the Country take its own course,” the trainee wrote.



Nangak Tamboree project partners at a smoking ceremony at Nangak Tamboree in Bundoora.



Narrap Unit Rangers after their cultural burn at Nangak Tamboree in 2021.

The La Trobe University Nangak Tamboree Wildlife Sanctuary has been a hub for the project, providing seedstock from its nursery and a venue for constructing nest boxes. In the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung language Nangak Tamboree means respecting, sharing and looking after the waterway.

Local community gets involved

The project has strong community support and has been assisted by Flora Victoria, Ross Trust, La Trobe University Botany Society, La Trobe Nursery and Reservoir Secondary College. Banyule and Darebin Councils were involved in a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony at the site.

Danny Reddan from DCMC said collaborating with the Narrap Rangers has added immense depth to this environmental restoration project.

"It is a great privilege to be working with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap Unit on their journey of reconnection to Country and healing, and very satisfying to see the benefits for team learning, culturally affirming knowledge and skills, and building pride. We are looking forward to working with La Trobe University and Melbourne Water to realise the project vision for the next three years and beyond," Danny said.

The Narrap Unit Rangers and DCMC are restoring Country at Nangak Tamboree, an authentic cross-cultural project, using cultural burns and best practice natural resource management techniques.

Commended – Warby Range Landcare Group Inc. and Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation

Highly commended Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation – Narrap Unit & Yarra Valley Water



Narrap Unit Rangers manage the cool fire cultural burn at Wollert Community Farm in April 2023.

Yarra Valley Water, one of Melbourne's biggest water retailers, operates across much of the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Guided by the principle of 'honouring and healing Country' Yarra Valley Water is working on a partnership with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Since 2022 Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap Unit rangers have been caring for Country at the Aurora Treatment Plant

site in Wollert, delivering a multi-year project to restore biodiversity, regenerate landscapes and improve vegetation quality. A low intensity, cultural burn undertaken in an endangered grassy eucalypt woodland in April 2023 provided safe passage for fauna, suppressed weed species and rejuvenated the indigenous seedbank. A meeting place, interpretive trail, and bushfoods pilot are also planned for the site.



Narrap Unit Ranger Dave Mullins during the cultural burn at Wollert Community Farm in April 2023.

Australian Government Community Partnerships Landcare Award



Merri Creek Management Committee

From a weed-smothered drain, Merri Creek in Melbourne has been transformed into a much-loved waterway running through a picturesque bushland corridor, thanks largely to the efforts of the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) and many volunteers over the past 35 years.

Established in 1989, MCMC has united people from various parts of the catchment to conserve biodiversity through initiatives such as restoration and repair projects, species monitoring, water quality assessments, community engagement and support, plantings, weeding and litter clean ups. MCMC works in partnership with its members, which include Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek, Whittlesea and Yarra City councils, Mitchell Shire Council, Friends of Merri Creek and Wallan Environment Group, and alongside more than 20 'Friends of' and citizen science groups.

A pioneer of urban creek protection, MCMC combines its ecologically sensitive restoration projects along Merri Creek and its tributaries with community education and specialist technical advice to volunteers, land managers and decision makers across an area of almost 400 square kilometres. MCMC takes a collaborative approach to

its work of restoring the creek in complex urban, peri-urban and rural settings, by bringing together diverse perspectives from community, land managers, First Nations groups, government, and private landowners."

Working with and supporting the community is a key focus. Activities include talks, training workshops, guided tours, weed removal events, litter collection, planting and direct seeding. The numbers are impressive. In 2021–2022, despite lingering COVID-19 restrictions, MCMC supported 1000 volunteers who contributed more than 3000 hours to habitat restoration and protection, when more than 6770 people took part in 333 events. Approximately 27,800 native grasses, shrubs and trees – including seed orchards for two rare species of banksia – were planted at some of the more than 80 sites along the creek and its tributaries.

More than 100 partners

Over a period of two years volunteers also collected 4.4 kilograms of seed from 43 different species for sowing. In 2022–2023, MCMC engaged with 332 volunteers in the upper Merri Creek catchment, and 319 participants contributed 641 hours across 20 events. The Tree Banksia Orchard at Fawcner was boosted by the planting of 500 seedlings to provide a convenient source of genetically diverse, climate adapted seed. MCMC has worked with 102 delivery partners and obtained funding from a range of sources, including local, state, and federal governments, as well as philanthropic grant programs and competitive tenders.

MCMC has partnered on a variety of community-led projects, including the Merri Paddle Roundtable, working with community specialists, local government, and



Foundation year 6 students from Newham Primary School with a parent planting out the Biodiversity Learning Hub on the school grounds.

Highly commended Newham Primary School

Newham Primary School is located close to Hanging Rock and the Cobaw Biolink in the Macedon Ranges Shire. The school has been partnering with Newham and District Landcare Group since 2006 on biodiversity, revegetation, and environmental projects. The school has created an indigenous forest food garden, planted out a frog pond and revegetated a site adjacent to a tributary of Deep Creek for habitat and as an outdoor learning space. Thousands of native plants are being propagated at the school to enhance biodiversity in the local area. The partnership is increasing the environmental literacy of young people, creating connections within the community, and driving on-ground works.

experts from state government and academia, focused on bringing platypus back to Merri Creek. It also works with groups in the upper Merri, such as the Wallan Environment Group (WEG). MCMC is supporting WEG with its project to protect and enhance remnant vegetation along a disused rail reserve in Hidden Valley (Wallan), by undertaking a botanical survey of the site.

According to Merri Creek Management Committee Executive Officer Bernadette Thomas, robust community partnerships and collaboration have underpinned the success of its activities. This includes advocacy and bringing problems and solutions to the attention of local, state and federal governments, water corporations, not-for-profits and non-government organisations.

"The enduring theme over the 35 years is the strong community connection, and being part of the local – I say, local, because the creek's 70-kilometres long – communities that live along the creek," Bernadette said.

New volunteer groups formed

MCMC is constantly expanding support for new community groups, including the Queermates of Bababi Djinanang, and partnering with organisations from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.



Queermates of Bababi Djinanang members gather for a planting event at Fawkner in 2023.

Engagement with schools and scout groups has led to the formation of Junior Landcare groups at Upper Plenty Primary School and Our Lady of the Way Primary School (Wallan). Wallan Scouts built and installed nest boxes along Wallan Creek, in Wallan Community Park with MCMC's Landcare Facilitator, who in 2022 also helped set up the Upper Merri Plenty Catchments Landcare Group in the upper Merri.

"We are always keen to expand our work to partner with communities along the creek to help create that connection to nature that we know people are craving. It's about harnessing some of their curiosity and seeing whether we can translate that into action and collaboration on restoration works and citizen science events," Bernadette said.

Highly commended

Wodonga Urban Landcare Network

Formed in 2012, Wodonga Urban Landcare Network (WULN) is helping change the face of its municipality by improving waterways, restoring bushland, encouraging the creation of habitat in backyards and across landscapes, and facilitating citizen science projects. Wodonga is one of the fastest growing municipalities in regional Victoria which places significant pressure on the natural environment and public green space. WULN has grown quickly from three to 16 member groups. WULN facilitates and supports new forms of Landcare including the Bhutanese community farm which supports local migrants to grow food sustainably and learn about the environment, the maintenance of a key tourist rail trail, the protection of endangered turtles and the operation of a native plant nursery. In the past two years, WULN member groups' activities have involved 955 volunteers who contributed 18,631 hours to on-ground works.



A community tree planting event at Klings Hill in 2023.



Revegetated waterways at Tahara West in 2014.

Australian Government Individual Landcare Award



Australian Government



Kevin Nolte

An early adopter, advocate and community volunteer, Kevin Nolte was a Landcarer even before the movement officially kicked off in Victoria in 1986. As a young farmer in the Tahara West area, west of Hamilton, Kevin demonstrated a keen interest in revegetation, land improvement, erosion prevention, waterway management, and the care of livestock by planting shelterbelts.



Kevin Nolte has been responsible for planting more than one million native trees in Tahara West and surrounding areas over more than 35 years.

He planted native vegetation on the family farm operated with his parents, Albert and Doris, in the 1970s and 1980s and became an enthusiastic supporter of Landcare groups in the region, before starting the Tahara West Landcare Group in the early 1990s.

Kevin said he developed a fondness for native trees as a child, often drawing pictures of red gums, stringybarks and messmate.

"I thought gum trees were works of art. They always fascinated me, because most of the trees around the farms were either cypress or pines and most of the pines were well past their use-by-date. I wanted to make the area more natural," he said.

He ignored the critics who said he was losing too much land to trees and ran a plantation along two sides of a hill on the

family farm. The shelterbelts made it the safest paddock for sheep after they were shorn in September.

"If you got a storm in the middle of the night, you didn't have to get up, get the dog and go and shift your sheep. Before then, if you didn't get up and shift them, they'd be stuck up against the fence, dead."

Kevin rallied the community to join the Landcare group, applying for grants, implementing projects to restore land and the natural environment, and educating others. He also enlisted the help of his wife Carole and neighbour Ian Robertson, who were formal members of the Landcare group. Kevin and Carole's shared passion for the environment runs in the family, with a daughter, Sharon Rowe, pursuing studies in aquatic science and now working for local water authority, Wannon Water.

Sharing trees and revegetation expertise

A long-standing supporter of the principles and practices of Landcare, Kevin delivered four projects in the Tahara West region over a period of more than 10 years with the help of Landcare grants and local community volunteers.

Kevin learned to grow an extensive range of native trees from seed and continues to supply young trees to other local farmers for free to help with restoration works, teaching them about Landcare and paying for fencing materials out of his own pocket when funding was inadequate.

Revegetation projects delivered by Kevin have had a profound impact on the local environment, aiding in land restoration, repairing landslides, helping prevent erosion and significantly enhancing habitat for native wildlife.

Despite the challenges posed by limited funding, remote living, and an ageing population – which led to the Tahara West Landcare Group winding up in the early 2000s – Kevin has continued to advocate for Landcare, educating and collaborating with groups, organisations and farmers.

“I’ve enjoyed seeing the erosion in the creeks and the landslips being stopped,

and just the beautification of the whole area. It looks so much better,” he said.

Kevin’s contributions to Landcare extend beyond his personal initiatives. A pivotal figure in community engagement, he has used his long-standing association with service groups such as the Lions Club and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to promote Landcare principles.

Earlier this year, the CFA recognised his 60 years of volunteer service – first with the Tahara West Brigade and then the Tahara Brigade after their merger in 2017 – with a Service Award and Life Membership.

Building positive relationships

Kevin has formed alliances with other local groups and established positive relationships with organisations such as Wannon Water, local councils, and Agriculture Victoria. His proactive approach in seeking expert advice and educating others about local environmental needs and impacts has made him a respected figure in land management circles.

Kevin’s ability to overcome various challenges, from funding constraints to technological limitations, speaks volumes about his resilience and commitment to environmental stewardship. Now 80 and

retired, and despite his declining vision, Kevin continues to grow native plants from seed and supply them to local farmers at no charge.

His ongoing efforts underscore a profound dedication to preserving and enhancing the natural environment for future generations.



Ian Arney checking seedpods on his property Mallanbool at Millewa.

Highly commended

Ian Arney

Ian Arney farms at Werrimull in the northwest Mallee and is president of Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group (MCLG). Ian’s farm is a Landcare showcase – he has planted thousands of trees in windbreaks and across laneways from seed collected on the farm and undertaken extensive rabbit and fox control. Ian has been active in MCLG for more than 25 years. He has also been president of the local branch of the VFF, is currently a councillor with Mildura Rural City Council, and a member of Mallee Sustainable Farming. Ian is a leader in his community. He is a tireless promotor of Landcare and sustainable agriculture. He hosts local schools at his farm and is involved in countless local environmental projects. His unwavering commitment to Landcare is inspirational in his community.



Kevin and Carole Nolte were mainstays of the Tahara West Landcare Group in the 1990s.

Commended – Jan Healey and Paul Slayter

Tavish Bloom

Not many people can lay claim to having encouraged a baby boom in the wild, but Tavish Bloom's name was added to that list last year. The 13-year-old, who lives next to the Post Office Hill Reserve at Chewton, has been part of a project installing and monitoring 28 nesting boxes in the Central Victorian reserve.



Tavish Bloom has been part of a project installing and monitoring 28 nesting boxes at Post Office Hill Reserve, Chewton.

Among their successes are a female brush-tailed phascogale using one of the boxes to successfully raise eight joeys last summer. Nest boxes are important for providing refuge for the threatened species in the absence of its usual habitat: hollows in large trees.

Tavish said the shy, nocturnal rat-sized marsupials were his favourite local animal, "because I have them in the bush behind my house and I enjoy watching them go about their lives."

Even as a young child, he spent countless hours investigating, observing and recording flora and fauna in the reserve and two years ago joined the Post Office Hill Action Group (POHAG), that cares for it. Stripped of natural vegetation during the 1850s gold rush, when thousands of fortune hunters flocked to the diggings, the 22.6 hectare reserve on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung People was later used as a rubbish dump.

Daily observations at the local reserve

POHAG members, including Tavish, have cleared the site of waste and weeds, and planted local species of shrubs and trees to encourage biodiversity in the landscape.

Tavish visits the reserve each day, has created comprehensive species lists, and records observations to iNaturalist and eBird. This valuable data, which feeds into the Atlas of Living Australia and can be used by scientists world-wide, is evidence of the effectiveness of the restoration works.

Tavish has also been involved with community conservation groups, such as BirdLife Castlemaine and Connecting Country's Woodland Bird Monitoring Project, sharing his skills at identifying birds and mammals by guiding bird walks for up to 50 people at Post Office Hill Reserve and taking part in bird surveys.

Speaking up for the environment

Naturally reserved, Tavish has set aside his nerves to share his knowledge and dedication to nature with people of all ages.

"I have been interested in wildlife and the environment for pretty much my whole life, but I started getting really interested when I was 10," he said.

"I find them interesting because there are so many different species – their behaviours, habitats, colours – and because they're awesome. I think kids with



Tavish Bloom (fifth from left) with friends receiving the Castlemaine Steiner School's award at the 2023 Victorian Resource Smart School Awards.

Highly commended St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

A Woolworths Junior Landcare Grant supported St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Werribee to build a vegetable patch and kitchen garden at the school not long after it opened in 2021.

Each level in the school participates in a one-hour kitchen garden lesson each week. Students learn about weeding, watering, planting, harvesting, seed saving, making garden art from recycled materials, planting habitat for local insects, birds and animals, raising

seedlings, composting and making pots from recycled paper

The kitchen garden, which includes a yarnning circle, bush tucker and native plant sensory garden, straw bale garden, picnic table and frog bog, is always open for students to use as an interactive play space during break times. The school is on Wadawurrung Country and Kulin Nation seasons, stories, and plants are woven through kitchen garden lessons. Students are also encouraged to grow their favourite

vegetables, herbs and fruits and share traditional family recipes.

St Joseph's students participate in Clean Up Australia Day, National Pollinator Week, National Water Week, The Wonder Recycling Program and National Tree Day. This year students will also embark on individual passion projects in the garden. These include scaling up the composting area, increasing habitat for endangered local wildlife, more fruit trees, hydroponics and, hopefully, chickens!



Junior Landcare Ambassador Costa Georgiadis paid a special visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Werribee to celebrate their win in the Love Letters to the Land competition. The school submitted hundreds of letters with each student sharing heartfelt sentiments about their feelings for the land and how they care for it.

an interest in the environment should not hesitate to get out there in the bush and join their local Landcare group, so we can act and help the world."

Tavish has initiated nature conservation programs at his school, Castlemaine Steiner School, where he co-founded the Eco Club and has been involved in projects to develop the wetland, nest boxes and bird hides. Last year the school was awarded School of the Year in the Campus Infrastructure and Operations category of the Victorian Resource Smart School Awards. Tavish's extensive records documenting the many species that had returned to restored bushland and wetland areas of the school provided essential evidence for the award, which recognised the sustainably designed grounds had become a sanctuary for many plants and animals.

He's also inspiring other students to take direct on-ground action, in a Junior Landcare-style group, to learn about, protect and restore their local environment.

As well as building and installing nest boxes, Tavish is sharing his skills at setting up and using trail cameras activated by motion sensors which the group is using to film the behaviour of wildlife in the school's bush and wetland areas.

So far, they have captured footage of a nesting Krefft's glider, often mistaken for a squirrel glider, and hope to record the migratory Latham's snipe which has been observed visiting the wetlands.

YouTube channel helps tell the story

Tavish's own videos of wild birds and animals at Post Office Hill Reserve and elsewhere have been published at his YouTube channel, Pardalotus Films, named for the family of tiny, brightly coloured native birds, also known as pardalotes or peep wrens.

The videos, which include familiar animals such as the eastern grey kangaroo, wombat and brown snake, as well as his beloved brush-tailed phascogales, have racked up

more than 3600 views since the first was shared in 2022.

There's also footage of introduced animals such as rabbits, foxes and cats, which destroy natural habitat and prey on many ground-dwelling birds and small animals. The devastation wrought by feral cats – which can kill more than four million animals a day and are held responsible for the extinction of 27 native animals – is one of the environmental problems that Tavish would like to see solved in his lifetime.

Tavish's dedication to numerous projects at school and in the community demonstrates his great love for nature and a desire to raise awareness, invoke the same sense of wonder in others and encourage care for Australia's wildlife, so they can also be enjoyed by future generations.

Commended – Our Lady Star of the Sea Primary School



Young people learning about urban agriculture at Ceres Community Environment Park in Brunswick East during the CARYA 2023 training program.

Australian Government Climate Innovation Award



Australian Government



Climate Adaptation Requires Youth Action

A dynamic youth-led initiative, Climate Adaptation Requires Youth Action (CARYA), was launched in 2020 to give young people the opportunity to connect with like-minded peers and gain the skills to tackle social and environmental challenges intensified by climate change.



Participants discuss biodiversity in the garden at Banksia Gardens Community Services in Broadmeadows during the 2023 CARYA training program.

CARYA was a response to rising concerns about the climate crisis among young people in the Hume City Council region, who wanted to do more after the global School Strikes for Climate, but often did not know where to begin.

Launched by Banksia Gardens Community Services (BGCS) in Broadmeadows – one of Victoria's most disadvantaged postcodes – CARYA offers an eight-week training program covering topics such as climate adaptation, gender equity, climate justice, circular economy, First Nations knowledge and biodiversity. Graduates of the program take part in local climate adaptation projects, including tackling food waste, promoting community gardening, advancing composting practices, raising climate awareness and enhancing community engagement.

AI tool developed for environmental audit

Last year, CARYA was awarded a Victorian Government New Growth Projects grant to establish two Climate Action Youth Initiatives: an environmental audit for BGCS and an educational resource for the community.

The audit of BGCS operations covered seven categories: financial, waste production, water usage, transport, energy usage, biodiversity, and equity. It used AI tools developed by a CARYA participant to assess expenditure data and carry out carbon modelling and benchmarking, and identify affordable, quick measures for reducing emissions. The tool will be made available for other organisations to use.

The educational resource, informally known as CARYA Zine, draws from training materials to educate the public about a range of climate topics and will be distributed across the Hume City Council area in print and online.

As a community-focused initiative, CARYA promotes social cohesion and empowers young people aged 18 to 29 to drive change and the adoption of sustainable practices. Regular post-training meetings enable participants to plan projects and events, such as planting days, citizen science activities, sustainable transportation initiatives and circular economy programs.

Flexibility and accessibility are critical

Balancing project development with work, school and family responsibilities has been challenging for participants. Nonetheless, empowering individuals to take on lead roles and allowing flexible schedules helps them manage their commitments while contributing to the group's goals.

Another challenge has been ensuring events are accessible for Broadmeadows' culturally diverse community. An effective solution has been promoting events directly to organisations such as Arabic Welfare and Brotherhood of St Laurence, as well as placing flyers in residents' mailboxes.

Other activities include hosting and engaging in a range of climate-related events to promote environmental awareness, and co-designing a Hume Youth Climate Summit.

Recognising climate anxiety

Banksia Gardens Community Services sustainability and education coordinator Edgar Caballero Aspe said the program had also been successful in helping participants recognise climate anxiety and supporting them to address it by taking meaningful action.

Speaking in a promotional video, Hansani Abedheera Liyan Patabendige said she

Highly commended Heytesbury District Landcare Network

Heytesbury District Landcare Network (HDLN) has been focused on revegetating farmland since 1995, with almost two million trees planted in the district. The network's targeted climate action programs focusing on climate mitigation and adaptation on farms began in 2017. The keeping carbon on the farm project provides a suite of activities for dairy farmers and other primary producers to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and better prepare for climate change, including revegetation, carbon-sequestering soil amelioration trials, and

energy reduction strategies. HDLN has established 30 climate resilient exemplar farms in southwest Victoria, with a focus on increasing the carbon content, moisture levels and biology of agricultural soils as an effective way of building drought resistance. The network is currently producing a Farmers Emissions Reduction Toolkit with practical advice on how to reduce farm carbon footprints, while maintaining productivity and profitability and managing risk. HDLN is a trusted source of climate action advice for local landholders.



A Heytesbury District Landcare Network multispecies field day on activating soil biology near Colac in May 2021.

found the 2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires extremely stressful.

"I didn't even know there was (such a thing as) climate anxiety, till ... they actually talked about it, and I'm like, oh, OK this is a real thing," she said.

Wesley Grey, who also took part in the first program, said most people's introduction

to climate talk was "the icecaps are melting, the rainforests are being destroyed, everything's on fire and we're all going to die. Taking action has 100 per cent helped me with my climate anxiety," he said.

Commended – Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation

Australian Government Sustainable Agriculture Landcare Award



The Blackwell family

Over almost 50 years, the Blackwell family has proven it is possible to run a profitable, high-production livestock enterprise and care for the land that supports it.

The family property Corea, southeast of Dunkeld, is located on the Victorian volcanic plains – a region characterised by vast, diverse productive grasslands, wetlands, creeks, and ancient red gum trees. Its history dates to 1904 when William Thomson, a Scot, bought the property to grow fine merino wool. His son and daughter-in-law later managed the farm, enduring two bushfires that devastated the land, vegetation, livestock, and infrastructure.

Despite these setbacks, the Thomson family persisted, and in 1975, William's granddaughter, Cee Blackwell, and her husband, Bill, returned to manage Corea. A pivotal moment occurred when an Ararat stock agent quipped that they were going down to "Pleurisy Plains," a remark that stuck with Bill. A severe summer storm followed, causing the loss of a significant number of lambs.

"Stock losses are hard to cope with in any farming situation," Cee recalled.

"When you have a winter and you've got absolutely no shelter, and you think he (the stock agent) was right – there's nothing between us and the South Pole."

These events became the catalyst for change, prompting Bill and Cee to start planting trees. They focused on shelterbelts for livestock and creating wildlife corridors to provide habitat and safe passage for native species, including the superb fairy-wren, a bird that was abundant on neighbouring properties, but not seen at Corea.

A family commitment to revegetation

The Blackwells collected seeds locally and from across Australia, planting trees through direct seeding and nursery-raised seedlings. The first plantation was decimated by hares and magpies, so they made protective tree guards using old fertiliser bags and sticks to ensure the young trees survived. Their commitment extended to planting individual trees throughout the landscape, often near the stumps of those lost in the 1940 and 1944 fires. Old iron water tanks from neighbours helped protect the trees from grazing livestock.

Tree planting became a family affair, with all members – and any visitors – taking part. More than 300,000 trees and shrubs have

been planted across 150 hectares of the 2000 hectare property in the past 49 years.

"I think it was 17 years or more until we saw our first blue wren on the lawn, which was quite exciting.

"Now you drive around and turn the engine off and you can hear them everywhere. It's fabulous," Cee said.

After studying and working off-farm, Bill and Cee's sons, Edward (Woody) and Charles, returned to Corea in the early 2000s and became partners. The third, fourth, and fifth generations of the family now live and work on the property.

The Blackwells understand the intrinsic links between land, water, and biodiversity. They aim to protect and enhance their land management practices while maintaining a profitable farm business.

Regenerative agriculture boosts productivity

Implementing rotational grazing of deep-rooted perennial pastures and following regenerative agriculture principles has allowed them to boost farm productivity and stocking rates to support the three families.

This grazing management approach promotes long-term pasture survival, reducing the need for chemical weed and pest control, and improving soil health.

The Blackwells run self-replacing flocks of merino sheep and angus cattle, timing joining to match peak nutritional needs with peak pasture growth. Stocking rates have increased in the past 20 years and Corea now has a carrying capacity of 35,000 dry sheep equivalents.

Native vegetation provides valuable shade and shelter for livestock, reduces temperature extremes, slows wind speeds, and supports efficient feed usage, leading to 15 per cent higher survival rates for lambs.

Diverse tree plantings also enhance insect, bird, and mammal populations, which offer natural pest control and pollination services, complementing the integrated pest management program that minimises insecticide use.



From left, Woody, Cee, Charles, and Bill Blackwell at Corea earlier this year. The family has proven it is possible to run a profitable, high-production livestock enterprise and care for the land that supports it.



The Blackwell family at home in 2021.

Good farm design means less stress for stock

Creek lines, wetlands and other water bodies have been fenced to exclude livestock and planted with diverse flora to protect waterways and support aquatic life. This practice also benefits livestock by providing clean water, enhancing growth rates, and reducing soil erosion and nutrient runoff.

To improve animal welfare, the Blackwells phased out mulesing 14 years ago by breeding a plainer-bodied, easy-care, high-production merino. Well-designed stockyards and a 15 kilometre laneway system across the farm facilitate low-stress stock movement.

Containment areas with ample shade, shelter, feed, and water are used in summer to ensure groundcover retention in the cropping paddocks. The Blackwells have partnered with local conservation groups, including Friends of the Forgotten Woodlands, to establish a seed orchard for native species and developed Sydney blue gum and sugar gum demonstration sites for farm forestry students.

"Everything we've done has been from the heart. We've tried to make the landscape a better place than what we found it for the livestock, the birds, and the humans," Cee said.

These practices have earned recognition and access to markets that reward sustainable land management, such as the integrity mark ZQRX for their wool clip. They are also dipping their toes into carbon farming, having recently completed an initial carbon starter report, a precursor to registering a carbon project.

The Blackwells' dedication to sustainable farming extends to community involvement. Along with neighbours, they formed the now-defunct Nevertire Landcare Group, so-called because they never get tired of planting trees because the rewards are there.

Family members also hold leadership roles in various community, sporting and agricultural groups, and host numerous courses and workshops at Corea. Students from Lake Bolac, Dunkeld and Glenthompson schools have helped plant trees, and members of local Landcare groups and Birdlife Hamilton, as well as researchers from IPM Technologies and La Trobe University, have conducted bird, insect, and flora surveys.

Despite the early challenges and scepticism from peers, the Blackwells have persisted, confident in their approach to revegetation – dismissed by many as a waste of good land – and later the adoption of regenerative and holistic management principles. Their efforts have not only improved farm productivity but also enhanced the landscape, demonstrating that high-production agriculture and environmental stewardship can coexist.

Commended – Mt Alexander Regenerative Agriculture Group



The Blackwell family has transformed Corea, fencing off waterways and planting more than 300,000 trees and shrubs.

NextGen Landcare Award

Bryce Watts-Parker

Growing up surrounded by some of Victoria's most significant and beautiful national parks, it's no surprise that Bryce Watts-Parker pursued a career dedicated to the environment.

The Mallacoota local, who now works as a monitoring and project coordinator for East Gippsland CMA, spent many a weekend bushwalking, hiking, boating, exploring and snorkelling, and idolised David Attenborough and the late Steve Irwin.

"That fuelled my passion and interest for the local environment. I was one of those lucky few who knew where I wanted to go after Year 12 and continued on with my studies and then managed to land myself the work that I am in currently," he said.

The first in his immediate family to attend university, Bryce studied a Bachelor of Biological Sciences at La Trobe University.

Bushfire recovery a community effort

He was at home for the holidays when bushfires tore through the region in December 2019 and battled unsuccessfully

alongside his father, Matt, to save the family home. More than 120 houses in Mallacoota and surrounding areas were destroyed in the fires and over one million hectares – an estimated 83 per cent of the land area – was burnt, devastating the people, wildlife and bushland.

Despite their own losses, Bryce stepped up to volunteer alongside another 11 community members leading the recovery locally. The youngest member of the Mallacoota and District Recovery Association, he acted as the dedicated media contact, and was the go-to person for all environmental questions and projects.

"Personally, and for my family, one of the best ways to process what happened and get back up on our feet was to contribute and help out within the local community," he said.

That involved searching the blackened bush for injured wildlife, caring for them at the Mallacoota wildlife shelter, and distributing food and water for surviving animals.

Other post-fire activities included surveys and seed collection of the many local flora species, assisting Royal Botanic Gardens and Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) scientists undertake post-fire surveys, and developing the Friends of Mallacoota community nursery, so people could re-establish their fire-ravaged gardens using local species.

Between COVID-19 lockdowns, Bryce coordinated local replanting days and working bees to help both the bush and the people recover, and distributed more than 200 nest boxes to provide shelter for displaced animals. A paint your nest box competition was hugely successful in engaging members of the community.

Replanting helps people to heal

"Helping people replant their immediate backyards, the surrounding bushland and private property, has also been a wonderful contributor socially. It's brought people together and provided a common goal to allow people to heal through that time," he said.



East Gippsland CMA monitoring and project coordinator Bryce Watts-Parker has played a crucial role in helping the people, wildlife and bush of Mallacoota recover from the Black Summer bushfires of 2019–2020.

One of the projects he's most proud of is the Mallacoota Endemic Garden – Victoria's smallest and eastern-most botanic garden – which features more than 150 species of native flora, over 50 of them rare, threatened or endangered, and many that are unique to the region. They include the critically endangered Betka bottlebrush (*Callistemon kenmorrisonii*) and Gippsland banksia (*Banksia croajingolensis*), also known as shipwreck banksia.

Officially opened last year, the garden was conceived as a seedbank and insurance population for local endangered plants and to act as a place where rare and endangered species could be appreciated by the community.

The shipwreck banksia has a special place in Bryce's heart, after he watched it bounce back during the past four years.

"I've been really lucky and privileged in a personal and a work capacity to be monitoring and assisting scientific research activities on this species. I've been able to go out there every six months or so since the fire and have been checking up on this banksia species. It's been incredible to see it go from completely decimated population to an absolute thriving little patch of banksias that are now flowering and seeding which was really awesome to see," he said.

Environment and community go hand in hand

"I know it's a bit of a weird analogy, but I say to people that the local environment and the local community go hand in hand. That's why so many people come and live here in Mallacoota – because of the beautiful bush –



*One of the projects Bryce Watts-Parker is most proud of is the Mallacoota Endemic Garden, which has specimens of more than 50 rare, threatened or endangered species, including the critically endangered Mt Imlay Mallee (*Eucalyptus imlayensis*), which was completely burnt out in the Black Summer bushfires.*

and as the bush started turning greener and you see things start to flower and the fauna started to recover, we saw the community recovering at the same time.”

After starting work with the East Gippsland CMA, Bryce produced a video showing how to make a frog hotel as part of a citizen science project tracking frog recovery since the fires.

The video has become the CMA's most popular, notching up more than 15,600 views on its YouTube channel since mid-2022.

Bryce has also engaged a diverse audience through TV and radio interviews, taking part

in a documentary and webinars, by speaking about fire recovery, the impacts of climate change, natural resource management and the importance of community.

He excels at promoting CMA activities, addressing school and scout groups, and willingly takes on community activities.

Well known for the soft spot he has for the unique flora of the area and its wildlife, Bryce operates as the community snake catcher, safely relocating the reptiles and educating people about their role in the wider ecosystem.

He also continues to support research and scientists aiming to better understand the impacts of the fires on a range of species. This includes working with ARI to undertake reptile surveys, flora surveys and helping increase knowledge of the Mallacoota burrowing crayfish (*Engaeus mallacoota*) after floods in 2022.

To this day, Bryce continues to play a critical role locally in the ecological and community recovery of Mallacoota.

Commended – Marney Durie and Lillian Maher

Highly commended Jackson Cass

Jackson Cass started his working life in the construction industry before deciding to change tack and study conservation and land management. He joined Garibaldi Landcare Group as a volunteer while he was still studying and served as the group's treasurer from 2019–2022. At the age of 23 Jackson was appointed as Landcare Coordinator for Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG).

In 2022 Jackson joined the committee for Seeding Victoria. Seeing the opportunity to provide leadership and contribute to the important work of providing high-quality, provenance-sourced native seed for the revegetation of Victoria's ecosystems.

He is also a key collaborator on the CSIRO National Koala Monitoring Program and assisted in designing the Moorabool koala count in 2022. This project involved the use

of new thermal drone technology, incorporating Wadawurrung Traditional Owner knowledge and cultural perspectives, and empowering the local community of citizen scientists to collect valuable on-ground data. Having only been a part of the Landcare community since 2019, Jackson has worked hard to establish himself as a leader and is keen to continue the important work Landcare does for the environment.



Jackson Cass surveying koalas in Brisbane Ranges National Park.

Women in Landcare Award

Elizabeth Ross

As a teacher of horticulture, conservation and land management at Gordon Institute of TAFE, Elizabeth Ross has inspired countless students to pursue a meaningful career in natural resource management.

But it is her tremendous passion for the natural world that drives her support for numerous environmental groups in many roles – as a leader, educator, as well as volunteer – over more than 20 years.

Better known as Beth, her warm sense of humour and exceptional people skills help create an inclusive atmosphere that encourages active participation and brings out the best in everyone involved.

She emphasises mental, emotional, and physical well-being in conservation work – with a strong focus on OH&S – and good governance to enhance organisational effectiveness and longevity.

Beth's expertise in land management has led to significant ecological benefits. Her advocacy ensured the preservation of topsoil during the development of a car park at Ocean Grove Nature Reserve. Salvaged soil and plants were taken to the Bellarine Landcare Group (BLG) nursery where they are yielding seed for three locally rare species: wattle mat-rush (*Lomandra filliformis*), native cranberry (*Astroloma humifusum*) and common flat-pea (*Platylobium obtusangulum*).

On another occasion, she identified remnant vegetation containing locally rare plants for Friends of the Bellarine Rail Trail, and organised seed collection. The Bellarine Landcare Nursery has since produced thousands of swamp everlasting (*Coronidium gunnianum*), prickfoot (*Eryngium vesiculosum*) and smooth riceflower (*Pimelia glauca*) seedlings for use in revegetation projects.

Beth credits her love of nature to growing up on a small farm near Nyah West, in the Mallee, with parents who were keen observers of native birds and wildflowers and members of the Mid-Murray Field Naturalists group. She discovered botany at university.

"I can remember the first time I looked down the microscope at a flower and I got the best buzz in the whole world," she said.



Bellarine Catchment Network vice-president Elizabeth Ross has led many formal and informal workshops on indigenous grass and tree identification and seed collection.

Her involvement with community groups began as a way of learning more about the local environment.

"Then I got into doing more and if I didn't go and play with nature then I had to stay at home and do much less interesting work. Why on earth would I do that when I could be out saving the world!" she said.

Her engagement with citizen science through platforms such as iNaturalist and the BLG Facebook page has bolstered community participation in research, enhancing the quality and reach of local conservation data. She has also developed the Bellarine Nature Search website which has made local environmental information accessible to a wider audience.

Private landholders seek advice from Beth on flora identification and biodiversity management, and she happily engages with groups outside regular Landcare circles.

Her contributions to the community and the field of conservation were recognised at the BLG's 30th anniversary dinner in 2016, where Beth's exceptional service to Landcare was acknowledged. Beth is Bellarine Catchment Network vice-president, supports Bellarine Secondary College and the BLG nursery, sits on the Landcare Nursery's Committee of management, and is the nursery representative on the BLG committee.

She's also secretary of the Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, and supports Friends of Edwards Point, Friends of the Bellarine Rail Trail, and Queenscliff Community Nursery.

Highly commended Marney Durie

Five years after joining the Wycheproof and District Landcare Group Marney Durie's leadership potential was identified and she was elected president – at the age of 23. In 2023 Marney helped to run the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network (BNGLN) inaugural month-long Landcare Festival, which saw more than 50 events across the region with over 1000 participants. As well as her own farm and business commitments, Marney has taken the lead for BNGLN's Junior Landcare program, the planning of the Buloke Biolinks project, and the Wycheproof Wetlands project.

Marney has recently accepted the role of Landscape Coordinator for BNGLN's Windharp Horizons project, part of Landcare Victoria's New Futures Program. Marney's outstanding interpersonal skills, her empathy for her community and her passion for the environment make her an asset to Landcare in the region.



Marney Durie speaking to junior students at Wycheproof P-12 College about the bushfoods garden in 2023.

Greyhound Coastcare Award

Simon Davies

Clad in his distinctive hi-vis volunteer vest, Simon Davies can regularly be seen weeding invasive species and planting native flora along Point Nepean Road at Rye. It's something he's done for the past two decades, weather permitting, since he retired after 16 years as a monumental stonemason.

Simon's devotion stems from his first brush with indigenous plants, as a 19-year-old working with the Papua New Guinea forestry service with a focus on the klinki pine, also known as the New Guinea cypress. Back in Australia he worked full-time as a gardener at several properties at Portsea, and before and after work would do beach cleaning, mowing and maintenance for the Tyrone-Camersons Bight Foreshore Committee.

"I became very interested in the local vegetation then," Simon said.

A new neighbour, Lindsay McCallum, introduced him to propagating, and he started growing plants for revegetation projects. During his time as a stonemason in Bendigo, Simon continued to propagate plants from the Mornington Peninsula, bringing them back with him for planting.

After returning to Rye, Simon became a member of the Friends of Whitecliffs Foreshore Reserve group, where he has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to the area's preservation and enhancement. Simon shares his wealth of knowledge about the local ecosystem during workshops and informative guided tours along the foreshore to raise awareness about the importance of indigenous flora, fostering a sense of ownership among locals and a collective interest in biodiversity and coastal conservation.

He also assumed responsibility for the section of the reserve on the inland side



Simon Davies carries a crate of native tubestock propagated in his home nursery at Rye for revegetation projects in the Whitecliffs Foreshore Reserve.

of the highway to ease the burden on the reserve's management committee, which he said was doing a wonderful job of looking after its four kilometres of beachfront with volunteers and, "only a couple of rangers," Simon said.

According to Simon, the potential for this side of the road is remarkable because there is still quite a lot of remnant moonah woodland left.

"With an understorey of so many noxious weeds, like cotoneaster, sweet pittosporum, Italian buckthorn and periwinkle, it's a matter of clearing it out and then getting it replanted. I couldn't afford to do the work I do without propagating my own plants," Simon said.

As well as propagating plants that are native to the area for revegetation works, Simon shares

them with neighbours and other property owners to encourage them not to grow potentially invasive species in their gardens.

Simon said it had been wonderful to see the increasing awareness and understanding of native plants and their role in the environment over the past 50 years.

"Sometimes, when I'm working along that footpath, people will stop and they'll be genuinely interested in what you're doing. And I think that's very rewarding. I have a very strong view: the character of the air is dependent on the vegetation. Many people when they go to the bush or they go up to the Murray, they don't realise that what they're enjoying is the indigenous vegetation that is around them," Simon said.

Commended – Amy Simpson and Otway Ocean Care

Horrie Poussard Prize



Annalise Varker

Annalise Varker is the winner of the inaugural Horrie Poussard Prize for 'My story of working on Country,' published in Issue 85, 2022.

Annalise's personal account of her time as an Indigenous School Based Trainee placed with the North Central CMA was praised by the judges for its honesty,



Annalise Varker at a wetland revegetation day at Reed Bed Swamp in 2021 during her placement at North Central CMA.

humour and insight. The story demonstrates the importance of involving young people in natural resource management, how Landcare can serve as a meaningful and positive outlet, and provide pathways to training, employment, and personal growth.

Annalise addresses larger environmental issues such as global warming, land degradation and pollution in her story. She advocates for small, achievable changes that contribute to the healing of Country and sees many opportunities for young people to get involved with Landcare.

The Horrie Poussard Prize was established in 2023 to commemorate the late Horrie Poussard's contribution to the Victorian Landcare movement. Horrie was Victoria's first Landcare executive officer. He formed training groups, created incentive grants and educational materials and oversaw the formation of the first 50 groups in Victoria.

Horrie maintained a close interest in Landcare for the rest of his life and was committed to telling the Landcare story.



Highly commended Kaye Rodden

Kaye Rodden's story, 'A nature-based solution to landscape repair in the Barrabool Hills', was published in Issue 83, 2022. Kaye begins her story in 1990 when her family purchased a degraded farm on the western outskirts of Geelong. Battles with serrated tussock, rabbits and a devastating drought that destroyed much of their revegetation challenged the Rodden's attempts to heal the land. Kaye's personal reflections on the journey to creating a thriving ecosystem are compelling. The judges praised Kaye's story for demonstrating the power of community collaboration in addressing environmental challenges.

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



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Next issue

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

The Summer 2025 issue of the magazine will feature stories on innovative farming. We are interested in how Landcare and environmental volunteer groups and networks, landholders and farmers are responding to current challenges, including climate change and the changing needs of their communities, by trialling and developing new methods and innovative farming systems.

The magazine fills up very quickly so please get in touch with the editor well before the contribution deadline.

Contributions to the Summer 2025 issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 1 November 2024.

Email: editorviclandcare@gmail.com