

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Autumn 2014 Issue 60

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



LANDCARE SUPPORT FEATURE

Landcare on the Mornington Peninsula

The many faces of facilitation

Landcare for singles goes national

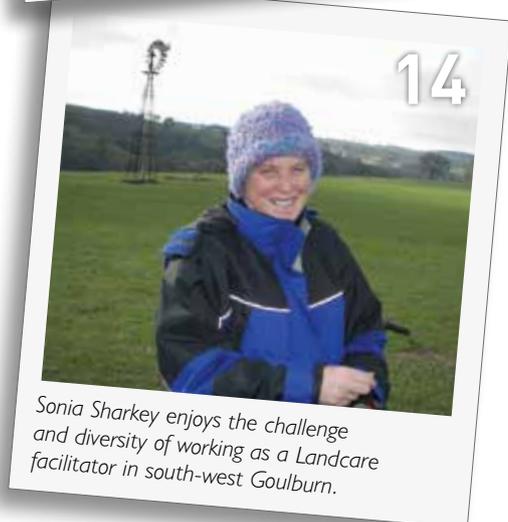
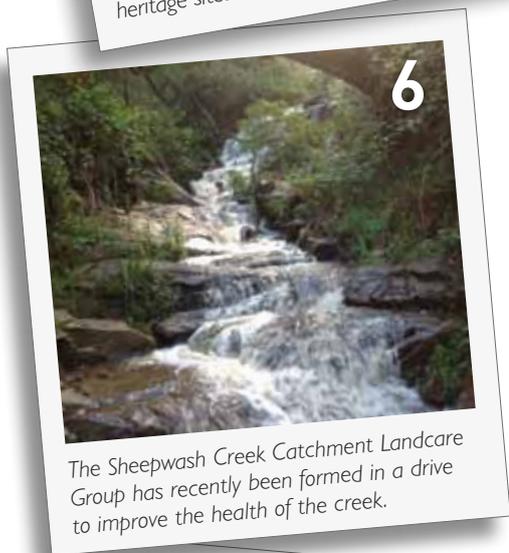


Landcare
Victoria



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

AUTUMN 2014 ISSUE 60



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Cover photograph

Shire of Mornington Peninsula Landcare Facilitator
Jacqui Salter planning Landcare projects on
Richard Hardham's property at Red Hill.
Photograph by David Easton.



From the Minister

I'd like to start by acknowledging the landholders who have suffered significant losses of both property and stock this fire season. I am proud of and extend my thanks to the Landcare groups and networks in fire affected areas who have banded together and are working closely with DEPI and other agency staff to assist with the fire recovery.

In this issue, we gain a fascinating insight into the support provided by hardworking facilitators and coordinators to Landcare groups and networks across the State. The stories remind us of the role of Landcare facilitators and coordinators who, with the assistance of State Government funding, achieve exceptional management outcomes.

Our savvy and creative Landcare facilitators are leading the way as communicators and are always looking at ways to make new links and strong partnerships in their communities.

Amongst our selection of facilitator profiles, we hear from Jacqui Salter, a Mornington Peninsula facilitator supporting 12 active Landcare groups in the area. Jacqui has

taken on the challenge of recruiting youth and weekend visitors to Landcare activities on the peninsula.

We also hear from Kim Cross in the eastern Mallee who has helped to reinvigorate several Landcare groups and is boosting the number of women taking part in the Landcare movement. Well done Kim.

These are just a snapshot of the talented facilitators employed under the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative. Since 2011, facilitators have supported the establishment or reinvigoration of almost 200 Landcare groups. They continue to work with the State Government and play a crucial role in the development and resourcing of Landcare projects.

I am excited to announce that Melbourne will host the 2014 National Landcare Conference.

Themed *Celebrating our history – growing our future*, the conference runs from 17–19 September and will showcase the work achieved Australia-wide since the inception of Landcare.

The National Landcare Awards gala will wrap up the conference and bring together the nationwide finalists. I look forward to welcoming all finalists to our great state in September and I wish our Victorian finalists the best of luck.

The Hon. Ryan Smith M.P.
Minister for Environment and
Climate Change

2014 National Landcare Conference

The 2014 National Landcare Conference will take place in Melbourne from 17–19 September at the Crown Conference Centre. The three-day conference will include a day of field trips to Landcare projects in Victoria.

The theme is *Celebrating our history – growing our future*. The conference promises to be an exciting celebration of Landcare's achievements since its inception with a focus on the future.

For registration and program details go to www.landcareonline.com.au

These are just a snapshot of the talented facilitators employed under the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.

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Facilitators support local community action to repair land degradation. The work plans of many facilitators include tasks such as helping with the planning, resourcing, delivery and monitoring of on-ground rehabilitation and restoration projects.

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Rowena Ellis demonstrates caper farming on a sustainability bus tour at Mansfield that was organised by Up2Us Landcare Alliance Facilitator Kerstie Lee (centre).

The Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative

By Adam Hughes and John Robinson

Facilitators play a vital role in the Landcare movement by mobilising and maintaining community participation so that local environmental and natural resource management issues can be addressed.

In 2011 the Victorian Government recognised the important contribution of Landcare facilitators by launching the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI). Under the initiative 68 VLLFI facilitators provide support to 582 Landcare groups and 54 Landcare networks across Victoria.

The facilitators work to develop and build the capacity of the state's Landcare groups and networks. They provide a wide range of support to the Landcare community, which varies from technical expertise on natural resource management, to facilitation process skills and information brokering.

The variety and complexity of support provided by facilitators depends on the particular needs of each Landcare group. Groups vary in size, focus, formality, organisational structure, scale and type of activity, public profile, and they even determine their own boundaries. The support provided also varies depending on where a group is located – in a rural, peri-urban, or urban area.

Effective communication is a key part of each facilitator's role. They communicate with the Landcare community through newsletters, email alerts, Facebook pages and websites, and by attending group and network meetings. Facilitators also act as a conduit for communication and information sharing between government agencies and the Landcare community.

Facilitators support local community action to repair land degradation. The work plans of many facilitators include tasks such as helping with the planning, resourcing, delivery and monitoring of on-ground rehabilitation and restoration projects.

Another key role for Landcare facilitators is undertaking community engagement to increase the participation of landholders and the broader community in Landcare and to build awareness of natural resource management best practice. In 2012/13 VLLFI facilitators organised 774 workshops, seminars, field days and training events.

The Landcare model is based on partnerships between the community, all levels of government and the corporate sector. Facilitators provide an essential link between these partners. This includes assisting with group and network strategic plans and helping to align government and

regional natural resource management priorities with local needs and capacity.

Training workshops for Landcare facilitators are currently being held across Victoria. The workshops aim to build the capabilities, skills and knowledge of facilitators so that they are better equipped to support and develop the capacity of the Landcare groups and networks they work with.

The crucial support that the VLLFI facilitators provide allows their groups and networks to focus on the day-to-day activities of Landcare – sustainable land management, revegetation, pest plant and animal control, fencing and rehabilitation works, and remnant vegetation enhancement and protection. Facilitators are helping to build and maintain the momentum of Landcare activity across Victoria.

Many of the stories in this issue of the magazine have been contributed by facilitators employed through the VLLFI.

For further information go to www.landcarevic.net.au/resources and search for Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative, or email the DEPI Community Engagement and Landcare Team at cel.hub@depi.vic.gov.au



Nest box building with Neerim and District Landcare Group.

A rich calendar of activities helps Western Port groups to thrive

By Rachel Drew

My Landcare journey started at the beginning of 2012 when, fresh out of university, I joined the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network as Group Support Officer. I support the 12 Landcare groups that make up our network. Supporting Landcare groups is interesting, inspiring but also challenging. Every group has its own personality and different ideas about what Landcare means.

Some groups in the network are really active. They host field days, conduct regular plantings and apply for and manage their own grants. Other groups are struggling with attracting new members or being active in their communities. It has been these groups that have really required support. I've found that tapping into something which is of interest to the group and region can really bring the group back to life.

Many people think that if they join their local group, they will just end up attending meetings and be stuck on the committee. I encourage groups to run interesting events in their communities, such as a wildflower walk, platypus and pizza night, frog night, fungi foray and bat information sessions. I have also helped groups to apply for grants, organise special events, source guest speakers and promote their activities.

The Ripplebrook Landcare Group is a good example of a group that was struggling to attract new members. When I first met the group there were four people trying to keep it alive. We decided to hold a meeting with a guest speaker on local wildlife and a free barbecue to find out if people in the Ripplebrook area were interested in coming to Landcare events. We advertised the event through a mail drop in the local area. More than 20 people attended, with a number of them choosing to join the group.

We asked attendees what was the biggest Landcare issue in the local area and they identified rabbits. I applied for a Communities for Nature grant for the group to undertake a rabbit control program and we were successful. We held an information session on rabbit control with another free barbecue and a different group of Ripplebrook locals turned up.

Gradually, over the past year, the group has been gaining momentum. The rabbit control funding has been fully allocated and we are starting to develop a waiting list to apply for more funding next year. We also held a biodiversity information evening on frogs that attracted 45 people including all 11 children from the local primary school.



I encourage groups to run interesting events in their communities, such as a wildflower walk, platypus and pizza night, frog night, fungi foray and bat information sessions.



Jindivik Landcare Group members enjoying a pizza and platypus evening.

I've found that attracting people to Landcare is most successful when there is a broad range of activities on offer. For example, activities on biodiversity may attract a different audience to those on sustainable agriculture. Making the event social is also a good idea and free food is always popular.

We've had some fantastic attendances at field days and even if only a handful of these people join their local group it can provide a great boost. I think it is important for groups to remember that it is not necessarily about how many members they have, as long as people in the local area are engaged and caring for their land.

Rachel Drew is Group Support Officer with the Western Port Landcare Network. For further information contact Rachel by email at rdrew_cec@dcsi.net.au

Reinvigorating Landcare on the

By Jacqui Salter

When I started work as a Landcare facilitator on the Mornington Peninsula in March 2012 I had no idea that it would be the most fulfilling job I have ever had. Working with environmental volunteers from different backgrounds is richly rewarding. I work alongside positive and supportive people and I feel great when I can assist them to achieve their worthwhile projects.

When I began, there were six active Landcare groups in the region and four non-active groups. Some of the active groups were doing well, with good membership rates and funding for restoration projects. Membership of the other groups had dwindled to only a few and they were not hosting regular meetings or events.

Survey reveals common themes

My first step was to survey all the groups to work out how I could best assist them. I then met with group representatives and brainstormed their priorities and areas of shared interest.

The active groups shared a number of common themes. They had dynamic and innovative committees with a clear focus, the members were friendly and enthusiastic with varied skills, no-one in the group had a strong personal agenda and they had good links to other organisations.



Richard Hardham, President of the Sheepwash Creek Catchment Landcare Group, discussing plans for potential biolinks with Jacqui Salter.

Active groups were keen to enlist more members and sought assistance with grant applications as this was an overwhelming task for many. To address this I organised a grant writing workshop. I also spent time researching and advertising upcoming grants and helping groups to write them.

To my surprise, the first few grants we submitted were successful – four groups received funding for projects ranging from biolinks to farm forestry education and fauna monitoring. Having an interesting project to work on gives groups a boost and attracts more members.



Landcare group representatives decide to form the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network.

Mornington Peninsula

I began the challenge of reactivating groups by starting with those that still had a few interested former members. We organised well-advertised public meetings where we workshopped the priorities of the attendees. These groups were quick to take off, with new people bringing enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the group.

Groups that had been inactive for a long while or had a history of frequently becoming inactive were more challenging. I was inspired by Rachel Drew, Group Support Officer from the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, who started a project lending motion-activated fauna cameras to engage landholders in her region. Undertaking a similar project in the Watson Creek catchment gave me a chance to develop a relationship with landholders, which resulted in this group re-forming in December 2013.

Events attract new members

The task of attracting more members for active groups was tackled in a number of ways. After updating the groups' websites, I then became an events coordinator. Over the past two years, we have run and co-run several successful events which attracted new recruits.

These events were advertised in the local newspaper and through direct mail-outs to residents. They included a weeds and natives look-a-like practical workshop, planting and weeding working bees, a Sustainable Rural Land Expo, Sustainable Horse Management and Horses and Bushfire workshops, a Landcare and VFF networking evening with speaker Sean Dooley from Birds Australia, a Western Port Bushwalk with a local fauna ecologist and Landcare stalls at community fairs.

These events were a great opportunity to introduce new people to the concept of Landcare and for members to meet each other and learn new skills in a relaxed and friendly environment.

Recruiting youth and weekenders

The challenge of recruiting younger people is a particular problem on the Mornington Peninsula where the percentage of retirees is higher than average. Social media is the logical route for communicating effectively with younger people and to enhance communication within groups. I'm grateful to Landcare Australia for their social media toolkit which I'll be using in the coming months to set up Facebook and Twitter accounts for the groups.

Another challenge we face on the Mornington Peninsula is the high percentage of non-permanent residents. We have tried to address the issue of absentee landholders by contacting landowners via mail a few weeks before events and holding events on weekends, rather than weeknights. Many of these landowners are new to sustainable land management but are keen to learn more. Informative workshops such as iFarm and weed ID have been a great way of engaging with weekenders.

A key priority of Mornington Peninsula Landcare groups was reconnecting existing patches of remnant vegetation. Despite being the most biodiverse 750km² in Victoria, more than 80 per cent of the peninsula has been cleared for agriculture and settlements. We decided to tackle the issue of habitat loss by drafting potential routes of reconnection across the peninsula.

We used habitat quality mapping as the basis for the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Biolinks Plan. This plan was developed through a number of workshops with local Landcare representatives, in consultation with members of the Mornington Peninsula Shire's Natural Systems Team, local ecologists and others. This map has been invaluable to groups when planning their

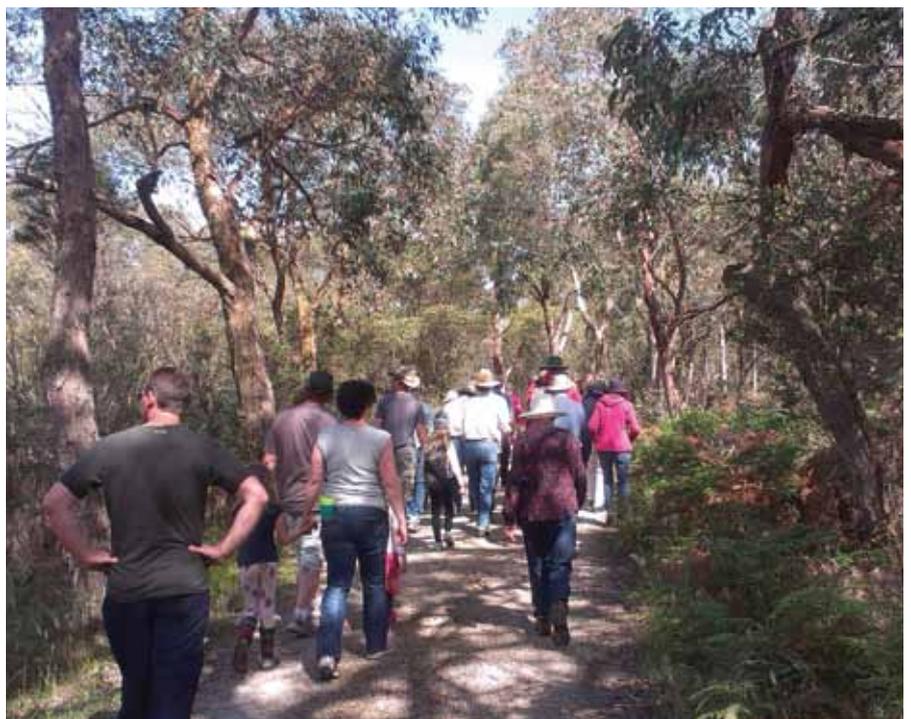


Jacqui Salter says her job as Landcare Facilitator on the Mornington Peninsula is both challenging and rewarding.

restoration projects, providing a scientific rationale for their work and supporting their project proposals.

Nearly two years on there are now 12 active Landcare groups, including the newly established Equine Landcare Group. My most exciting undertaking to date has been the creation of the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network. Forming a network will allow us to further support action by and across our member groups, share information and resources, advocate on policy issues, promote the adoption of sustainable land management and protect, conserve and restore native vegetation and fauna. The future is looking bright.

For further information contact Jacqui Salter, Landcare Facilitator, Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network by email at jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au



A well-attended tour on restoring bushland and wetlands.

“

One of the keys to the network's longevity has been its capacity to respond to local issues and a willingness to adapt to changing demands and embrace new ideas.

”



This mighty river red gum with a trunk circumference of 980 centimetres won the BIG tree competition.



Tony Marsh from Baranduda Landcare Group using a pole camera to inspect a nest box.

Kiewa Catchment Landcare

Located in north-east Victoria, Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups is a Landcare network that consists of five sub-groups representing urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Landcare has been up and running in the region since 1983 with the formation of a farm trees group.

One of the keys to the network's longevity has been its capacity to respond to local issues and a willingness to adapt to changing demands and embrace new ideas. But how do we maintain the momentum after so many years?

Embracing technology

The network uses technology to gain a better understanding of the environment. This includes the use of pole-mounted cameras and drones.

The Baranduda sub-group has over 250 nest boxes targeting endangered mammals (tuans and squirrel gliders) and bats. They use pole-mounted cameras as part of their regular monitoring program. This provides an opportunity to view rarely seen nocturnal mammals.

The cameras have a hand-held monitor so people on the ground can view the contents of the box, making it a great tool for community education. The cameras also reduce the need for ladders which makes monitoring a much safer experience.

The Kergunyah sub-group uses a drone for its wetland project. The drone captures both still and video footage and enables volunteers to obtain a bird's eye view of the wetland. The drone is operated using a smart phone and is used to record seasonal changes, map weed infestations and obtain images of inaccessible areas. It has been a big hit with the younger generation who are generally very keen to use new technology.



A squirrel glider taking a nap in a Landcare group nest box.

“

Landcare is nothing without its members, so maintaining and strengthening the membership base is critically important.

”

Groups – 30 years of achievement

By Belinda Pearce

Celebrating success

The network believes it is important to celebrate successes and to communicate achievements to the broader community. As part of their 30th anniversary celebrations the network ran a BIG tree competition.

The idea was inspired by a similar competition run by the Spring Creek Dairy Creek Landcare Group. Four thousand postcards were delivered to local mailboxes in the Landcare network area inviting people to submit entries into the numerous categories that included biggest tree, favourite tree and best revegetation project.

The competition raised awareness of the decline in big tree populations and highlighted the work of Landcare in ensuring their survival. The competition received considerable media attention and was embraced by the community. The winners were announced at the network's AGM that was attended by more than 80 people. The winner was a magnificent river red gum.

Communication

Landcare is nothing without its members, so maintaining and strengthening the membership base is critically important.

The network executive meets each month and has representation from each sub-group. The network also produces a bi-monthly newsletter and is a regular user of the Landcare Gateway.

This year the network will be launching an online membership system. The system will allow volunteers to renew memberships or join Landcare and provides a range of payment options including PayPal. The online membership system will automatically generate renewal notices and will ensure sub-group secretaries always have access to up-to-date membership details. The system will lessen the load for the membership secretary and use technology to its best advantage.

Research

Landcare is a leading researcher in the region – finding local solutions to local problems. Partnering with other groups and agencies has been critical to many of our successful research projects. The *Do it with Dung* dung beetle project involved partnerships with more than 20 other Landcare groups in Victoria and New South Wales, 100 landholders, North East CMA, DEPI and CSIRO. The project

was the largest dung beetle release and monitoring program undertaken in south-eastern Australia. Given the rise in farming input costs, landholders have enthusiastically embraced the benefits of dung beetles.

In 2013 the network, with the assistance of the North East CMA, conducted soil tests that documented the long-term beneficial changes to soil fertility as the result of dung beetle activity. The network has also been involved in deep-burrowing earthworm trials and this year it will partner with Indigenous knowledge holders to conduct native grass and pasture burning trials.

The strength of Landcare in the region is its ability to adapt and respond to issues that are of relevance to its members. The employment of a Local Landcare Facilitator in January 2012 was greatly welcomed by the network and has provided additional impetus to the many projects that are underway.

Belinda Pearce is the Local Landcare Facilitator with the Kiewa Catchment and Upper Ovens Valley Landcare Groups. For further information email Belinda at belinda.pearce@landcarevic.net.au

Group support grants help to relieve fundraising burden

By John Robinson

The ongoing costs associated with running a Landcare group, such as annual insurance and incorporation fees, can threaten a group's viability. In the past the burden of finding ongoing running costs forced some Landcare groups to discontinue or to go into recess. The availability of Landcare group support grants of \$500 helps to offset the operating costs required to run a Landcare group or network.

The grants can be used to cover costs such as printing, production of newsletters and promotional materials. These small grants also require minimal reporting and group members are relieved of the extra fundraising tasks of selling raffle tickets or hot-dogs just to keep their group viable.

The group support grants are part of the State Government's Victorian Landcare Grants which also provide start-up grants to help with establishing new groups or networks. A new Landcare network can receive a start-up grant of \$1000 per network. A new Landcare group can receive a start-up grant of \$500 per group.

The Victorian Landcare Grants for 2013-14 allocated group support grants to 278 groups and networks. A total of \$137,000 was granted which also included nine start-up grants for the formation of new groups and networks.

Some start-up grants have provided much more than just the wherewithal to enable the formation of a new group or network.

A \$500 Landcare start-up grant from



Old hay baler in operation at the 175-year celebrations at Smeaton.

the North Central CMA in 2013 helped to kick start the formation of Friends of Smeaton. The funds covered the group's initial incorporation and insurance costs and allowed them to focus on planning a celebration to mark Smeaton's 175 years of settlement.

Friends of Smeaton engage with the past

According to Ron Cosgrave, President of Friends of Smeaton, the group has played a key role in bringing the community of Smeaton together to improve both the township and the natural environment.

"After months of planning, an exciting weekend of historic activities took place in October 2013. Smeaton is home to Birch's Creek, on which stands a five-storey bluestone flour mill, known as Andersons Mill. The mill, built in 1861, has the only working water wheel in the country, and is these days managed by Parks Victoria.

The festivities at the mill included men and women dressed in period costume who gave demonstrations of period skills and crafts. Making your own rope, milling your own oats and baling your own hay were all on the menu for kids. A re-enactment of the delivery of produce by Clydesdale-drawn wagons was a highlight, as were the working steam engines and vintage machinery. The celebrations attracted around 3000 visitors and were a huge hit," said Ron.

The Friends of Smeaton has a membership of 33 local people and has many improvements planned for the town, including weed control works along the water race at Andersons Mill, and environmental and amenity enhancements on a block of shire land in the town.

For further information about Victorian Landcare Grants go to your CMA website.



Wagons on their way to Smeaton to re-enact the delivery of produce from Clunes to Andersons Mill at Smeaton.

Creative facilitation turns waste into fertiliser

By Lisette Mill

I work as a Landcare facilitator for the Basalt to Bay Network in south-west Victoria's Moyne Shire. Like many Landcarers I am committed to picking up litter and recycling. So it makes sense to support other organisations to do the same, particularly if a small push from Landcare can start something very big.

In early 2012 I heard that a local company, Camperdown Compost, was on the hunt for local sources of carbon – particularly wood chips. I recalled the mound of bulky green waste piled at the Moyne Shire Waste Facility just outside Port Fairy. I wondered whether council and industry would be able to work together to use that green waste as a component of compost on local farms.

I arranged for Bruce Reaburn, Waste Officer at Moyne Shire Council, to meet Tony Evans from Camperdown Compost and myself at the Badhams Road site one wild and wet day. We viewed the pile of green waste deposited at the site by trailer and truck. The project looked

possible – and it is now underway. The two organisations have partnered on diverting over 404 tonnes of green waste from the site to be turned into organic fertiliser for use on local farms. What was once waste is now a useful resource and Moyne Shire has recovered some of its waste processing costs.

Bringing people together is one of the most productive and satisfying roles of the Landcare facilitator. Many facilitators work in multi-partner and multi-stakeholder environments and have a lot of knowledge about what's happening in the landscape. This knowledge can sometimes point to a way of shuffling the blocks around. A small amount of time can get the various



Chipped compost from the Moyne Shire Waste Facility is now being turned into organic fertiliser for use on local farms.

partners lined up to make a cathedral. In this case the cathedral is a pile of council green waste; the builders are worms; and improved soil health and cost savings for council is the mortar.

I applaud both Moyne Shire and the Camperdown Compost Company for getting involved. When local government and industry lead the way it makes facilitating recycling and reuse at a property level so much easier for Landcare staff like me.

Lisette Mill is the Local Landcare Facilitator with the Basalt to Bay Landcare Network. For further information contact Lisette by email at basalttobay@gmail.com



Lisette Mill contemplates the many forms that facilitation can take in the bush at St Helens.



Bringing people together is one of the most productive and satisfying roles of the Landcare facilitator.



Behind the scenes with a Mallee Landcare facilitator

By Kim Cross

Two years ago I accepted a position with Mallee CMA as a fulltime Landcare facilitator working with the six Landcare groups that make up the Eastern Mallee Landcare Consortium. I was excited by the prospect of starting something new and being able to contribute to on-ground natural resource management, community engagement and raising the profile of Landcare. Little did I know I would go on to form lifelong connections and friendships with Landcare and community group volunteers.

In the beginning – connect, listen and support

Covering an area from Robinvale and extending south through to Sea Lake initially seemed overwhelming. I decided a plan was needed to ensure the needs of all groups were met. With this in mind I diligently printed out Landcare material and started sending out emails to set up a group meeting.

The day arrived. I was armed with my stack of paperwork and welcoming smile, but there were only four participants. I was perplexed about how to reach all of the groups and provide the support they needed.



Robinvale P-12 students enjoying their community garden open day at Mallee CMA's Waterwatch trailer.

I contacted the executive of one of the groups and they extended an invitation for an informal meeting. Over coffee I got to know the group executive. This helped me to see and understand the issues directly affecting their lives and what they needed to help their group to continue to support positive environmental outcomes. All I had to do was to listen; this was when my role as facilitator became apparent.

Building a strong foundation – engage, motivate and celebrate

Most of the groups I work with have been operating successfully since the early 1990s and each group has their own way of doing things. We needed to convey the purpose of the groups as a consortium. We worked together to come up with a mission statement for the consortium: 'Custodians of the land working together to enhance and protect the unique Eastern Mallee landscape for future generations.'

The mission statement, and an accompanying logo, has helped to secure group sponsorship and support which will ensure group sustainability. Group survival is a priority and it depends on funding, both philanthropic and government, which

is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. Much of my time is spent supporting group secretaries and coordinators to navigate their way through funding applications. Providing opportunities to improve grant writing skills through workshops and training is also critical.

Training is also important for strong group governance. By identifying skill sets among group executives we have been able to provide a computer course on managing projects through Excel, and information sessions on Quickbooks. The training aims to streamline group processes, keep paperwork to a minimum and contribute to the quality of reporting.

Regular Landcare meetings and planning sessions have resulted in the development and implementation of individual group action plans for 2013–18. The plans identify priority issues including pest plant and animal threats, group development, Junior Landcare, remnant vegetation protection, community assets and engagement.

Connectivity – Landcare, community, government

I have been able to create and maintain strong networks with local government

“

Much of my time is spent supporting group secretaries and coordinators to navigate their way through funding applications. Providing opportunities to improve grant writing skills through workshops and training is also critical.

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Manangatang community members celebrate after a successful tree planting at the local rest stop.

and non-government agencies. This has been very important when groups are undertaking pest plant and animal control projects. A major achievement has been the control of pest rabbit populations which are a major threat to viable agricultural land and flora and fauna species in the Mallee.

As a facilitator I have been able to provide connectivity and strong communication links between all of the environmental stakeholders. This has fostered some new action in the region with urban Landcare

action groups emerging. These groups are taking ownership of community assets, attracting new volunteers and creating a sense of kinship in the community.

Although women make up a small number of Landcare volunteers in the Eastern Mallee Landcare consortium they are the key drivers of executive committees. Women take on many lead project management roles and contribute significantly to on-ground works and community projects.

During 2013 I developed and ran a Ladies Leadership Conference with the support of the Landcare volunteers. The conference included guest speakers on ladies in Landcare, mental health and well-being, supporting rural women, getting involved with community groups and healthy minds and bodies. Relaxation yoga classes and health checks were also performed on the day. The conference was a great success and will be held again in 2014.

The future is in the balance

Landcare groups in the Mallee need ongoing support so they can continue their efforts to manage pest species, regenerate our environmental assets and provide educational opportunities to the next generation of Landcarers.

Living off the land has never been easy and Mallee farmers are resilient and resourceful. Facilitators who are prepared to listen and learn can help the people of the Mallee with the balancing act of managing viable agricultural land whilst contributing to biodiversity and a harmonious environment. It's an honour to be part of it.

For further information contact Kim Cross by email at kim.cross@depi.vic.gov.au



Guest speakers at the 2013 Ladies Leadership Conference.



Long-term partnerships bring the most benefits. The Glenaroua Land Management Group and the Manningham Rotary Club have been working together for 15 years.



Sonia Sharkey enjoys the challenge and diversity of working as a Landcare facilitator in south-west Goulburn.

Courses and workshops bring the south-west Goulburn

The South West Goulburn Landcare Network sits within the Goulburn Broken catchment. The network covers an area of approximately 100,000 hectares. The landholder base is changing from being mainly fulltime farmers to a mixed bag of farmers, hobby farmers, lifestyle or tree changers and absentee landholders, along with people moving into the local towns.

Planning and running workshops to target specific groups or targets is one of my challenges as Landcare facilitator.

Courses and workshops bring the community together

The FarmBlitz program builds on the knowledge of all the participants at a workshop and provides a way of sharing knowledge and linking people with different skills. The program aims to help people become more sustainable on their plot – whether it is a quarter acre block or hundreds of hectares of farmland.

We've run workshops and courses on many different topics – fencing, how to

hang a gate, keeping chooks for eggs and meat, vegetable gardening, drip irrigation, growing and pruning fruit trees, water health of dams and creeks and wetlands, making sourdough bread, permaculture gardening, creating frog habitats, caring for sheep and alpacas, soil health, composting, worm farming, bush tucker foods and preserving your harvest at the end of the growing season – all fascinating topics and a great way of bringing people together.

As well as running workshops and field days I also help the Landcare groups under the network banner to apply for grants. Once the projects have been completed I assist with final reporting and project mapping as well as planning future projects.

I also help people with identifying plants. After the 2009 bushfires many strange plants appeared in the area. Some are native species that required the fires to set them into action, while others were weeds which were brought into the area with stock feed or mulch.

Finding volunteers and fostering partnerships for planting projects is a large part of the job, especially leading up to the autumn break and planting season. Creating partnerships with



A workshop on keeping chooks for eggs and meat helps to forge links between people in the community.



A workshop on making sourdough bread is a way of extending the Landcare concept and introducing it to a new range of people.



Each day brings something different and the sense you are working in partnership with people on something important, something that will leave a legacy well into the future.



community together

By Sonia Sharkey

corporate groups is an excellent way of benefiting not only the landholder and the environment, but volunteers can also walk away with a real sense of pride and ownership in what they have achieved.

Fostering links and partnerships

Long-term partnerships bring the most benefits. The Glenaroua Land Management Group and the Manningham Rotary Club have been working together for 15 years. They have put 100,000 plants back into the landscape to aid with salinity and erosion as well as creating corridors of vegetation for a variety of native species to use and move through.

There are regular Landcare group meetings throughout the year to attend. This helps me to keep in contact with the group members and listen to what a group's priorities are. Then there are meetings with other natural resource management agencies and local government departments.

This provides a fantastic network of contacts not only in my region and catchment area, but across all catchments. These links can have many practical benefits when tackling issues such as working on the Mount Piper biolink – part of a chain of vegetation that connects with the Central Victorian Biolink.

One of my favourite parts of the job is the individual site visits with landholders. This is a great opportunity to have a look at a property, address any issues and assist with funding to help find a solution for a problem. It is always great to see the environmental works underway on properties as part of the normal course of land management.

There are constant requests from the public for information and there is work on our regular bi-monthly newsletter that keeps the community up to date on field days, workshops and topics of interest.

I get wonderful support and direction from the network committee – there's always someone to bounce ideas off. There is no chance of getting stale when you work in Landcare. Each day brings something different and the sense you are working in partnership with people on something important, something that will leave a legacy well into the future.

Sonia Sharkey is the South West Goulburn Landcare Facilitator. For further information contact Sonia by email at swg_landcare@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Landcare for the retired

In my role as Landcare facilitator I have been running a program with the residents at the local retirement village. We sow 100 tube stock of a species that is disappearing from the landscape – currently drooping sheoak – from locally collected seed.

After the residents have sown the seed I take it home and look after it until the autumn break. Local landholders then prepare an area to receive the plants. The residents get feedback on where the plants have gone. We are also hoping to take some residents on a bus trip to an accessible site so they can see the benefits of their handiwork.



Residents of the Dianella Retirement Village at Kilmore sowing seed for South West Goulburn Landcare Network projects.

A year with the Bellarine Landcare Group

By Emma Camilleri

In February 2013 I received the happy news that I had been employed as the Landcare facilitator with the Bellarine Landcare Group (BLG). My previous experience, spanning around ten years, included a stint as a ranger with Parks Victoria, work as an environmental project officer for a non-government organisation in the United Kingdom and a conservation ranger position with local government.

I love working with communities, talking to people about all things conservation and land management and being able to get dirty, so working as a Landcare facilitator is a great mix for me. I also get to live on the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula.

BLG is a member of the Bellarine Catchment Network. Working for the group involves project management, community education and hands-on practical work. The group has

been granted Caring for our Country funding for a major project to reduce the impact of foxes on our RAMSAR assets – Swan Bay and Lake Connewarre. The project is called the Bellarine Ark. It has an eight-year history and has been successful in bringing private and public landholders together in a collaborative approach.

A project to build the resilience of the Bellarine RAMSAR sites funded by Communities for Nature is another of my major projects. Now in its second year, the project involves working with private landholders to identify threats to waterways and remnant vegetation. Partial funding is then provided to assist them to fence off sensitive sites, control rabbits and develop buffer zones and wildlife corridors using direct seeding methods. When waterways are being revegetated with plant stock we source it from two local community-run nurseries.

It's been a great year. I've never been busier, but the group seems to be running smoothly and all of our projects are achieving good outcomes. I think being a Landcare facilitator is all about balance.

For further information go to the Bellarine Landcare Group's website at www.bellarinelandcare.org.au or email Emma Camilleri at emma.blg@environmentbellarine.org.au



Emma Camilleri (far right) working with students from Bellarine Secondary College along the Bellarine Rail Trail.

Help Landcare to develop overseas

By Rob Youl

Australian Landcare International (ALI) and the Victorian Landcare Council have created an Overseas Landcare Fund for small community projects abroad.

Initial donations for the fund came from ALI, the Victorian Landcare Council, organisations, Landcare networks and groups and private sources, while bankmecu provided \$1500 to cover set-up and transfer costs.

Funds have been allocated to projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for revegetation, Nigeria for wetlands and biodiversity, Tanzania for junior Landcare, Sri Lanka for water quality and the Philippines and Indonesia for tree nurseries. A wetland project in Laos and a tree nursery and training project in Cameroon will be underway soon.

Grants are small – there is currently a \$500 limit, but this can go a long way in developing countries. To ensure funds arrive at their destination and are used effectively, we link with known overseas non-government organisations and contacts, and seek pictures and reports from the groups involved.

There are projects in Africa, south-east Asia and the South Pacific seeking funding and we invite Landcare groups, networks and individuals to contribute. Where appropriate we link donors with specific projects and their involvement can lead to genuine relationships, the exchange of ideas and even to Victorians doing Landcare work abroad.

For further information go to www.australianlandcareinternational.com or email Rob Youl at robmyoul@gmail.com



Motorbikes transport seedlings for food and erosion control to steep mountain areas in central Sumatra, Indonesia.



The many faces of facilitation: Anthony Gallacher hosts a Landcare stall at the Pyramid Hill College fete.

The many faces of Landcare facilitation

By Anthony Gallacher

I'm often asked by friends what a Landcare facilitator actually does. Some of these people have only a vague notion of Landcare and I struggle to give a direct and simple answer to what I do.

In my experience, the day-to-day work of being a Landcare facilitator is rarely the same. Landcare facilitators deal with a diversity of people, groups, plants and animals and opportunities.

The components that come to mind most readily when thinking about the Landcare facilitator role are project management,

facilitation and reporting. This includes coordination of conservation projects such as weed control, the running of meetings and signing off of reports.

Some of the lesser-known tasks include journalism, photography, marketing and teaching. Landcare facilitators write and take photographs for articles, newsletters and media releases. Marketing skills come to the fore through stalls and in the details of grant applications where you are trying to articulate your message and sell your project.

I also manage the network's website and blog, including uploading content, news, events and grant opportunities. The website is an important communication link between our network and the rest of the community. It serves as a record-keeping tool and as a means to keep network members up to date. The email subscription service provides an easy method to alert people to what's happening in between the bi-monthly release of our newsletter.

Graphic design skills come into play when producing a group brochure, event flyer, or a new banner. This presents an opportunity to move away from words and exert some creative flair!

Facilitators also work as cartographers. The map-making facilitator takes lines on aerial photographs and transfers them onto online mapping tools or into geographic information software. Maps are an important planning tool for facilitators and groups.

Then there's the ecologist role. This can be a challenge when people expect you to know every weed, crop, plant, animal and insect in the region. It's a great opportunity for learning and with the right resources it doesn't take long to start getting familiar with the landscape.

In all of these different roles Landcare facilitators are engaged in community development – helping local community groups articulate their vision for their landscape and Landcare group.

Being a Landcare facilitator is a diverse and privileged role. If I had to write a position description for my job I'd have to include everything from web manager, assistant treasurer through to ecological consultant, plus a footnote: whatever you want to make it.

Anthony Gallacher has been the Landcare Facilitator for the Loddon Plains Landcare Network since March 2012. For further information email Anthony at anthony.gallacher@gmail.com



Anthony Gallacher gives a presentation to students at Boort P-12 College as part of a Trees for Mum event.



Since the network was formed we've had a permanent facilitator which has given us direction and leadership.



Third generation farmer Irene Punton at one of the Mid Loddon Landcare Network's protected bush stone curlew habitat sites.



Members of the West Marong Landcare Group study their satellite imagery biomass maps as part of the precision agriculture project.

Landcare memories from

In 1999 when the Mid Loddon Landcare Network was first formed, I was its project manager, having been a member of the Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group for five years. My role for the network was to provide support to our member groups by writing grant submissions, assisting with project delivery and reporting on the completed projects.

I remember one of our farmers saying: "You do the paperwork Jude and we'll do the on-ground work." And they did, year after year, even through the long dry. Each year the work of fencing creeks, remnants and wildlife corridors was planned and completed across farmland, public land and the lifestyle properties that surround our forests and farms. Over a few short years our Mid Loddon landscape was changed forever. Recently I spoke with a number of local Landcarers on how Landcare has evolved in Mid Loddon.

Fifth generation Derby farmer Rob Pollock remembers that the Derby and Leichardt farming community formed a revegetation action group in 1986 to work on revegetation. In 1990 this group extended its membership further south to Woodstock and Laanecoorie and became known as the West Marong Landcare Group.

According to Rob the farming population has shrunk since then and the farms have become larger.

"Much of the supporting infrastructure has disappeared, but the local Landcare group has steadily gained strength, continuing to expand in area and activities."

West Marong Landcare Group extends its interests

Rob has been supporting the group as secretary for almost 25 years and continues to be a vocal and active member. Rob and his family have recently set up a successful cell grazing trial site with support from a Farming for Sustainable Soils Network project. They are also involved in other soil health projects, remnant woodland protection and revegetation.

Third generation Woodstock West farmer Howard Hepburn is another foundation member of the West Marong Landcare Group. Howard can remember the group's first plantings of tube stock.

"We enjoyed the friendship of working together planting out eroded creeks and gullies. As time moved on and our knees grew older we began the faster method of direct seeding paddock shelterbelts. We also worked at fencing out patches of remnant vegetation and repairing fences



Mid Loddon Landcare Network members conduct a serious investigation of newly sown pasture at a cell grazing trial site.

Mid Loddon

By Judy Crocker

that protected soil erosion repair work begun, but not completed, in the 1960s.”

According to Howard the group had no coordinator for a number of years and got by with departmental support.

“Since the network was formed we’ve had a permanent facilitator which has given us direction and leadership. Our projects have extended into a strong interest in soil health involving intensive soil testing and nutrient trials. We are also interested in precision agriculture in its many forms and integrated pest management. The groups in the network are keen to lower the use of insecticides as we rebuild our native bird populations.”

Irene Punton and her family have been members of the West Marong Landcare Group since 1990. Irene has been treasurer since 1991 and her son, Nic Punton, is the current president.

Irene says she’s enjoyed the journey of land rehabilitation across the local farms.

“The change in the landscape and soil health has been very pleasing. We’ve increased our knowledge by learning from each other as a group and from the specialist knowledge we’ve brought in.

“It’s also good to see that our young folk are now taking on the challenge of farming. They are quick on the uptake of new technology like GPS and using satellite imagery to assess crop and pasture growth.”

Farmers and lifestyle landholders work together

One of the major achievements of the Mid Loddon Landcare Network has been how farmers and lifestyle landholders work together. The network’s aim is landscape restoration in its many forms. We have farmers attending lifestyle group meetings and lifestyle landholders joining in with many of the farmer group meetings and events.

A recent addition to the network has been the Mid Loddon Conservation Management Network. The network has consolidated relationships with local public land managers and strengthened interest from network groups to tackle all landscape problems equally, whether on agricultural, lifestyle or public land reserves.

Frank and Jenny Steele live on a bush block at Lockwood South and are active members of the Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group. Frank is a Waterwatch volunteer and monitors the condition of Bullock Creek. Jenny monitors the

infra-red cameras set up in four of the bush stone curlew protected habitat areas on agricultural and public land near the Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve.

According to Jenny when people live on a lifestyle bush block, it is too easy for them to just treat it like a very large suburban block.

“People hurry to and from their work in town and don’t spend the time to really appreciate what they are custodians of. Landcare is a great interface between country and city and can be full of useful insights for people who don’t earn a living off the land.

“A greater understanding leads to involvement in revegetation, plant identification and wildlife monitoring which then increases our knowledge of the area and our sense of community. Our local Landcare group is working to re-establish the bush stone curlew in our area by providing suitable habitat, fox control and a breeding program. This has brought people together from farms and rural blocks to achieve this goal and share in the benefits.”

Judy Crocker is the Mid Loddon Landcare Network’s Facilitator. For further information contact Judy by email at jcroc22@gmail.com

Landcare for Singles – recruiting volunteers and

Facilitation can have many applications. In my role as a Landcare facilitator with the Yarra Ranges Landcare Network, amongst a suite of other tasks, I help to run a program that is aiming to recruit new volunteers to Landcare activities while offering them an opportunity to meet a potential life partner.



The Landcare Australia Limited online kit provides groups with all of the resources they need to run a successful Landcare for Singles event.

Former Yarra Ranges Landcare Network Facilitator Kim Boswell developed Landcare for Singles in 2010. Kim was keen to address a declining and ageing volunteer base and a growing sense within the network that young people were not interested in the environment or volunteering.

“We needed to do something that would clearly demonstrate the willingness of young folk to participate in environmental volunteering activities. Something that would assist us to open our minds to the fact that in order to engage a different generation we would need to change or adapt ourselves and our traditional ways of working,” Kim said.

Potential recognised

A Landcare Volunteer Action Project Grant provided the seed funding for the initial Landcare for Singles event in 2011. The Yarra Ranges Landcare Network, with support from Landcare Australia Limited and the Yarra Ranges Council, has had great success with the project. The network is testing the viability of making Landcare for Singles a regular seasonal activity in the Yarra Ranges.

As the new facilitator I was involved in running two events in 2013. We chose sites where groups were planning to rehabilitate and needed additional support.

We then went about planning a day that is open to anyone single and over 18 years of age. Participants were encouraged to circulate around the planting site, with a number of icebreaker questions provided and incentives to encourage mingling.

A recipe for success

We’ve had singles of all ages, from a variety of places, and with different levels of environmental awareness. While some nerves are apparent, we aim to make people feel at ease by being welcoming and relaxed. My skill set is in natural resource management and I am still developing the art of social engineering. Getting people together in a beautiful natural environment with no loud music or alcohol and giving them something useful to do is conducive to conversation and a recipe for success.

We’ve been particularly successful at attracting women to our events. Perhaps women are more open to trying something new? With any new idea, it can take a while to catch on and gain momentum. We advertise through sporting clubs, community centres, Facebook, local newspapers, radio and shop fronts. In our experience men are a little slower to sign up, but at our second event for 2013 we had more equal numbers of men and women on the day.

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We needed to do something that would clearly demonstrate the willingness of young folk to participate in environmental volunteering activities.

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From little things, big things grow: a day of planting trees together can forge new friendships.

fostering new relationships

By Anne Fitzpatrick



A Landcare for Singles event at Warburton last year.

After both of the 2013 events we surveyed participants to obtain feedback. Twenty-four people responded to the survey after the Wesburn event. More than 85 per cent of respondents rated the event as excellent or very good and 76 per cent of respondents said they would recommend a similar event to a friend. Eight respondents said they would look into joining a Landcare group.

After the event at Birdsland we refined the survey and asked participants if they would like us to help facilitate a connection with anyone that they met on the day. Four connections have been initiated and we hope to hear of some positive stories from these.

In the Yarra Ranges, Landcare for Singles has been successful at introducing a variety of new people to Landcare. We are providing potential new volunteers with a positive experience and giving them

an understanding of the spirit and intent of Landcare. We may not get an instant increase in group membership, but this is something we will monitor over time.

We are always looking for new ways to attract volunteers and recognising that there are different kinds of volunteers with different capacities to commit to groups is important. We'd like to increase engagement with retirees, singles, families and working people with spare time. Some future ideas include a Landcare event aimed at single parents and having an operatic orchestra accompany a planting day – the creative juices are flowing in the Yarra Ranges.

Anne Fitzpatrick is Landcare Facilitator with the Yarra Ranges Landcare Network. For further information email Anne at yvlandcare@bigpond.com

Landcare for Singles goes national

By Trish O'Gorman

Following on from the inaugural Landcare for Singles event run by the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network, the Landcare Australia team recognised how clever and innovative this type of event was and how well it could work to encourage a new demographic to get involved with Landcare.

Working with Kim Boswell, Landcare Australia developed a project kit and downloadable resources and templates which would help any group run a Landcare for Singles event. As a result, Landcare for Singles was launched as a national program on Valentine's Day in 2012.

As part of the national launch, Landcare Australia funded events in Canberra, Darwin, the Gold Coast, Perth and the Illawarra region of New South Wales. Landcare Australia worked with local coordinators to promote the series of events, encourage registrations and highlight the opportunity for other groups to get involved.

Over 200 people took part in these events, with over 80 per cent of attendees never having been involved in a Landcare event before.

Since the launch, Coastcare for Singles events have taken place in Perth and Landcare for Singles events in St Kilda, Brisbane and the Yarra Valley.

The project kit includes a detailed outline of what's involved in running an event, a sample running order and event checklist. Groups can also download promotional templates, including poster and flyer artwork, registration forms, name tags and many other resources to help make their event a success.

Trish O'Gorman is the Communications Director at Landcare Australia Limited. All resources, templates and the project kit can be downloaded from the resources section of www.landcareonline.com.au

Facilitating Landcare in the Dandenong Ranges – a view from both sides of the fence

By Glenn Brooks-MacMillan

My involvement with Landcare started with a desire to restore depleted farmland. I became involved in tree planting, weed management, protecting native vegetation and establishing Trust for Nature covenants. I joined the local Cardinia Creek Landcare Group and eventually found myself elected to the position of President.

Our group joined other local groups to form the Southern Ranges Environment Alliance (SREA). In early 2012 we were successful in obtaining a Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative position for the historic Puffing Billy corridor in the hills of the Dandenong Ranges, east of Melbourne. The position was advertised and I suddenly had a big decision to make – what would Landcare look like from the other side of the fence and could this role help with the issues my local group face every day? I applied for the facilitator position. The rest is history!

My work is directed by a committee of management, but my approach is always to return to the question: what would I expect from a facilitator if I was a local group member or resident?

I quickly learnt that many groups experience similar challenges when applying Landcare



Building relationships is a key part of delivering on-ground natural resource management. From left: local Member for Gembrook Brad Battin, SREA Facilitator Glenn Brooks-MacMillan, Puffing Billy CEO John Robinson, Yarra Ranges Lyster Ward Councillor Samantha Dunn and Cardinia Shire Council Mayor Brett Owen.

practices to their property, local reserve or park. As a facilitator I am in the unique position of being able to explore the reasons behind these constraints. After a period of investigation I suspected that a lack of true community engagement was one of the problems. Having the onground experience to challenge these constraints has been very valuable.

Working towards true engagement

I spent a lot of time working with agencies trying to understand engagement – what does it mean to each party? I came to understand that the community was sometimes being informed rather than engaged.

I may never resolve all of the issues in bringing agencies and community groups together, but having regular communication and open discussions clearly helps the parties to work together more closely. Understanding some of the causes may work better in solving problems than reacting to the symptoms.

SREA was able to source funding from a Victorian Government Communities for Nature grant to work with the Puffing

Billy (operated by the Emerald Tourist Railway) Board on weed management, tree planting, fauna management and community engagement. The Green Tracks Project was created – a partnership with the sharing of resources and knowledge. However, it quickly became obvious that some natural resource management practices were being questioned when others were encouraged and supported.

Community builds on weed program

The ability to build community capacity has been realised by the formation of the Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs. The weed alliance began as a small group of residents concerned about the damaging effects of weeds in the Dandenongs. The State Government and local councils have been investing in weed works on public land under a program called Urban Fringe Weed Management Initiative (UFWMI).

The Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs raised interest in the issue of weeds on adjacent private land, and after a series of bus tours and forums was successful in obtaining some funding for a model project. Simply named



My work is directed by a committee of management, but my approach is always to return to the question: what would I expect from a facilitator if I was a local group member or resident?





The Cardinia Creek Landcare Group has been active in trying to improve the health of the Cardinia Creek Catchment for the platypus.

UFWMI Plus, the aim is to carry out works on private land to complement the weed control works that are underway on public land.

This year will be my third in the facilitator's role. I'm looking forward to building on the relationships and partnerships that are so critical to the efficient delivery of local environmental initiatives.

By stepping into this role I have become more confident in emphasising the importance of supporting community members to help deliver natural resource management. Money to put trees in the ground is important, but it's more important to have the right community people resourced to deliver on-ground works. Employing local group members builds community capacity by giving individuals the skills and resources to do more than just plant trees – another form of community engagement.

Glenn Brooks-MacMillan is the Local Landcare Facilitator with the Southern Ranges Environment Alliance. For further information email Glenn at info@srea.org.au

Employing Landcare staff

By Susi Johnson

Landcare support staff can be critical to the success of groups and networks. Understanding the rights and responsibilities of the employer and the employee is important for avoiding conflict and ensuring that people are treated fairly.

The Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) fields many queries on whether Landcare support staff are considered to be employees, independent contractors or voluntary workers. While we can't give legal advice, we can point people in the right direction.

The definitions in this area aren't particularly clear and can depend on whether you are concerned with wages and conditions (employment law), tax and superannuation (the Australian Taxation Office), or safety (WorkSafe).

It's often assumed that an Australian Business Number (ABN) makes someone an independent contractor, but many employees also have ABNs. Another misconception is that independent contractors submit timesheets, but so do casual employees, and sometimes superannuation is paid to contractors. Vouchers provided to volunteers as rewards for their work may also constitute employee benefits.

Whether someone is an employee, an independent contractor, or a volunteer has implications for insurance, leave entitlements, intellectual property and superannuation. People may be happy to be treated as independent contractors or volunteers, but if something goes wrong (for example a serious accident or the relationship breaks down and they sue for unfair dismissal), then penalties may apply for breach of employer duties if they are deemed to be employees by the relevant authorities.

If you are unsure into which category a particular person falls, get legal advice, or treat them as employees with the associated rights and responsibilities.

Independent contractors need to hold their own insurance. If they do not have existing insurance it is an indication that they are not established and experienced independent contractors. For FTLA member groups, volunteers are covered by FTLA insurances and employees are covered for professional and public liability, but separate Workcover may also be required.

Contractors (and volunteers) retain intellectual property rights so you need to ask them to assign or license any intellectual property they develop on your behalf. Employee-developed intellectual property is owned by employers.

Clear agreement around work priorities is vital. Problems can arise from lack of work plans, performance management, or unclear lines of authority. Both parties need to be satisfied with hours and work conditions. Volunteers often don't think about after-hours phone calls but this can be very intrusive for employees who need some downtime. Whether managing staff or volunteers, concerns around bullying also need to be taken seriously. Bullying falls under health and safety legislation and includes excluding people from interaction.

Susi Johnson is the Executive Officer of the FTLA. This article is for general information only. Please seek specific advice for your situation. Good sources for further information are Justice Connect, WorkSafe, Fair Work Australia and the Australian Taxation Office, or call the FTLA on 9207 5527; or email ftla@vff.org.au

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The network values its board and recognises the importance of remaining a grass roots, community-based organisation.

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Mandy Coulson, Landcare Coordinator for the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network inspecting serrated tussock with Andrew Gray (left) and Max Coster.

Planning is the key to the future for the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network

By Mandy Coulson

Planning is a critical task for Landcare facilitators and coordinators. Planning is a way to turn our thoughts and dreams into reality. Planning can help us to embrace opportunities, increase participation in Landcare and achieve on-ground change.

The landscape of the Surf Coast and Inland Plains area has experienced a period of constant change mainly caused by an increasing population. In recent months the newly elected board of the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network (SCIPN) identified the need for a solid strategic plan to gain a better understanding of local natural resource management issues and their importance to the community.

People across each of the network's four geographic areas – coastal, peri-urban, small-acreage and broad-acre farming – provided input for the plan during a three-hour independently facilitated workshop. From this flowed the network's five-year strategic plan comprising a local catchment plan and yearly operational

plans – both essential for the organisation's continued improvement.

The network values its board and recognises the importance of remaining a grass roots, community-based organisation. However, with the plan and an improved organisational structure in place, we can better manage the pressures and demands of the future.

The role of being a Landcare coordinator for a network like SCIPN is challenging and very diverse.

I'm involved in writing funding applications, collating, monitoring and reporting project outcomes, engaging with the local community through monthly network news updates, website and local media tasks, liaising with key stakeholders,

speaking at forums and, most importantly, being there for the community.

Helping to create a community vision that will enhance, protect and rehabilitate our natural resource base is very satisfying work and gives me a great deal of enjoyment. There's also the benefit of working alongside a truly inspiring group of people.

Mandy Coulson was the winner of the Landcare Facilitator or Coordinator Award at the 2013 Victorian Landcare Awards. For further information email Mandy at nrmextension@exemail.com.au

A day in the life of a Regional Landcare Coordinator

By Jodie Odgers

It's the middle of summer and I am relieved that we've managed to coordinate our meeting on a day that isn't too hot. I am driving to Nuggetty, a small town south-west of Bendigo, with Anthony Gallacher, the facilitator of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network. We have arranged to meet with members of the Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee and the Wychitella District Landcare Group to talk about wheel cactus control.

As we near our roadside meeting place I begin to notice a few wheel cactus plants along the roadside and in some paddocks. We are driving through granite country which unfortunately also means cactus country, as the plants are ideally suited to the local soil type.

Ian Grenda from the Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee is waiting for us when we arrive and it isn't long before committee members Tony and Cheryl Kane and Lee Mead join us, along with Janet Richardson and Joy Freeman from Wychitella. With more than 100 kilometres between them the groups aren't exactly neighbours, but both share a passion for tackling wheel cactus.

Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) is native to Mexico and has become naturalised in western and central Victoria, western New South Wales and south-eastern and eastern South Australia. It infests pastures, granite outcrops and open woodlands.

The two groups are focused on tackling infestations in their own areas and have had varying levels of success. The Wychitella District Landcare Group has a long history of tackling cactus on Mount Buckrabanyule and is looking to spark interest in a renewed push to control outbreaks of the cactus that have exploded on the mountain since the wet years of 2010–2011.

The Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee and their 'cactus warriors' are continuing to tackle the problem through regular working bees and they are always looking for new opportunities to recruit landholders and get school groups and volunteers involved with their crusade.

Supporting and facilitating meetings like this is an important part of the role of both regional and local Landcare facilitators and coordinators. Bringing groups together that have been working in isolation enables them



Ian Grenda from the Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee. The committee is trialling the use of cochineal beetles to control wheel cactus around Nuggetty.

to share their stories and experiences, talk about what has worked for them, discuss what hasn't worked so well and identify opportunities to work in partnership.

The meeting has also provided the Wychitella District Landcare Group with another weapon in their arsenal to control wheel cactus. Janet and Joy are taking home a box of cochineal beetles that the Tarrangower committee has been trialling on three sites around Nuggetty.

The beetle is a biological control agent that has had success in inhibiting growth of

the wheel cactus in South Australia. The Wychitella District Landcare Group is now working with the Loddon Plains Landcare Network on a renewed push in their area and they are hoping that the beetle will be another control measure that they can use. A successful day at the Landcare coalface.

For more information on this project go to www.cactuswarriors.org and www.lpln.org

Jodie Odgers is the Regional Landcare Coordinator for the North Central CMA. For further information email Jodie at jodie.odgers@nccma.vic.gov.au

Around the State – News from the

Glenelg Hopkins

Eight groups/networks in the region have been successful in obtaining Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI) assistance. The groups are: Basalt to Bay Landcare Network, Beyond Bolac Community Action Group, Hamilton Railway Consortium, Making a Difference to the Merri at Warrnambool, Panyyabyr Landcare Group, Tarragal Landcare Group, Upper Mount Emu Creek Landcare Network and the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group.

The region's VLLFI facilitators have provided a real boost for their local Landcare communities. The CMA works closely with the facilitators providing maps, feedback on funding applications and training opportunities as well as providing some funds for projects.

Groups have finalised their projects for the 2012-2013 State Government's Victorian Landcare Grants. Works totalling \$620,000 were completed. A full report is available in the region's Landcare report card which is available from the CMA.

*For further information contact
Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.*

Corangamite

The region's Landcare Support Plan has recently been completed. A key action is to continue to support the 12 Landcare networks to share knowledge and experiences through networking, training and planning opportunities and to introduce new and innovative programs.

The Corangamite coordinators group held a two-day team meeting at Queenscliff in December, with 18 Landcare staff

attending. Discussions focused on Indigenous engagement with Landcare, developing a regional Landcare weed plan, a soil mapping and monitoring project with the University of Ballarat and implementing the Landcare GPS and MapInfo program to promote the benefits of regional tools for collecting spatial data.

The field trips included an opportunity to learn about the marine environment on Swan Bay from a canoe and a farm walk on one of our own Landcare coordinator's properties. Cam Nicholson led a walk around his 320-hectare sheep and beef farm where he talked about improving soil function and the outcomes of 30 years of soil testing and grazing management.

*For further information contact
Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.*

Goulburn Broken

Supporting the region's group and network facilitators is an ongoing priority in the Goulburn Broken.

A successful Indigenous Engagement workshop for Landcare support staff was held in Benalla last December. Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator Brendon Kennedy and Yorta Yorta representatives discussed Indigenous site recognition and methods of engaging with local Aboriginal communities.

The CMA's Community Natural Resource Management Action Plan has been completed and approved and will soon be launched. The survey and development of the Annual Landcare Report Card for 2012-13 for the region has also been undertaken with the report distributed in February 2014.

An occupational health and safety plan has been produced for groups and networks to help them keep up to date with legal requirements and safety issues. A successful and well-attended community natural resource management meeting of network chairs, coordinators and facilitators was held in Benalla and Trawool respectively. We have also been promoting the Victorian Landcare Grants through local media.

*For further information contact
Tony Kubiak on 5761 1619.*

East Gippsland

Of the 2.2 million hectares in the region 20 per cent is freehold. This land hosts rich agricultural and horticultural industries. The rest of the region is largely State forests and national parks. The Landcare groups and networks in the region embrace the stewardship of these natural resources and also play a big role in bringing the isolated and remote communities together.

My role as Regional Landcare Coordinator is to support Landcare to make these things happen. This involves support for our Landcare staff and for volunteers. By providing facilitation, governance and cultural awareness training for our local Landcare staff they are better equipped to assist their groups and networks.

Administering funding is another critical role. When funding is in place and being managed efficiently groups and networks are able to get on with their projects and on-ground activities.

I'm also available to help with guidance and encouragement across the region and to make sure the efforts of the Landcare community are recognised and celebrated. The regional Landcare awards and care days are good opportunities for people to socialise and reflect on what they have achieved.

*For further information contact
Amanda Bartkowski on 5150 3851.*

West Gippsland

The South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) has been very active. A Blackberry Blitz Forum was held at Mt Best Hall in February. The forum included case studies, techniques and strategies to tackle blackberries even in the most inaccessible places.

The SGLN Healthy Soils – Sustainable Farms Project is assisting farmers to access and make sense of the latest soil science. The project involves identifying soil constraints within the production system, implementing best practice and trialling innovative approaches. There is also



The Corangamite Landcare Coordinators Working Group at a farm walk on the Nicholson property on the Bellarine Peninsula in December 2013.

Regional Landcare Coordinators

support for the development of nutrient, erosion and soil management plans.

Two fox action groups are being formed in coastal areas of Corner Inlet. SGLN is seeking expressions of interest from landowners in adjoining areas to work together over six months to tackle foxes on their properties trialling an action-learning process. Trial participants will go on a boat trip with Parks Victoria to Dream Island – a fox-free environment, in November 2014.

For further information contact
Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.

North East

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Ryan Smith launched the region's Landcare Support Plan at Baranduda in December 2013. The plan outlines the key priorities for CMA Landcare support in the region from 2013–2015. The launch took place in conjunction with the launch of the Victorian Environmental Partnerships Program funded Northern Eco-Connections project.

Key priorities for the plan include delivery of training, developing tools to help groups plan, recording achievements, reporting and promoting Landcare activity and achievements.

The region's Landcare Report Card for 2012-13 was released in February by the CMA. The achievements listed in the report include over \$1.4m gained from all investors, and more than 2500 participants at more than 80 community-led events.

For further information contact
Tom Croft 02 6043 764.

Port Phillip and Westernport

Local Landcare support staff gained great insights into Indigenous culture at a recent workshop organised by the CMA's Regional Landcare Coordinator, Doug Evans, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator, Brendon Kennedy. Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Bill Nicholson delivered the poignant and engaging workshop.

Recently secured Australian Government Regional Delivery funding will enable the CMA to provide ongoing support over five years to targeted Landcare groups. Focused on helping groups to design high quality biodiversity projects, the support will be delivered by the CMA's two new Sustainable Land Management Coordinators, Anthony Dufty and Sarah Halligan.

Anthony and Sarah will also be working with farmers on the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, complemented by



Uncle Bill Nicholson takes local Landcare support staff to Bolin Bolin Billabong to learn about its significance to the Wurundjeri people.

two new CMA recruits. Regional Landcare Facilitator Karen Thomas will work with agricultural industry groups and Regional Indigenous Facilitator Rhys Collins will work with the region's Traditional Owner groups.

For further information contact
Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

Wimmera

The recent Grampians northern complex fire sadly caused large scale damage to Landcare work delivered over many years by Laharum Landcare Group and other local groups. Junior Landcare revegetation sites and soil health trials were affected and local Landcarers expect significant impacts on threatened species in the area. Landcare groups on the northern Wimmera plains have also faced challenges with major fires this year.

Landcare has a vital role to play in bushfire recovery across the region. The Regional Landcare Coordinator is providing guidance and strategic support to local Landcare facilitators and volunteers to help attract resources to the region to deal with these pressing challenges.

Workshops have been held on post-fire pest and weed management and groups across the Wimmera are banding together to support one another.

Many Landcarers across the region are looking forward to a major regional Landcare celebration in Horsham in early April.

For further information contact
Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.

Mallee

It's been a hot start to 2014 in the Mallee, but this hasn't deterred our local Landcare groups from being ready to once again undertake some really positive projects.

Throughout 2013 a review and renewal of the Mallee Regional Landcare Support Strategy for 2013–18 was completed. This strategy is the cornerstone of the Mallee Landcare program and helps define the Landcare groups' purpose and direction for the next five years.

The strategy builds on the capacity of community, volunteer-based natural resource management groups and enhances their ability to deliver long-term, lasting change, not only to their local environment, but also their local community's well-being and future prosperity.

For further information contact
Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

North Central

The CMA hosted a successful Future Farming Expo in Maryborough for farmers and landholders in March. With a theme of inspiring innovation, the expo focused on the future of Australian agriculture and included demonstrations on visual soil assessment, propagating native plants and optimising livestock nutrition.

The region's Landcare team partnered with the Loddon Plain Landcare Network to hold an on-farm composting field day at Yarrowalla in March. Farmers who attended the field day learnt how to undertake on-farm composting to improve crop yield and pasture productivity.

The CMA's Landcare newsletter, North Central Chat, continues to grow its distribution list. Each month the newsletter features contributions from the community, Landcare news, Waterwatch updates, local and statewide events, training, resources and funding opportunities.

To subscribe and for further information contact
Jodie Odgers on 5440 1883.

In brief

North East CMA rolls out Landcare number plates

The North East CMA has recently fitted specialty Landcare number plates to its vehicle fleet to help promote Landcare in the region.

Chief Executive Neil McCarthy said the CMA has had a long and productive relationship with Landcare and related community groups.

"It is important that the CMA shows its support for Landcare. The use of Landcare number plates is a simple but important way of demonstrating this and reminding us that we are part of a bigger community of passionate people," said Neil.

"It is a commitment we wish to make by having 24 of our vehicles fitted with the specialty Landcare number plates."

The Landcare number plates were developed, and are administered, by the South Gippsland Landcare Network. Proceeds from the sale of the plates go to Landcare projects in South Gippsland.

For more information or to purchase a number plate please contact Jenny O'Sullivan by email at sgln@landcare.net

Next issue – young Landcare

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on involving young people in Landcare. From toddlers to teenagers



Members of the Frayne College Student Sustainability Group with Minister for Environment and Climate Change Ryan Smith during the launch of the North East CMA's Landcare Support Plan at Baranduda last December.

to twenties and thirties we are interested in hearing the experiences of your groups and networks on engaging young people in Landcare.

Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 6 June 2014.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
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