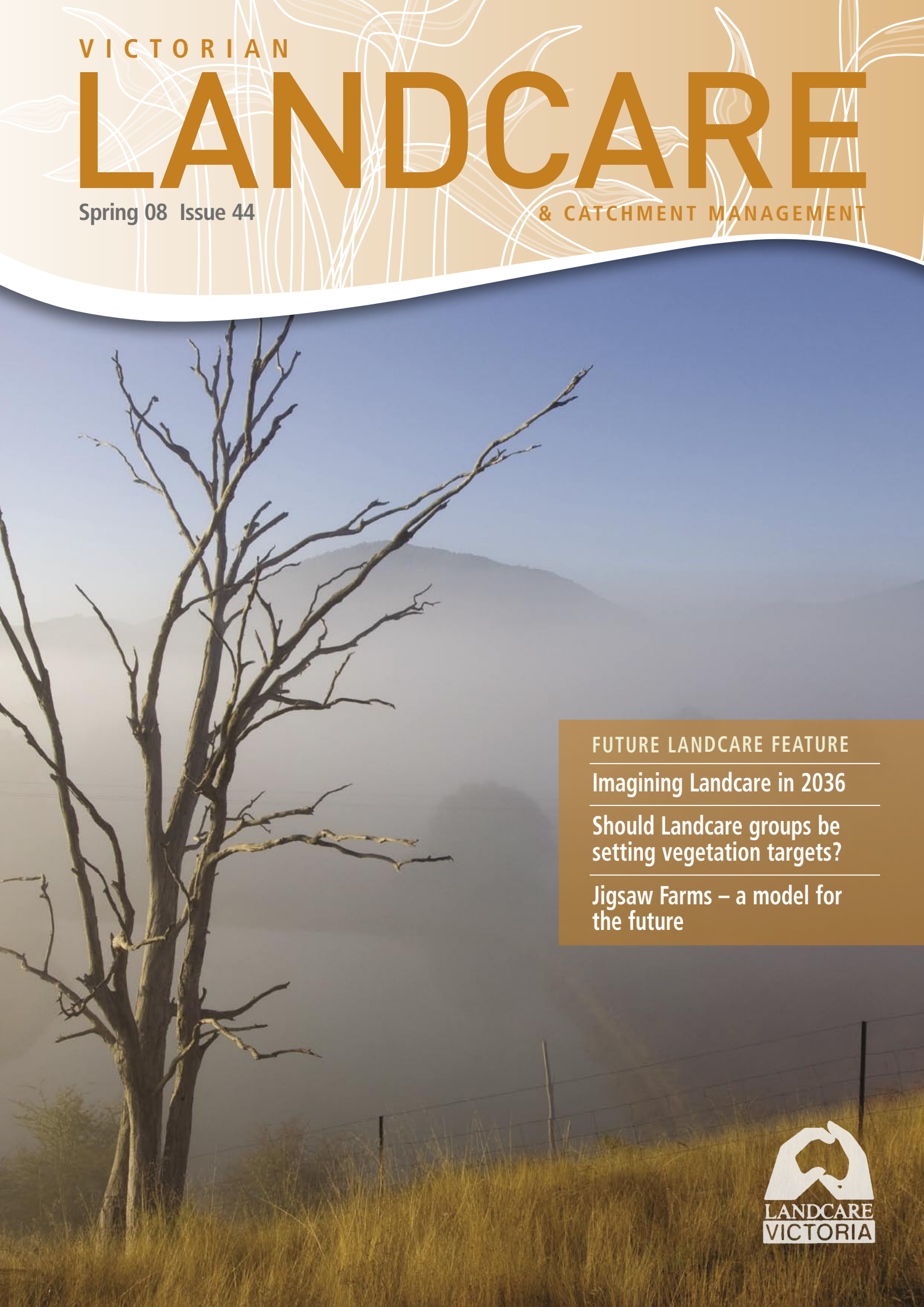
VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Spring 08 Issue 44

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



FUTURE LANDCARE FEATURE

Imagining Landcare in 2036

Should Landcare groups be setting vegetation targets?

Jigsaw Farms – a model for the future

LANDCARE VICTORIA

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

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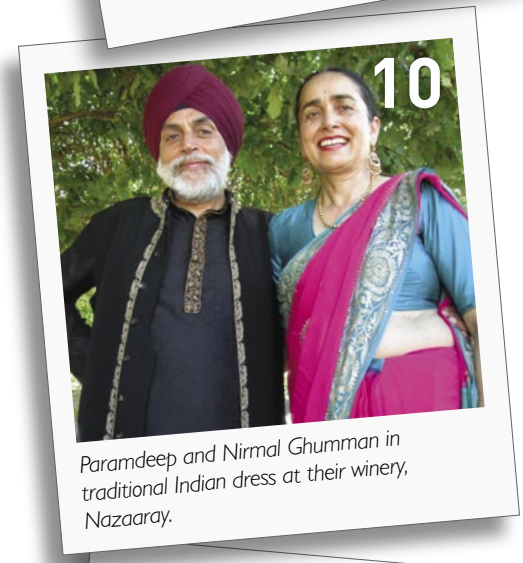
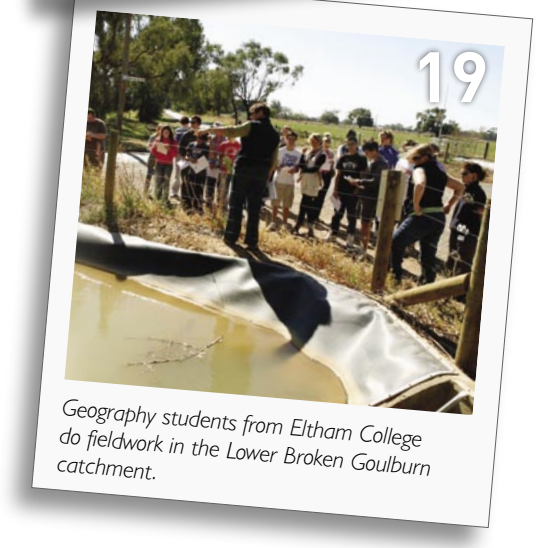
Jigsaw Farms produces carbon neutral wool.



Paramdeep and Nirmal Ghumman in traditional Indian dress at their winery, Nazaaray.



Geography students from Eltham College do fieldwork in the Lower Broken Goulburn catchment.

contents

The Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment and distributed in partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Catchment Management Council. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.

Victoria The Place To Be

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Victorian Catchment Management Council

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Cover photograph
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by Andrew Chapman.

Back issues of the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine can be found at www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne.

Printed by Bouquet Productions 9646 6071
Printed on 100% Recycled Paper
ISSN 1327 5496

From the editor

After six days of paddling Chris Ord and Jarad Kohler celebrate arriving at the headwaters of the Yarra River at Williamstown with other Landcare supporters.

Welcome to our future Landcare issue. Futurist Neil Henson has written a fascinating vision for Landcare in 2036. He has some interesting ideas about the importance of engaging young people in the Landcare movement.

Also in this issue you'll find stories on the sale of Victoria's first carbon-neutral wool, migrant Landcarers on the Mornington Peninsula using traditional Burgundian wine-making techniques and the Bass Coast Landcare Network's approach to setting vegetation targets for their local landscapes.

Start Up grants get groups going

The Landcare Volunteer Recruitment Initiative is rolling out Start Up grants to help community members start a new Landcare group or network, or reactivate an existing group or network which has been out of action for over 12 months.

One of the first grant recipients was the Friends of Picnic Point Reserve Landcare Group in Bairnsdale. Started this year by Clint Eastwood and headed up by chairperson Reg Baldwin, the group has already gathered 20 members and is developing a five-year strategic plan. The Start Up grants, funded by DSE, helped them to pay for incorporation, insurance, communication and postage.

For more information about the grants contact your Regional Landcare Co-ordinator or DSE on 136 186 or go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/landcare.

Source to the sea

Chris Ord had an exhausting Landcare Week in September. Chris, along with Jarad Kohler, paddled 215 kilometres from the source of the Yarra River at Warburton to the headwaters at Williamstown.

Chris grew up in Warburton and enjoyed playing in the river as a child. Now working for Landcare Australia, he had always wanted to track the river's complete course from top to bottom.

Chris figured that Landcare Week was an appropriate time to fulfil his dream while raising questions surrounding the river's health. Paddlers joined Chris and Jarad at various points along the river and on the final leg where they were rewarded with a BBQ at Williamstown.

Chris has written a fascinating account of his week on the Yarra River. Go to www.landcares2s.wordpress.com.

Landcare Expo

In our last edition we mentioned a Landcare Expo was being planned to bring Landcare to the Melbourne audience. The idea for the expo came out of the Victorian Landcare Forum. Originally planned for September, the expo is now likely to take place in March at Birrarung Marr. Keep an eye on the Gateway for details.

Landcare eye strain

We have received a number of letters from readers concerned about the print size in the magazine. The print size has been increased for this issue. Please let us know if it is easier on the eyes.

Next issue

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on planning. We are interested in all of the different types of planning, from whole farm planning to EMS, to group and project planning.

Contributions to this issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 13 February 2009.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
carrie65@optusnet.com.au

Grassland alert for the south-west

Landholders in south-west Victoria with kangaroo, wallaby, spear or other native grasses, or areas of naturally exposed rocky outcrops, may have a protected ecological community on their property.

The Australian Government listed the natural temperate grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plains as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* in June 2008.

These grasslands are facing an extremely high risk of extinction. They are home to a variety of nationally threatened fauna such as the Growling Grass Frog and more than 20 threatened plant species.

Landholders whose activities are likely to have a significant impact on the grasslands may need to refer to the Australian Government for assessment and approval.

A free brochure is available from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts on 1800 803 772 or visit www.environment.gov.au/epbc/information/farmers.html.

Free advice and assistance is also available from the Environment Liaison Officer at the NFF. Contact Ross Rowe on 1800 704 520 or by email at environment@nff.org.au

The 27 Landcarers from across the State who met in July 2008 to establish the Victorian Landcare Council.

A grassroots Landcare council for Victoria

By Leon Trembath

Who speaks for Landcare? This was the title of my story at the Victorian Landcare Forum held at Creswick earlier this year. It was a concept that resonated with many of the 300 delegates. The momentum created at Creswick grew over the following months and in July a group of 27 Landcare members from throughout Victoria met and committed to forming an organisation representing the volunteers in Landcare.

There was strong agreement that this organisation must be connected to grassroots members with a clear understanding of the many views and opinions held by the Landcare volunteers. I am delighted to announce that the Victorian Landcare Council (VLC) has now been formed.

Landcare started in Victoria in 1988, but it has never had an independent voice. During the last 20 years other groups and agencies have taken Landcare under their wing. This has led to competing agendas and Landcare often not being a number one priority.

There is little argument that Landcarers have made a significant difference to improving farms and public lands across Victoria. Surveys estimate that 60% of farmers participate in Landcare activities, 500,000 hectares of farmland and riparian zones have been revegetated, plant and animal biodiversity has increased and water quality in creeks, rivers and estuaries is improving. Landcare farming initiatives have had a significant impact on cropping and grazing practices.

Landcare has a strong future. In addition to farmers, the tree-change community who are deserting the cities and bravely purchasing rural land make up many of our members. Landcare continues to be a major support for these new property owners who are focused on repairing their land and understanding the need for sustainable practices in this time of climate change.

Despite all of our achievements Landcare has not been formally recognised in the planning process. This has led to the situation where Landcare has often been 'done to, rather than done with'. The creation of the Victorian Landcare Council will provide an important mechanism for planning and consultation.

The council is also concerned about the constant state of flux created by successive governments changing funding arrangements. This impacts on the ability of Landcare networks to retain staff. We will speak to this issue as an independent organisation, partnering with other groups in tackling this on-going concern.

The council will initially be made up of two delegates from each of the ten CMA regions. The first delegates may be selected, but subsequent delegates will be elected by the Landcare volunteers. Landcare members will be hearing through their groups and networks about the selection and election process of the first representatives to the council.

The council is planning to run bi-annual forums within each of the ten regions. The aim is to re-establish the connections within the Landcare community and to regain the integrity of the grassroots, bottom-up approach.

The regional forums will focus strongly on local issues, giving a voice to local Landcare members and potentially leading to local and regional partnerships that address the issues that are identified. The forums will also assist the council in identifying statewide concerns.

The Victorian Landcare Council hopes to bring together Landcare farmers and urban volunteers, who need to learn how our farmers truly respect the land. We plan to speak for those who know their land and its needs. We will champion the ideas of the grassroots members of Landcare.

Being tens of thousands of small voices, Landcare has had a rich history in its 20 years. Now it's time to unify our voices to show a new direction and strength.

For more information contact Leon Trembath, Convenor of VLC Ginger Group (the initial start-up group), on 5186 1333 or at churinga@wideband.net.au

In brief

Landcare goes retail in Maffra

Last October the Maffra and Districts Landcare Network shifted from its offices at DPI to a shop in the main street of Maffra.

Given the nature of Landcare work staff are often out in the field rather than in the office and there were initial concerns that it would be difficult to maintain regular opening hours for the shop.

Through a partnership with East Gippsland TAFE through their Work for the Dole program the network now has an administration officer who ensures the shop is open between 9am and noon every day. Flags are hung out the front of the shop when it is open at other times.

Despite a few teething problems the shift to a shop has been a great success. Sponsorship from Endeavour Petroleum BP helped in purchasing a photocopier, printer, fax and scanner while Workways were generous in allowing use of their facilities in the meantime.

Having the shop has enabled the staff resource base in the office to grow and there is also more space and facilities for volunteers to come in and use the resources. Many Landcare group members use the shop to make their own meeting notices and flyers. Every Wednesday two volunteers spend the day using the facilities at the shop to organise National Tree Day activities across the network.

Landcare staff Peter Steller, Margie Gibson and Wendy Hayne all enjoy working out of the new Maffra and Districts Landcare Network shop in Maffra's main street.

From left, Roe Lavers, Chris Dormer, Sharon Edwards, Cheryl Cameron, and Jacqueline Tansy weaving local plants from the North East. Photo courtesy of The Border Mail.

The shift to the shop has given the network a much stronger identity within the town and made it more accessible to the community. For further information contact Wendy Hayne on 5141 1474.

Weaving new links

Over the last 12 months indigenous artists and Landcare groups from the Indigo and Kiewa Valleys have come together for a series of four weaving workshops. The workshops were organised by the North East CMA and Indigo Shire Council, with funding support from Regional Arts Victoria.

CMA Indigenous liaison officer Richard McTernan said Landcare members suggested the activity as they recognised that local plants used for revegetation works had Indigenous uses as well.

"As a result of the workshops a number of Landcare members are now planning to use the native *eleocharis* species for revegetation on their properties. The fibre from this plant was traditionally used by Indigenous people so this will enable more sustainable supplies of a traditional resource in the region," Richard said.

Sharon Edwards, a Ngiyampaa woman who learned weaving from the Gunditjmara elders in Portland, has led each workshop. The workshops culminated in a travelling exhibition that toured the region from June until August.

Importantly, the weaving workshops have also created new work opportunities for the Indigenous artists involved in the program through an increase in community interest and demand for more workshops.

Soil moisture monitoring information days

The Sustainable Irrigation Program for the Goulburn Broken Dryland held two Soils ain't Soils information days in June. The days focused on delivering the benefits of Soil Moisture Monitoring Equipment (SMME) for irrigators in the rain-fed catchments.

Presenters Samantha Longley and Dennis Watson from DPI and Adrian Orloff of MAIT Industries discussed soil, water and weather interactions in relation to irrigation scheduling and why SMME is of benefit to irrigation.

They ran through the types of SMME equipment available on the market and indicative costs, highlighting how SMME can improve the management of irrigation and lead to improved water use efficiency and productivity.

Many of the participants will take advantage of the SMME grant available to irrigators in the Goulburn Broken dryland and North East areas of 50% of the cost of SMME up to $2000.

For further information contact Samantha Longley on 5833 5254.

Imagining Landcare in 2036

Neil Henson is a futurist with experience in design, marketing and strategic foresight. Neil presented a vision for Victorian Landcare in 2036 at the recent Victorian Landcare Forum. Here are some of the ideas from that vision.

In our rapidly changing world nothing is ever certain. Which routes will we take as we head towards 2036 and, importantly, what directions and strategies will Victorian Landcare take?

Universal values are changing. Consumers are becoming more involved with ethics relating to animal husbandry and management and becoming more concerned for their personal health and the health of their food.

Australian society can change its direction rapidly – we have seen an apology to Indigenous Australians, the signing of the Kyoto Protocol and the sudden recognition of climate change – all within four months of a new Federal Government.

The demands made on Australia with regard to trade for agricultural goods and resources could increase many times over and produce tensions around water and land use. There will be emerging issues around oil supplies; bio-fuel production versus food production.

Are the innovations brought by genetically modified foods for the better or the worse? Will we be successful in meeting our climate change obligations? Where will the opportunities be for revegetating large tracts of land? What will be the advantage in carbon trading once prices are fixed?

How will all of these issues affect farmers and country folk? And indeed how will we define country folk as demographics change?

Finding the Landcare niche

The challenge for all Victorians is riding in the balance. Without doubt we have to secure the future of our food without further depleting our natural resource (capital). It is imperative that we sustain and improve the resources (water and soil) to sustain us. At the same time it is our duty as world citizens to provide what foods we can to avoid food shortages.

The challenge to Victorian Landcare is to find its niche at all levels of society (rural and urban) to play its role at both grass-roots and policy level. Leadership will be crucial in this challenge. The future leaders of Victorian Landcare will determine whether Landcare can be a player in helping to solve these issues.

The Landcare brand

As we move towards 2036 Victorian Landcare will need to have clearly defined its brand so that it has value for corporate sponsors and can attract new members. In attracting young people to Landcare it is important to be aware that their values and moral codes may be different to those of people currently involved in the movement. Climate change, for example is considered a moral issue for many in Gen Y and X.

A successful brand is ultimately a question of authenticity. It needs to reflect the transparency of the values of the people behind it. A brand calls up in the minds of those who know it a certain set of qualities or values. These associations have been built up over time. If a brand promises to do something that is in line with its values it will be trusted.

So many different players in the Landcare brand area can create confusion and a lack of brand clarity. This confusion has the potential to be a threat to brand integrity.

Mustering Landcare youth

I believe the perception that young people today are directionless and apathetic is misjudged. The problem is that we have locked young people out of our decision making and we don't engage them. The exclusion of young people from meaningful participation in society is a direct cause of their indifference to social

As we move towards 2036 Victorian Landcare will need to have clearly defined its brand so that it has value for corporate sponsors and can attract new members.

By Neil Henson

and cultural institutions. Young people don't care because society as a whole doesn't care about what they think.

Many young people that I know and meet are passionate about the natural environment but they won't engage with groups of people who want to control them.

It is imperative that Landcare learns to engage these people if it wants to make a long-term difference to our society. The challenge is how to do this when Landcare has an ageing membership with entrenched ideas and established methods of working.

Consumer companies know how to engage young people. They set up marketing teams to understand how young people think and how to target them and get their attention. They know how to exploit their insecurities and weaknesses; body issues, low self-esteem, insecurities about career prospects and the future.

This disempowerment needs to be turned around. We can learn from these sometimes unscrupulous companies how to build self-esteem through meaningful engagement, valuing opinions (especially when they differ from our own) and including them in decision making. We can work with young people and involve them in developing their own secure future.

Our community resource of talented and passionate young people will be wasted without any meaningful communication and the ability for them to set their own agendas based on their values and sense of purpose.

Here is a vision for where Landcare might be in 2036.

Since 2008 Landcare has:

- Re-branded and launched itself as a leader in the community space.
- Because it was no longer dependent on decreasing government funding it was freed up to engage across the government, private and community sectors.
- It has championed the community-based activism space for biodiversity and food security and picked up buckets of money.
- It has increased its volunteer base and got better at engaging young people through shared values and brand integrity and clarity.
- It has developed a brokerage arm to engage the private sector with landholders to facilitate carbon trading.
- It has brokered tri-sector partnerships between food suppliers, biodiversity protection, community service agencies and communities.

Futurist Neil Henson paints a picture of Landcare in 2036.

- It has recruited the corporate sector to partner with regional organisations to up-skill around new innovative technologies and management.
- It has acted as a champion to government for better outcomes for country people.

In 2036 Landcare is a highly valued brand because it became relevant as a key player – not only for tree planting and regional social cohesion, but in all aspects of how people relate and live in the landscape. And it became accountable and responsible to the landscape and its people.

While the premium attached to selling wool in the carbon neutral market is an incentive, the main gain for us is that we can now say that, as farmers, we are doing something positive in reducing our carbon footprint while still being commercially focused.

Jigsaw Farms is establishing new forests for carbon, water quality improvement, wildlife habitat and to provide future incomes from wood and timber.

Jigsaw Farms – a new picture for the

Which is more important for our future – meeting global food demands, or using valuable land to soak up carbon emissions from the atmosphere? While the experts have been battling this out, some innovative farmers in Victoria's south-west have discovered a pathway that shows us how emission reductions don't have to be at the expense of increasing on-farm productivity.

Jigsaw Farms is a 4900-hectare farming enterprise owned and managed by Mark Wootton and Eve Kantor. Over the past 11 years Mark and Eve have been striving to build a farming system that brings all the pieces of the sustainable agriculture puzzle together – hence the name Jigsaw Farms.

Mark Wootton and Eve Kantor in one of their new and fast-growing spotted gum farm forests.

The farm is run as a company, but with a family farming model. There are six staff and their young families involved in Jigsaw Farms. By consolidating farming into a system there is a greater access to capital and agribusiness knowledge and innovation while the social and landscape values of farming are also maintained.

As owner-managers, Mark and Eve planned to combine a high productivity sheep and cattle operation while revegetating Jigsaw on a landscape scale. They are aiming for 30% being planted with permanent revegetation and farm forestry plantings or in wetlands. This target hasn't been met yet, but they are well on the way. Just last year they planted their millionth tree.

New forests are 45% permanent revegetation (along creeks) and 55% farm forestry. This is generally spotted gum, to be managed on a cycle of harvest and replant.

The plantings are on the farm's less productive and degraded soils. Around 25% of the poorest soils on the farm are now planted to trees or developed as wetlands.

The agricultural production from the remaining 75% of the farm has increased from 30,000 DSE to 70,000 DSE over the past 11 years.

According to Mark Wootton the increase has largely come about as a result of management and structural changes such as improving fertiliser rates, use of modern perennial pasture systems, fencing to land type, developing an extensive laneway system, expansion of a deep water storage system that feeds into a reticulated water

Jigsaw Farms produces carbon neutral wool.

farming puzzle

By Graeme Anderson

system and continual development of staff to understand the key profit drivers of professional grass growing.

All of the developments on Jigsaw Farms are done with concern for future sustainability. Mark's estimates show that emission reductions of new forests while they are actively growing will outweigh all of the on-farm agricultural activities.

The Greenhouse Accounting calculator indicates that Jigsaw Farms, even using farm peak seasonal stocking rates for the whole of the year, produces just less than 15,000 tonnes per year of CO^2 equivalents. Mark and Eve are confident that this carbon footprint can be significantly reduced in the future while still maintaining the high levels of fibre and meat production.

Jigsaw Farms will even have excess carbon credits it could sell. At this stage they have 4000 excess tonnes per year to sell even after they become carbon neutral. This is well beyond what might be required should farms ever be required to manage or reduce emissions through a trading scheme.

Graeme Anderson is a Senior Farm Advisor with DPI in Geelong. He can be contacted on 5226 4821 or by email at graeme.anderson@dpi.vic.gov.au

Carbon neutral wool goes under the hammer

In June 2008 Jigsaw Farms sold 84 bales of wool into what should be a lucrative new premium market. The wool was purchased by the Merino Company (Lempriere Australia) for its carbon neutral wool pool.

The 19-micron wool will be launched at the Pitti Filati trade show in Milan as Quatha fashion t-shirts aimed at the youth market where there is an increasing price premium for carbon neutral products.

Mark Wootton from Jigsaw Farms believes that the market for carbon neutral wool will be growing in the future.

"While the premium attached to selling wool in the carbon neutral market is an incentive, the main gain for us is that we can now say that, as farmers, we are doing something positive in reducing our carbon footprint while still being commercially focused."

The carbon neutral scheme operated by the Merino Company works by farmers voluntarily balancing CO^2 emissions from wool production, processing, garment making and marketing through regenerative land management practices at the source of production.

Jigsaw Farms provides offsets for the 84 bales of 11,854 kg of clean wool by planting trees. This equates to 830 tonnes of carbon equivalents having to be offset through the Landcare CarbonSmart scheme. This scheme also pays Jigsaw Farms for this offset on an annual basis.

Jigsaw Farms is using this sale as a trial. Mark Wootton is keen to follow up on urban-based interest for the beef and lamb side of the business for climate-friendly products.

"The farmers I speak to are keen to explore practical and market driven solutions to climate change and not to focus on the negative. They realise that the world has an increasing demand for food and fibre. They also realise that we are moving at great speed in an increasingly carbon constrained world. The challenge is to meet this challenge now and to stop just talking about it," Mark said.

For further information contact Claire Drum at the Merino Company on 8625 6523.

Indian winemakers grow a rich crop

By Rebecca Camilleri

When Indian-born immigrants Nirmal and Paramdeep Ghumman bought their property on the Mornington Peninsula it was choked with thistles, cape weed and blackberries. Their dream to create fine wine using traditional Burgundian winemaking methods has taken them on a journey to restore the fertility and sustainability of their land.

Nirmal and Paramdeep bought the property in 1991. They called it Nazaaray which means beautiful visions in Persian for its breathtaking views. The first vines were planted in 1996.

"When we bought the property we knew that it was in a bad state and that it would require plenty of work before we could even think about planting vines," Nirmal says.

Drawing upon Nirmal's background as a medical pathologist and general practitioner, Nirmal and Paramdeep set about creating a rich and sustainable environment that would support fungal and bacterial life. This is based on the theory that the uniqueness of every vineyard (or the terroir) is determined, in part, by its resident bacteria and fungi.

Donkeys, beetles and worms work for the soil

Instead of using herbicide sprays they used natural ways to clean out the weeds and improve soil quality. Two donkeys were added to the beef herd to get the thistles under control. African dung beetles were introduced to the paddocks where the cattle grazed and earthworms were added by the sackful. All degradable material is composted back into the soil.

Paramdeep and Nirmal Ghumman in traditional Indian dress at their winery, Nazaaray.

"We've added mulch, gypsum and lime by the semitrailer load. We've put chook poo to add humus to the soil and we have not used superphosphate in years," Nirmal says.

Nirmal and Paramdeep have shared the journey with their local Landcare group – the Main Creek Landcare group.

"We have received much support from Landcare over the years, with working bees to plant native vegetation and improve our land. Just recently we had another working bee to help us remove mirror weed from the property, which is a real problem in the area," Nirmal explains.

Paramdeep Ghumman shares some of his award-winning wine.

Nazaaray today is lush and green. Unlike most vineyards it is interspersed with native vegetation which encourages small birds that help with insect control. Rosellas, blue wrens, finches and kookaburras abound. Ibis and ducks are now regular visitors as are kangaroos, with the odd sighting of koalas, echidnas, blue tongue lizards, skinks, snakes and owls.

According to Nirmal the dam is a cacophony of sounds. Recently they have heard pobblebonk frogs – a good indicator that the land and water are healthy.

Traditional methods produce fine flavours

Nazaaray has a growing reputation as one of the region's finest producers of cool climate Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris wines. The Ghummans attribute their success in large part to their sustainable and increasingly organic/biodynamic land management practices.

"Our winemaking philosophy is centred on traditional Burgundian methods which favour a natural approach, right down to hand-picking the fruit. We are a micro-winery so our focus is on quality not quantity. We practise minimal intervention, with all fruit being grown onsite and all wine being made and bottled onsite. Our vines are spur-pruned by hand so that yields are reduced, but they are concentrated and rich in flavour.

"The relatively high rainfall in the region means that irrigation is not required, which further enhances the fruit flavours," Nirmal explains.

While Nirmal and Paramdeep share an ethical motivation to adhere to sustainable land management practices they are driven most by their desire to create the best quality wine. Their belief is simple: if you look after your land, if you nurture it at a microbial level, it will yield superior, more complex fruit.

"We have received some great tips from biodynamic wine expert Max Allen and are starting to implement some of those concepts which we feel are consistent with our own philosophy.

Future water projects

"There is a lot of focus on biodynamics and organic winemaking at the moment; however, we are less interested in following a singular theory. For us it is about producing the best quality wine

Paramdeep checks his tree guards.

which reveals the unique character of the region, with optimum intensity and flavour," explains Nirmal.

Future projects at Nazaaray include looking at water harvesting and controlling water flow to minimise flood damage, as well as tree planting to control the winds which are expected to increase in intensity. The Ghummans have found that grass in less wind-distressed areas tends to stay greener longer.

Nirmal and Paramdeep are delighted at the success of the winery and the awards and recognition that it is bringing. They say the greatest reward though is from their loyal customers.

A bottle of fine Nazaaray wine.

"When they tell us how much they have enjoyed our wine – that just makes my day," Nirmal says.

For further information contact Nazaaray Estate Winery on 0416 143 439.

Lessons from India – migrant Landcare practices

Nirmal and Paramdeep Ghumman arrived in Australia in 1981 and bought their Mornington Peninsula winery in 1991. Neither of them had direct experience of farming in India but they brought with them some knowledge of Indian farming practices and their own cultural approaches to natural resource use.

"As an immigrant and someone starting out in agriculture I was most interested to learn as much as I could from Australians. And I was keen to join the local Landcare groups. However, I combined my new learning with what I knew of traditional Indian practices which, due to sheer necessity, has a strong focus on reusability. For example in India, the cow pats are collected and reused as fuel, and then composted and returned to the soil.

"My father would make a slurry of the cow pats to collect the methane gas, which was piped into the house to be used for gas and lighting. The waste would automatically be redirected to the compost.

"While the farming practices of India and Australia are worlds apart, I think as Indians we have taken the essence of traditional agricultural practices which are naturally bent towards organics and reusability," Nirmal says.

News from the VFF Farm Tree and Landcare Association

By Susi Johnson

The Farm Tree and Landcare Association held its annual general meeting in June. The new President is Susan Campbell from the Springhurst and Byawatha Hills Landcare Group. Vice-President is Bill Wells from the Strathbogie Tableland Landcare Group. The Treasurer is Richard Jamieson from the H11-H12 Community Action Group. The position of Secretary is currently vacant.

The ordinary members of the association are Judy Griffiths from the Burgoigee Creek Landcare Group, Simon Pockley from the Otway Barham Catchment Landcare Group, Alex Arbuthnot from the Maffra and Districts Landcare Network and Peter Berrisford from the Bellarine Landcare Group. The Immediate Past President is Andrew Stewart from the Otway Agroforestry Network.

Committee members welcome contact from Landcarers, especially in their local area. Traci Griffin from DPI gave a presentation on win-win climate change adaptation at the meeting. Copies of the presentation can be obtained from Susi Johnson.

Governance training

The FTLA Governance Training program for 2008/9 is underway. The program is based on the 2007/8 VFF Office Bearer Training Program that was well received by Landcare attendees. Sessions are free for Landcare members, FTLA members and VFF members.

The training is funded through the DSE Volunteer Recruitment Initiative. Sessions cover basic governance issues, how to identify strengths and weaknesses of volunteer groups, how to attract and retain members, committee succession issues and more.

Sessions are being held in Foster on 25 November 2008 and Doncaster/ Warrandyte on 3 December 2008. To book call 1300 882 833, or email: member@vff.org.au. A further 11 sessions with at least one in each CMA region will be held before 30 June 2009.

Renewals

Renewals were due in the middle of the year and reminders went out in August. Please get in contact if you are unsure if your group has renewed.

Susi Johnson is the Executive Officer of the VFF Farm Tree and Landcare Association. She can be contacted on 9207 5527.

In the interests of increasing the productivity of agriculture worldwide, organic and conventional agriculture should become less exclusive and adopt the best practices of both systems, relying on good science rather than dogma.

Figure 1: A red loam on basalt in north-east Victoria with high organic matter content in the topsoil.

Increasing soil organic matter – a

***It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.* – old proverb**

One of the positive spin-offs from our current concerns about emissions of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, has been the refocusing of attention on soil organic matter. For many years, soil scientists have advocated the benefits of soil organic matter in improving soil structure, nutrient retention and recycling, soil microbiological activity, and water-holding capacity – especially in sandy soils.

These benefits can now be realised because an emphasis is being placed on soil organic matter as a sink for carbon – a means of sequestering carbon released as carbon dioxide, through the process of plant photosynthesis followed by the incorporation of plant residues in the soil.

The soil in figure 1 has a large soil organic matter content – around 8% by weight in the top 20 centimetres, measured as organic carbon. This soil is formed on basaltic rock under high rainfall and supported a substantial forest for many years before it was cleared for permanent pasture.

Even a soil formed on relatively infertile sandy parent material, under its natural bush vegetation, may contain 1-2% organic carbon in the top 15-20 centimetres. This can be seen in the darker topsoil in figure 2. If the organic carbon content of these soils could be raised by only 0.5% in the top 15 centimetres, approximately ten tonnes of extra carbon would be stored, an amount equivalent to nearly 37 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Many farming practices are being advocated to increase soil organic matter. These range from minimal cultivation to zero tillage or direct drilling, the retention of crop residues (conservation tillage), planting cover crops, and the addition of organic materials such as compost, manures and mulches. Preventing the erosion of organic-rich topsoil is also important.

Adding fertilisers, especially those containing nitrogen and phosphorus, and husbanding of soil water, will produce bigger crops that in turn can contribute more carbon in residues above and below ground. Expensive fertilisers should be applied at an optimum rate. Then the cost of the extra nitrogen and phosphorus supplied is covered by the product value and does not need to be counted as a cost of increasing carbon in the soil.

Organic and conventional farming come together

The renewed focus on building up soil organic matter has led to a resurgence of interest in organic agriculture, especially in developed countries where benefits are claimed for better quality food, produced with minimal environmental impacts.

Ideally, organic agriculture should operate as a closed system, with external inputs used only on an as needs basis and then according to strict guidelines. Unfortunately, such organic agriculture cannot feed the world population of six billion plus. Large-scale agriculture in countries such as China, India, the USA, Canada and Australia relies heavily on high-analysis synthetic fertilisers and pesticides to maximise food production in what is called conventional agriculture.

Both systems – organic and conventional – have their pluses and minuses. I believe that the two systems of agriculture should

Figure 3: Soil organic matter accumulating under leaf litter in a sandy soil in the south-west of Western Australia.

priority for all farmers

By Robert White

come closer together to benefit the quantity and quality of food produced and protect the environment.

The healthy levels of soil organic matter that are considered fundamental to organic agriculture should also be a key objective of conventional agriculture. The only inputs to a certified organic system are organic materials such as cover crop residues, compost and composted manures, supplemented by approved minerals such as lime, rock phosphate and rock potash, and elemental sulfur. Conventional agriculture has the flexibility to use organic materials primarily to build up soil organic matter while also using high-analysis fertilisers to supply specific nutrients.

Building up soil organic matter is difficult in some combinations of soil and climate. The rate of decay of organic matter by soil organisms increases roughly twofold for a 10°C rise in temperature, up to about 35°C. If the soil is sandy there is little clay to protect the products of decomposition, collectively called humus. Nevertheless, even on sandy soils experiencing hot dry summers, provided the surface is not disturbed, a layer of leaf litter forms a protective mulch under which soil organic matter will slowly build up, as shown in figure 3.

Legumes for nitrogen

The supply of nitrogen to crops provides a good example of where organic and conventional agriculture could be better aligned. Nitrogen fertilisers are now very expensive because of the price of oil, gas and energy in general. Capturing nitrogen from the air by growing legumes is a cheap way of supplementing the soil nitrogen supply.

Legume cover crops are a cornerstone of organic agriculture and could be made much greater use of in conventional agriculture. To supply nitrogen in the short-term the legume must be effectively nodulated and ploughed in before maturity.

Rejecting urea fertiliser as an acceptable nitrogen input for organic agriculture is a mistake. Urea is the main nitrogen waste compound in the urine of sheep and cattle. This simple compound is the same whether produced in an animal that is grazing on organic pasture or manufactured in a fertiliser factory.

The benefits of soil organic matter in agriculture are well known, as are the practices that encourage its accumulation, but the rate of increase is constrained by soil and climatic conditions.

Figure 2: A sandy soil under woodland south of Sydney with some organic matter accumulation in the topsoil. The bare soil at the top of the profile is spoil from the soil pit.

In the interests of increasing the productivity of agriculture worldwide, organic and conventional agriculture should become less exclusive and adopt the best practices of both systems, relying on good science rather than dogma.

Robert White is Professor Emeritus of Soil Science at the University of Melbourne.

The importance of vegetation is not limited to its role as habitat. It is also valued for its role in soil health, water quality, productivity, and increasingly, the removal of greenhouse gases from the air.

How much habitat is enough? Landcare groups have a role to play in protecting, restoring and linking native vegetation across the landscape.

Should Landcare groups be setting vegetation targets?

By Mike Nurse, Moragh Mackay and Sally MacAdams

Victoria's landscapes are particularly vulnerable to the changes in our climate that scientists are forecasting. According to the 2001 National Land and Water Audit Victoria is the most stressed landscape in Australia from a native biodiversity and land health index perspective.

Two-thirds of Victoria is privately owned and 61% of private land is rural or agricultural. At the moment, approximately 47% of Victoria is covered in vegetation. Only 33% of the State's vegetation is on public land and only 14% of private land is vegetated.

The Victorian Catchment Management Council's (VCMC) 2007 Catchment Condition Report estimates that more than 60% of native vegetation remaining on private land in Victoria supports threatened ecological communities including 30% of our threatened native species populations.

So how much habitat is enough?

Research in Northern Victoria suggests that landscapes with 30-35% native vegetation cover are relatively healthy and ecologically resilient. Vegetation quality is also important. The VCMC report suggests that native vegetation condition in significant areas of Victoria is still declining.

According to Geoff Park from the North Central CMA the location of the vegetation must also be considered along with its quantity and quality.

"The pattern and configuration of vegetation in the landscape are significant factors. Recent research recommends building spatial variation (patchiness) and landscape heterogeneity; this means including different landscape elements such as drainage lines, ridge tops and varied slope aspects into landscape design," Geoff said.

The importance of vegetation is not limited to its role as habitat. It is also valued for its role in soil health, water quality, productivity, and increasingly, the removal of greenhouse gases from the air.

A recent report by CSIRO says rural landholders can make a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions through sequestration in vegetation and soils.

Do Victorians need to think about setting a target for vegetation cover on private land, both in terms of protecting biodiversity and responding to climate change? What would such a target look like and how would it work?

The Bass Coast Landcare Network is tackling these questions with a classic Landcare approach – using demonstration and community education and working from the ground up.

Bass Coast targets a bush future

The Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) has an unofficial target for their region of an average of 30% native plant cover on private land and smaller regional reserves.

According to Moragh Mackay, Network Training Co-ordinator, it is not a hard-and-fast rule.

"Obviously not every farm will have 30% native vegetation cover. Some will have more and some will have less – it's an average. Lifestyle blocks may well contribute significantly. It's more about making sure that we have enough significant areas of native vegetation and corridors to link those up."

Moragh said that the group first started thinking about the target when they were developing their vision for their landscape's future. They came across research that recommended a target of 30% native vegetation.

The group is also considering other important data including scientific modelling of groundwater flows and research into the best location of salinity plantings for greatest impact without having a negative impact on environmental flows. The BCLN strategy also considers the mix of vegetation needed for biodiversity.

Moragh Mackay believes that carbon sequestration may become an increasingly powerful motivator for the community to embrace the target.

"As Victoria's climate becomes warmer, drier and more unstable, farmers will need shelter for stock that is more extensive, better quality, and better matched to water availability. This will be a further driver for increasing native vegetation."

The target is still more an idea than a written policy. The group is currently road-testing the idea, factoring it into project planning and gradually building support for it in the community. Moragh has written an article about the target in the network newsletter and it has been incorporated into a poster on managing local native vegetation.

"We encourage landholders to go bigger and wider with their plantings where there are multiple benefits, such as along waterways, linking remnants and providing shelter," Moragh said.

"We inform them that if you're going to do some revegetation work, you're better off to do it well, then it will be easier to maintain. That means putting the time into the preparation, fencing carefully, allowing enough land, and targeting ecologically significant vegetation types."

This approach is part of BCLN's Land Stewardship project which is using a tender approach to purchasing ecosystem services from landholders who have many best management practices in place.

They are also training farmers and landholders in environmental best management practices and the use of eFarmer, a web-based farm mapping tool. Farmers are now assisting Moragh with the delivery of training to other farmers. This is a powerful mechanism for motivating and spreading changes of practice across communities.

Moragh Mackay said that the farmers are excited about being able to share what they've learnt with their neighbours and are starting to take on real leadership roles. She hopes that part of that leadership role will be to demonstrate that landholders of all types can be a part of a community-driven response to climate change and declining biodiversity.

A group of mixed beef and dairy farmers doing the Bass Coast Landcare Land Management Planning Course to develop farm plans and priority action plans. From left Mark Walters, Phil Grant, Rob Paterson, Brian Enbom, Dave Batemen, Mairin Hawker, Josie Buchanan, Moragh Mackay and Cheryl Enbom. Six of the nine landholders in this group are connected along the Foster Creek, a tributary of the Powlett River.

Farmer decisions show local bias

By Margrit Beemster

Call it climate change or climate variability, but either way our climate is changing. Much of south-eastern Australia is in drought and this is having a marked effect on how farmers and other landowners manage their land, including remnant vegetation.

Dr Rik Thwaites believes drought and climate change are having a marked impact on how farmers are managing their land.

> *The study found it was farmers rather than non-farmers who were more optimistic about their ability to respond to future market and climatic conditions.*

Understandably, catchment management authorities and natural resource managers are concerned. To this end the North Central CMA has co-ordinated a large research project on ecosystem risk and the impacts of climate change funded through the National Action Plan for Salinity and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Researchers from Charles Sturt University's Institute for Land, Water and Society conducted the social research component of this project which included partners from the Australian National University and the DSE.

The study found it was farmers rather than non-farmers who were more optimistic about their ability to respond to future market and climatic conditions. Another interesting finding was that those landholders who didn't believe in climate change were more confident about their ability to adapt to a drier climate.

For the study, a team of social researchers headed by Dr Rik Thwaites and Professor Allan Curtis interviewed two representative groups of landholders earlier this year.

One group was from the Kamarooka area north of Bendigo, relatively flat country with large mixed farming (cropping and livestock) properties; the second was from the Muckleford area, hilly country with smaller property sizes and a higher proportion of lifestyle landholders.

Responding to a variable climate

Landholders were asked three key questions. The first was, at the property scale, what is the range of responses to climate variability?

"In effect we asked landholders how they have got through the last ten years of drought," said Rik Thwaites.

In both groups, landholders had responded by increasing their efficiency in water use, storage and transport. In some cases landholders adopted minimum till practices to conserve soil moisture.

The groups responded to the risk of climate variability differently.

"We identified a variety of responses, some more strategic or long-term; others more tactical or short-term," Rik Thwaites said.

In the Kamarooka area, landholders responded to the risks associated with climate variability and difficult economic times by seeking greater efficiency of production. They achieved this by expanding and intensifying their operations. For example, by cropping larger areas, buying larger machinery or in some cases buying more land.

In the Muckleford area, the landholders responded to risks by making themselves a smaller target. They reduced risk by reducing debt and moving to low input, low management farming systems.

Landholders with larger properties were more able to diversify and make adjustments to their enterprise. Landholders with smaller properties, particularly those with only a single farm enterprise or with perennial crops, had less capacity to adjust their activities.

Over the last decade landholders in both areas, but more so in the Kamarooka area, have increased the areas sown to lucerne.

"Planting lucerne is one of the strategies farmers have adopted to increase efficiency and intensify production. It has contributed to their surviving the drought," said Rik Thwaites.

Climate variability and decision making

The second question asked how important climate variability is as a factor contributing to land management decisions. The researchers found many factors influenced decision making including landowners' personalities; available resources; and the nature of their external operating environment.

Farmers will respond to the risks of climate variability differently.

"There is a complex relationship between all factors with no one factor alone contributing to decision making. Climate variability was never the single reason for a decision. In fact it was rarely identified as the most important factor," said Rik Thwaites.

About half of the landholders believed climate change was real with slightly more believers in Muckleford than Kamarooka. A key difference between believers and non-believers was that the non-believers were more confident in their ability to adapt to a drier climate.

"In Muckleford this lack of confidence in being able to adapt to climate change was associated with higher levels of personal stress," said Rik Thwaites.

Managing native vegetation

The third question related to the management of native vegetation in a drier environment.

Rik Thwaites said most people attached a high value to native vegetation with people tending to fall into one of two broad groups: those who valued remnants for their production values as windbreaks and shelter belts for stock, and future opportunities for carbon credits; and those who valued remnants for conservation. People in both groups placed a high value on the aesthetic qualities of native vegetation.

"Not surprisingly, there was more emphasis on production values in Kamarooka; and more on conservation values in Muckleford," said Rik Thwaites.

"The country where the study took place was originally grassy box woodlands and native grasses were an important part of the landscape. In Kamarooka the remaining grasslands tend to be along creek and fence lines, roadsides, and occasionally in paddocks and unploughed wetter areas.

"Because of the drought, some farmers have expanded their cropping areas and sown lucerne in country that was once too wet to plough which could be impacting on native grasses," said Rik Thwaites.

In the Muckleford area, the native grasslands that remain are confined mostly to the less accessible, low fertility hillsides.

"These were low productivity areas already and the drought has made them even more so. Even those landholders with a commercial agricultural focus were getting little production off this land, so they are locking it up and letting it come back, or de-stocking altogether."

Rik Thwaites said the differences in the two groups' responses indicated just how local responses to climate variability are.

The project will be followed by a similar study in the North East during the early part of 2009.

For further information email Rik Thwaites at rthwaites@csu.edu.au

Because of the drought, some farmers have expanded their cropping areas and sown lucerne in country that was once too wet to plough which could be impacting on native grasses.

News from Heytesbury and District Landcare

Volunteers celebrate a job well done at the Lake Gnotuk planting day.

Caring for Lake Gnotuk

Around 20,000 years ago a volcanic eruption in the Camperdown area created the steep, flat-floored crater we now know as Lake Gnotuk. This May Lake Gnotuk saw another major environmental event – the launch of a community project that aims to enhance the Lake Gnotuk Community Reserve and its surrounds.

Mitre 10, Landcare Australia and the Heytesbury and District Landcare Network joined forces with the Lake Gnotuk Committee of Management, local residents, Camperdown College and Conservation Volunteers Australia to get the project underway. Participants planted 400 native grasses and understorey plants and enjoyed a barbecue at the reserve.

Lake Gnotuk is a rare volcanic landform known as a maar. A maar is a broad, circular, volcanic crater with steep inner walls and a low surrounding rim built of fragments of rock material that have been blown out of the crater during eruptions. Most maars in Australia are found in the southern part of Victoria's Western District. There are more than 30 maars in the area between Colac and Warrnambool including Lake Purrumbete and Tower Hill.

According to Becky McCann, former co-ordinator for the Heytesbury and District Landcare Network, the project aims to further enhance the reserve as habitat for native wildlife and highlight the significance of Lake Gnotuk.

"Lake Gnotuk is a nationally listed wetland and internationally recognised landform. It is renowned for its sediment layers and the role they play in reconstructing past climatic events and making predictions about future climate change.

"Works completed include the planting of 520 indigenous seedlings and native grasses, improved access and safety with the creation of a walking track to the lake's edge, the erection of information signs, warning signs and bollards and the construction of seats and benches to take in the magnificent lake views," Becky said.

The project has been underway over the past two years and Beck McCann praised the hard work of the Lake Gnotuk Committee of Management members for volunteering their time. Greg Farmer acted as project manager and oversaw the construction of the walking track and benches while Camperdown College students, volunteers from Conservation Volunteers Australia and local residents all helped out.

Greg Farmer, left, with Barry Rantall from Mitre 10 Camperdown planting native grasses at Lake Gnotuk.

Unearthing backyard

The Heytesbury and District Landcare Network is taking innovative steps to educate children and the community about the importance of the plants and wildlife of their region.

Through a bush treasure collection, brochures and a photo competition, the Landcare network is getting the community involved in educating each other and contributing to a valuable community resource.

The photographic competition focuses on local plants and wildlife. The entries will be used to create an important photographic record of the many unique species. The photographs will become a valuable tool to educate people about the significance of local plants and animals.

According to Landcare Project Officer Yonie Tiljak a great collection of photos has already started to come in.

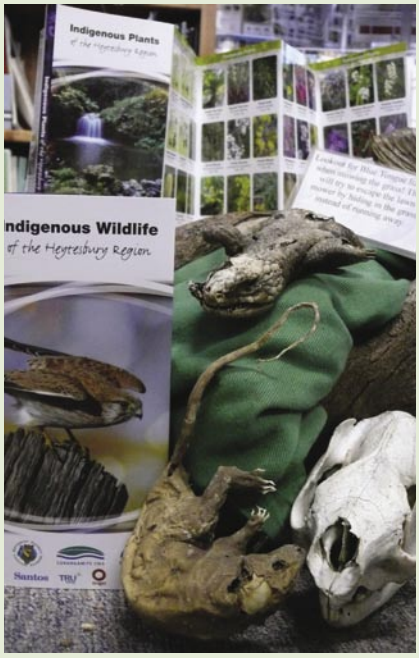
The Landcare Network has also recently created two brochures focusing on the plants and animals of the local region from Cobden in the north, to the coast between Nirranda and Moonlight Head.

The flora and fauna brochures are useful pocket-sized guides for identifying species.

Local bird observers, field naturalists and other community members helped with information and photographs.

The bush treasure collection is made up of preserved plant and animal specimens including skulls, nests, scats, flowers, or even the whole animal. It brings the plants and animals seen in the photos and brochures to 'life', giving people the chance to see and touch actual specimens.

treasures



The Heytesbury and District Landcare Network is helping to educate the community about the importance of the plants and wildlife of their region.

"The bush treasures provide a link between the photographs and the community's own backyard, as our backyards are the habitats that these plants and animals live in," Yonie Tiljak said.

"A photograph can show you the beauty of an animal while the bush treasures can show how that animal lives, what it eats, its interactions and the threats that it faces.

For example someone brought in a preserved half of a blue tongue lizard that lost a fight with a lawn mower, showing the impact of humans on our local wildlife."

We are on the lookout for new and interesting additions to our bush treasure collection and our local plant and animal photograph database. Please contact Yonie Tiljak at the Landcare Resource Centre, Timboon on 5598 3755.

LandLearn answers questions for city kids and teachers

By Lydia Fehring

Over the past three years more than 500 VCE geography students and teachers have ventured to the country to learn more about water use and management in the Murray Darling Basin. Ninety-five percent of the students were from metropolitan Melbourne.

The Murray Darling Basin is a compulsory area of study in VCE geography. DPI LandLearn has taken advantage of this opportunity to increase student and teacher understanding of sustainable agriculture and the important role Victorian primary producers play in growing the food we eat.

LandLearn has developed fieldwork and teaching resources to support teachers and students. The fieldwork covers fourteen sites in the Lower Goulburn Broken Catchment between Nagambie and Barmah Forest and takes two days to complete. Teachers can also tailor a one-day field trip to address the most relevant themes for their students either on irrigation, salinity, water quality or environmental flows.

The fieldwork is a practical way of conveying regional and rural perspectives to urban students and teachers. Students are often unaware that farmers actually have to pay for water. They are often astounded at the complexity of natural resource management issues and the impact they have right through the catchment.

LandLearn helps teachers to integrate sustainable agriculture and natural resource management into the curriculum in practical and useful ways. Professional development workshops are run for teachers of all levels and other educators including Landcare staff. Participants walk away from these workshops inspired and equipped with new skills, hands-on activities and resources to use in the classroom.

LandLearn staff are based in Echuca, Tatura and Box Hill. For further information go to www.landlearn.net.au or contact Sherin Halliday on 5482 0453, or by email at landlearn.program@dpi.vic.gov.au

Geography students from Eltham College do fieldwork in the Lower Broken Goulburn catchment.

The NAB volunteers celebrate after a hard day of planting.

Banks of help for Cairn Curran

By Matt Crilly

The Sandy Creek Catchment Landcare Group is underway on a wildlife revegetation project near Maldon. We are rejuvenating the vegetation in the Cairn Curran and Seers Road area with the aim of creating a wildlife corridor to provide habitat for native fauna. The corridor will join other remnant vegetation with the plantings carried out by Goulburn Murray Water along the banks of Cairn Curran.

> *Amazingly, the NAB volunteers were able to plant 1600 trees and shrubs well before lunchtime.*

We planned the project and made a successful Envirofund application. Once our application was accepted we began the process of ordering our supply of plants, arranging the rip lines and fencing and trying to find some willing helpers for this massive task.

Luckily we heard about the NAB volunteer program. Our project was registered and NAB staff members began signing up.

To prepare for the planting day we arranged for a local contractor to do the ripping. The next task was to get some fences erected to prevent stock getting to the plants. A week before the actual planting date we marked out where we wanted the plants to go.

Twenty-two NAB staff turned up to the planting day in June. We had organised 10 Hamilton tree planters for them to use. The first task was to get the holes dug. We sent ten people off to attack that task.

They were quickly followed by another team with boxes of trees and shrubs. Amazingly, the NAB volunteers were able to plant 1600 trees and shrubs well before lunchtime.

After a refreshing barbecue lunch everyone was back into it. We finished off the watering and the tree guarding. Then it was time for a beer as everyone stood by and admired their efforts before heading back to Melbourne.

We are now working to get 500 grasses into the ground. It will be really exciting to compare the photo points once these plants begin to get established. Hopefully we get plenty of good soaking rain over the next couple of months.

Our thanks to all at Envirofund, Landcare and especially the wonderful NAB volunteers who helped us get this project up and running.

Any agricultural activity that inefficiently supplies nitrogen to the soil-plant system can lead to large losses of nitrogen through a number of loss processes, including nitrous oxide.

Biodiversity credit a new model for business

Trust for Nature's Revolving Fund purchases parcels of noteworthy bush and then on-sells them with a Conservation Covenant to ensure the land is protected forever. Income from the sale of the properties is wholly returned to the fund to enable further purchases.

In 2006 Trust for Nature bought a 200-hectare buloke and stringybark woodland at Minimay in the Wimmera. The property provides key habitat for the endangered Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. Only an estimated 1000 birds of this species remain.

The property has recently been purchased by the Members and Education Credit Union (mecu) as part of its Landbank initiative. The mecu Landbank aims to help offset the loss of biodiversity associated with its business of banking and in particular to offset new homes financed by mecu.

For every new property mecu finances they will set aside an equivalent land area of native bushland into its Landbank.

All properties purchased by the Landbank will be protected by Trust for Nature Conservation Covenants against any future development.

Landcare Australia will project manage the Landbank while Trust for Nature will oversee the quality of conservation works.

The Landbank will assist mecu to become carbon neutral by June 2010. In addition, mecu plans to trade in net-gain biodiversity offsets from its Landbank, providing developers with an opportunity to offset the environmental impact of their own developments.

Landcare carbonSMART General Manager Matthew Reddy said the collaborative partnership model developed by mecu has enormous potential to be replicated across Australia supported by the Landcare movement.

"It is exciting because it has potential to open up a new funding stream for the land economy, where corporates can work creatively with the Landcare movement to identify and realise market opportunities for offsets and carbon trading.

"It opens a window of opportunity for major industry-funded conservation projects that could make an enormous contribution to enhancing biodiversity and increasing declining habitat."

For further information contact Matthew Reddy on 9662 9977.

Around the State – News from the

Glenelg Hopkins

It is planting time in Western Victoria. Good winter rain has given a boost to revegetation projects. Group work has been undertaken at Casterton, Bahgallah Killara Landcare Group along the Glenelg River, at Hotspur along the Crawford River and at Balmoral as a joint effort by the Balmoral Landcare Group and the Balmoral Secondary Collage.

Vegetation at Green Hill Lake, near Ararat, has been increased as part of a partnership project between Ararat Landcare Group and Ararat Rotary Club. A new Landcare group is being formed at Mt Clay, near Narrawong. The group aims to curb weeds in the gully areas from Mt Clay to the Surry River.

For further information contact Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

Port Phillip and Westernport

The 2008 Port Phillip and Westernport Landcare Awards presentation was held at Federation Square in September.

Kerry Armstrong wowed the crowd of 230 people representing 68 different community groups. The One Fire Dancers gave an engrossing performance of Indigenous dance and music that inspired Ian Hunter, a Wurundjeri elder who delivered the welcome to country, to join in with vocals.

Arron Wood, 2007 Prime Minister's Environmentalist of the Year, shared his learning on how to engage youth, before the winners of the 11 award categories were announced.

Congratulations to all of the inspiring winners who will now be nominees for the 2009 Victorian Landcare Awards.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

Wimmera

The annual planting season is over for 2008 and again we had a huge response from farmers and landowners. With the help of 500 volunteers who worked on four large-scale events, we planted over 60,000 native plants on more than 40 sites around the Wimmera.

This year we also hosted two teams of international student volunteers. Their assistance was greatly appreciated by farmers and project managers.

Members of the newly formed Irrewarra Landcare Group in the Corangamite region.

Welcome to Victoria Leeke who has recently taken up the Landcare Co-ordinator position with Project Platypus and good luck to Hindmarsh Landcare Network for the National Landcare Awards in Canberra.

For further information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.

Mallee

The Mallee Regional Landcare Network has secured funding through the Volunteer Recruitment Initiative to assist the formation of new or lapsed groups within the region. Response so far has been fantastic, with new and reinvigorated junior Landcare groups forming and community groups taking advantage of the funding for administration costs during their inception phase.

Training in the use of the Victorian Landcare Gateway website took place in October. Visit www.landcarevic.net.au.

For further information contact Brendon Thomas on 5051 4576.

Corangamite

Four new community groups have been formed in the region in recent months.

The Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network recently established a Landcare and community centre in the historic schoolhouse at Modewarre. The centre will include Landcare resource materials, equipment for hire, aerial photos and a permanent display of local and regional information about farming and the environment.

Over 100 people attended the Ballarat Environment Awards. Leigh Catchment Group received the best environment group award and co-ordinators Andrea Mason and Jenny Sedgwick were inducted into the Hall of Fame for ten years dedicated service to environmental works.

The team welcomes Ben Roberts, newly appointed co-ordinator for Heytesbury & District Landcare Network and thanks Becky McCann for four years of dedication to the Landcare movement.

For further information contact Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

East Gippsland

The Regional Landcare Awards for 2008 were held in September. Peter Murrell, Judy McKinnon, Mark Jeffris and Cat Van der Vlugt received awards in the individual category.

Bruthen & District Landcare, Waiwera & District Landcare and Peter Kramme received Rivercare awards. Raymond Island Landcare Group and Andrew

Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

Brown were recognised in the Nature conservation category.

The Landcare Community Group award was given to Friends of East Gippsland Rail Trail Inc, East Gippsland Landcare Network Executive Committee, Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group, Goongerah Landcare and the newly formed Friends of Picnic Point Landcare.

The Community Partnerships category awards went to Toms Creek Landcare, Bairnsdale Power Station – Alinta, and Southern Farming Systems.

John and Vanessa Trail received the Landcare Primary Producer award and the Landcare Indigenous Community Project went to Charmaine Sellings.

For further information contact Becky Hemming on 5150 3577.

West Gippsland

Landcare in West Gippsland involves 75 groups and 2159 families who own or manage 325,000 hectares of private land. An observation is that people are keen to be part of an active group and if a group goes into recess many members gravitate to neighbouring groups that are active.

The Landcare networks have identified corporate governance as a priority. Initial training has been provided and community network volunteers have found it useful and very worthwhile. As a follow up the Landcare networks are looking to update their strategic plans.

Caring for our Country has created some anxious moments in the region. There appears to be plenty of opportunity, but we need to effectively manage the transition along with the high demands of project delivery and a reduction in staff. Given the strength, resilience and dynamics of Landcare in our region we are hopeful the future remains bright.

For further information contact Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.

North Central

Allison Long is the new Statewide Landcare Co-ordinator with DSE. She will be greatly missed in the region. We wish Allison all the best and welcome Jennelle Carlier to the region.

The Victorian Government's Drought Program projects have been completed along with two New Generation Landcare Grants Projects. Both programs have had a very positive impact on the landscape; congratulations to the groups involved.

The Caring for our Country Sustainable Farm Practices grants for 2008-09 have been announced. Congratulations to the Northern United Forestry Group, the Mid-Loddon Sub-Catchment Management Network and the Northern Poultry Cluster.

For more information contact Jennelle Carlier on 5440 1814.

North East

The Ovens Landcare Network has launched *Soil Health – the Journey*, a farmer-friendly handbook. The handbook details the lessons learnt by the project participants and is available on the NE Landcare Gateway for download.

The Kiewa Catchment Landcare Group celebrated 25 years of operation in May. This is a significant milestone for a group which started as a tree group and is still going strong.

The CMA commenced the new Caring for our Country funded Landcare Support arrangements in July. Unfortunately the reduced funding means less Landcare facilitator support available to groups.

For further information contact Tom Croft on (02) 6043 7600.

Goulburn Broken

The transition in Australian government funding from NHT to Caring for our Country has resulted in substantial disruption to Landcare support and further weakens job security for facilitators and co-ordinators.

We have been reviewing our Community Landcare Support Strategy which has highlighted all of the good work and effort that volunteers have achieved. Thanks to all the groups that provided information to produce the annual Landcare performance story.

A new Landcare network is operating in the Mansfield area. The Up2Us Landcare Alliance is focusing on traditional Landcare activities as well as the challenges posed by climate change. This network was one of two networks and several groups to get a kick start under the Volunteer Recruitment Initiative Start Up grants.

For further information contact Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

John and Vanessa Trail took out the East Gippsland Regional Landcare Primary Producer Award.

Sure Gro's™ Spring 2008 Sale

Freecall 1800 643 384

REVEGETATION 350 TREE GUARD SETS

Set Includes

1 x Tree Guard

450mm height x 350mm lay flat width x 100µm thick. Carton Qty 500. Life expectancy minimum 18 months.

3 x Bamboo Stakes

750mm long x 10-12mm diameter Bales of 500.

	Ex GST	Inc GST
Option 1: 500 + sets	**39¢**	42.9¢
Including 1 Recycled Fibre Weed Mat	**67¢**	73.7¢
Option 2: 3000 + sets	**36¢**	39.6¢
Including 1 Recycled Fibre Weed Mat	**62¢**	68.2¢

NOTE: 750mm long x 11-13 diam. bamboo stakes available at 6¢ ex gst extra per set

CORFLUTE SETS

NO ASSEMBLY REQUIRED
(welded join)

Set Includes

1 x Tree Guard

450mm height x 200mm triangle(quick fold)

1 x Hardwood Stake

75cm x 18mm x 25mm

1 x Suregro Recycled Fibre Mat

370mm x 370mm

Option 3

Ex GST	Inc GST
$1.50 per set	$1.65

Option 4

	Ex GST	Inc GST
1,500 + sets	**$1.43**	$1.57

2 LITRE MILK CARTON TREE GUARD SETS

Set Includes

1 x 2 Litre Milk Carton Tree Guard

300mm height, 95mm x 95mm square, with stake perforations.Pack of 500 Milk Carton tree Guards

2 x Bamboo Stakes

600mm long x 8-10mm diameter.

Bales of 1000 stakes

	Ex GST	Inc GST
Option 5: 500 + sets	**33¢**	36.3¢

Please note SureGro Milk Carton Tree Guards are purpose made with stake perforations.

WEED MATS

Recycled Paper Weed Mats 380mm diameter	Packs of 100 Mats **33¢** each ex GST	36.3¢ inc GST
Surejute Weed Mats Approx 370mm x 370mm	Packs of 100 Mats **38¢** each ex GST	41.8¢ inc GST
Recycled Fibre Weed Mats Approx 370mm x 370mm	Packs of 100 Mats **35¢** each ex GST	38.5¢ inc GST

FERTILIZERS AND WATER CRYSTALS

Typhoon Tablets

10gm Box of 1000.
20gm Box of 500.

Ex GST	Inc GST
$78.00	$85.80

Slow Release min 12 months

Granular AquaBoost AG100 Water Crystals

	Ex GST	Inc GST
25 Kilo	**$320**	$352
10 Kilo	**$160**	$176
1 Kilo	**$20**	$22

SEN-TREE™ BROWSING DETERRENT 15 LITRE KIT

PROVEN DETERRENT AGAINST RABBITS AND WALLABIES

Sen-Tree™ Browsing Deterrent (formerly WR1) is an egg-based adhesive compound, sprinkled with grit onto the foliage. The combination of odour and grit have a recurring deterrent affect, through learned association.

Ex GST	Inc GST
$265	$291.50

APVMA approved Reg No 51933
Protected under Australian patent no: 703522
Exclusive Licensee:Sure Gro™

See website or contact Sure Gro™ direct for more information

EROSION CONTROL MATTING

NEW

SureGro Advanced Jute Roll (Covers 45m²)

1.83m wide x 25m long - 350gm/m²

	Ex GST	Inc GST
1-10 rolls	**$80.00**	$88.00
10+	**$75.00**	$82.50

SureGro Recycled Fibre Roll (350gm/m²)

1.8m w x 50m long-350gm/m2 covers (90m2)

Ex GST	Inc GST
$170	$187

2.4m w x 50m long-350gm/m2 covers (120m2)

Ex GST	Inc GST
$220	$242

Note: SureGro erosion control matting is needle punched to allow easy water penetration.

All orders must be paid for in full prior to dispatch or where agreed in writing. All prices quoted are Ex. Factory and include GST. Sure Gro has negotiated favourable rates with interstate carriers. Orders must be received on or before 15/12/2008 and will be processed in order of receipt. Normal Trading Terms And Conditions Apply. **NOTE: Freight is an additional charge which will include GST.**

500ml seasol complete garden treatment with every order **Free!**

LC1102573

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OFFER ENDS 15/12/08