

Telling the farmer's story

By SALLY WHITE

WHEN Landcare was launched in a small Victorian country town in 1985, it was little more than an idea.

But it sowed the seed for something big – a movement that would not just go nationwide but spread beyond Australian borders.

It's a story Forbes farmer Philip Bruem likes, not just because of what Landcare stands for but because he's hoping to one day be able to relate a similar success story about the Australian Year of the Farmer (AYOF).

It's almost six years since Mr Bruem found himself lamenting the growing divide between city consumers and agriculture with friend Geoff Bell, now AYOF's managing director.

Frustrated by the lack of appreciation of farmers' contribution and determined to do something about it, they began exploring the potential for an event that would highlight the importance of agriculture.

That idea for an "event" turned into a full year of events and a plan to have 2012 gazetted as "Australian year of the farmer".

"No formal application was required – you just had to get on with it and organise it. So we did," Mr Bruem said.

With their plan having now come to fruition, for Mr Bruem, the AYOF chairman, it's full steam ahead.

Last month nine LandCruisers began a year-long roadshow that will cover more than 56,000 kilometres and visit more than 320 events across the country where they will help spread farming's story.

Mr Bruem said the roadshow was a key element in their mission to raise awareness about the contribution farmers made to the economy.

Research conducted ahead of the AYOF launch reiterated just how

much work there was to do.

It found nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of city dwellers never made it to the countryside and about 69pc visited rural Australia less than once a year.

The research, conducted by TNS, found city dwellers on average spent just 3.5 days a year in rural areas – although encouragingly more than half said they would like to visit the country more often.

"The Australian Year of the Farmer campaign aims to enhance the ties between city and rural communities in a celebration of Australian farming and, in doing so, communicate to all Australians the importance of farming to our economic and social fabric," Mr Bruem said.

While many people recognised agriculture was a big industry, few appreciated just how big that contribution was either domestically ("Australian farms and related industries account for about 27pc of GDP") or on a global scale ("The average farmer grows enough to feed 600 people a year, 450 of them overseas").

Nor did many people realise Australian farmers were global leaders in their own right, particularly in areas like water efficiency.

"We have a history of top class innovation and invention that continues to set our farmers apart," he said.

"Many of our farmers do not just follow best practice, they create it."

But for Mr Bruem, the year isn't just a 12-month program.

While the next 11 months will be critical in reaching out to city consumers and getting some airplay for farming's story, he's hopeful it will be just the first step on the road to better recognition of the importance of agriculture Australia-wide.

"Of course it's a very big and important big step," Mr Bruem said.

"Just getting the year off the ground has been a huge leap and the support



Young farmer brings ag to city

AFTER spending the past few years studying a Bachelor of Arts in Communications at Monash University, Elizabeth Reid (pictured) is combining her university knowledge and agricultural life experience in an effort to bridge the gap between metropolitan and rural Australians.

Growing up on a 570 hectare sheep and cropping property, Moroco East Station at Deniliquin in the NSW Riverina, 24-year-old Elizabeth, a fourth generation farmer, understands the importance of farmers for food security.

As part of the Year of the Farmer travelling road show, Elizabeth's key focus is to "encourage young people to stay on the farm and to raise the profile of Australian farming".

"I will also be highlighting food security and the importance of our Australian farmers."

A keen communicator, Elizabeth said her "free range childhood" and time travelling domestically and internationally has enabled her to "broaden my horizons and see the best of both worlds."

She said her experiences inspire her to "be a communicator between the city and rural Australia."

Elizabeth will spend the next 12 months travelling with the road show and says she was lucky to be given this roll straight out of university.

we're seeing tells us our efforts are gaining momentum."

Mr Bruem sees many parallels between Australian Year of the Farmer and Landcare.

One of AYOF's core objectives is:

"Promote the role our farmers play as environmental managers, creating and delivering sustainability through best practice management".

The fact farmers manage 60pc of Australia's land, and farmer involve-

ment is a major contributor to Landcare practices emphasising sustainable productivity, demonstrates just one obvious benefit for this strong partnership between Landcare and Australian Year of the Farmer.

Initiative rewards for carbon-friendly farming

Comment by Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon JOE LUDWIG

THE Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) is a landmark for farming in Australia, offering new ongoing sources of revenue to help farmers and rural communities survive the tough times and prosper during the good years.

The Government is securing a sustainable future for Australia by implementing a carbon price to assist in reducing pollution while investing in a clean energy future.

This will help look after our environment and our communities, now and into the future.

The CFI, which was officially launched on December 8, 2011, is a key part of this and will allow farmers to generate carbon credits through a range of activities, including revegetation, manure management, fertiliser management, reduced livestock emissions and improved rangeland and cropland management.

The initiative has been specifically designed to encourage greenhouse gas abatement activities that lower inputs and improve farm efficiency.

By supporting these win-win practices, carbon farming will help farmers deal with the impacts of a variable

climate and build resilience in the land sector.

Already eligible carbon farming activities have been approved and the number of activities eligible for crediting will continue to grow as the market expands.

Under the initiative, piggeries can now be credited for the capture and flaring of methane; local councils can earn credits for the capture and combustion of legacy landfill gas, and landholders can be credited for carbon taken up by reforestation with native species.

Savanna fire management is another activity that is in the final stages of approval.

The government, industry and researchers are actively developing further methods which will provide more opportunities for Australian farmers and land managers.

The CFI is just one part of the government's plan to protect the interests of our great farming nation through the Clean Energy Future Land Sector Package.

Our plan for securing a Clean Energy Future will ensure agriculture in Australia remains prosperous and sustainable into the future.

As part of this important economic reform, agricultural emissions have been permanently excluded from

coverage under the carbon price mechanism which means farmers will not pay for their direct emissions.

On-farm and personal fuel use will also be permanently exempt from the carbon price.

To further support farmers, the government is also investing \$1.7 billion of the revenue raised through the carbon price on a Land Sector Package, one element of which is the CFI.

This will assist the agricultural sector by improving productivity and developing low emission technologies.

Two additional new programs under the Land Sector Package will fund research and practical demonstrations to increase the range of eligible activities and enable more farmers to reduce emissions and earn income through the CFI.

Filling the Research Gap will fund research into abatement technologies and Action on the Ground will demonstrate emission abatement projects on real farms.

The first rounds of these programs are now accepting applications for funding.

Another component of the Land Sector Package, the Extension and Outreach program, will provide farmers and land managers with access to the advice and expertise required to make informed business decisions



Senator Joe Ludwig, Mike Moodie from Mallee Sustainable Farming and Colin Hunt, Merrine, Victoria.

about participation in carbon farming.

The design of the Extension and Outreach program is being carefully considered to ensure it complements the existing extension networks around Australia.

The program will be rolled out across Australia in 2012, providing farmers with the knowledge to participate and profit from the new revenue streams being unlocked by the CFI.

The Government is committed to a

sustainable future for our nation and these programs represent real investment in the land sector and demonstrate our commitment to supporting rural Australia.

Farmers have a strong history of innovation and are world leaders in adopting new farming techniques and practices and the CFI will help ensure the future productivity and profitability of Australian agriculture and rural communities.

Reducing inputs and raising hope

IN SOUTHERN Tasmania, Landcare is helping farmers review their farming practices with an emphasis on health – of land and people – after a long battering by drought.

NRM South, the agency that co-ordinates natural resource management activities in the island's southern districts, decided two years ago to focus on soil health as an indicator of a farm's environmental and financial health.

The interest was there.

Barry Hardwick, regional Landcare facilitator with NRM South, said the region's farmers, worried about the toll taken by drought but without the financial reserves to boost production through bought-in inputs, had been asking for help with low-cost ways of restoring their soils.

NRM South obliged with a workshop focusing on soil health and pasture improvement, featuring independent scientist Dr Christine Jones and other speakers on holistic farming techniques – including local practitioners who had proven the techniques under local conditions.

The workshop was highly successful, Mr Hardwick said.

"There are still farmers talking about it now, comparing their pastures with the pastures they saw during the forum."

NRM South has subsequently held separate pasture cropping and grazing management training courses.

A group of farmers practicing pasture cropping has been formed and five grazing trials established, with plans for a total of 10 demonstration sites to investigate the effect of grazing management on weeds and salinity.

It's not just about taking ideas from the mainland, Mr Hardwick said.

The concepts are open to re-interpretation for Tasmanian conditions.

"We're not excluding anything. It's about what works, low cost, low input."

The issues farmers are confronting have always been there, in Mr Hardwick's view, but the changes were so incremental that farmers could ignore them.

Drought brought things to the fore. "It was devastating to the psyche of rural communities. There were people on suicide watch and all sorts of dreadful things happening that couldn't be pushed away," he said.

"One of the big issues is that farming has become more and more marginal for many people.

"Farmers have been trying to offset a fall in returns by putting on fertiliser but in the drought that was no longer an option.

"The programs we've introduced are aiming to reduce farmers' costs without losing profitability – or better, improve profitability through reduction of input costs."

In a region badly hit by drought and tree losses, many farmers are also trying to restore some vegetation and ecosystem function to their landscapes.

"They saw their farms during the drought, when things got bad, and it was shocking for them," Mr Hardwick said.

"I see this as fulfilling a need in the farming community.

"The focus on health is a key component of this, across the board.

"The majority of farmers are interested in the health of their land, and increasingly they are linking their land's health to their own health.

"Also, there are the social aspects of healthy communities.

"We need to focus on the health of our landscapes, farms and communities as one thing, not separate issues."

Mr Hardwick also believed farmers valued a sense of themselves as stewards of their land.

Most farmers were involved in Landcare because they cared about their land, he pointed out, and they



genuinely wanted to do something about issues like salinity or tree loss.

NRM South's triple-bottom-line approach stitches good stewardship into the same package as farm productivity and profitability.

"It's early days," Mr Hardwick said.

"The system we currently have, and the values that support it, have been around for a long time.

"I know I had my own struggles to change my thinking, and for farmers it's a real challenge.

"But I think unless we start making some of these changes, we're going to run into issues like peak oil totally unprepared.

"There's data coming out across the world about the potential of re-establishing function in the landscape.

"There's sufficient evidence to justify trialling it and seeing where it goes – and we've got this motivation coming from the farming community."

New ground in old dilemma

IN A small soggy paddock about 80 kilometres north of Hobart, a trial is indicating there may be new answers to old problems of farming in Tasmania.

The paddock is damp and nutrient-poor, and in living memory it has never grown much more than the barest livestock pick.

But under an NRM South program aimed at boosting soil health in low-cost ways, the paddock has been pasture-cropped.

Oats have been direct-drilled straight into the poor pasture, with minimal ground disturbance.

The idea, said NRM South's Landcare facilitator Barry Hardwick (pictured in the paddock in October 2011) is to jump-start soil biological processes.

The oats pump sugars into the soil and feed microbes.

The microbes help liberate locked-up nutrients in the soil, feeding the crop and pasture simultaneously.

The oats grow – as they have done this summer, very vigorously – until they can be grazed and trampled down by carefully-managed livestock.

The decaying leaf and root residue from crop and pasture further builds the soil microbial community and soil fertility.

The soil starts to build, instead of the collapse in fertility that has occurred over so much of this area of Tasmania.

So far, that's how this plot is playing out, Mr Hardwick reports.

If the trend continues, it is a small example of the fact farming can regenerate its own lands, given a better understanding of ecological processes.

Managing crops through a dry run

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The *Farming During A Period Of Extreme Climate Variability* report, prepared for the Birchip Cropping Group (BCG) found that adaptation would be crucial in remaining viable if projections of increased climate variability came to pass.

The bad news for growers in low rainfall zones is that it is likely to be drier in winter and spring, with more heat waves through the critical grain fill period in spring.

It will mean more issues with moisture stress and the earlier maturation of the crops will also put them at increased risk of frost.

However, the good news is there are a number of techniques that

will dull the impact of a hotter, drier climate.

Report co-author Harm van Rees, Crop Facts, said farmers would have to consider the seasonal risk before committing to planting.

"On farms with subsoil limitations, alternative crops such as lentils and canola will have limited opportunity, but the flip side of this is that even with less finishing rain, plants will still grow sufficient dry matter for hay crops to be an opportunity."

He also said farmers would have to budget for variable income between the years and some years it would be difficult to break even.

"As a general rule of thumb, at average grain prices of about \$200/t on-farm, a decile 3 rainfall, or a year in the wettest 70pc of all years, is required in low-to-medium rainfall zones before a profit can be realised."

With this in mind, Mr van Rees said farmers needed to closely monitor their cost of production and set limits on chemical and fertiliser inputs, along with more fixed costs such as machinery and ensure they are in line with yield potential.

In terms of moisture for crops, he said projections were that summer rain would not decline.

With the likelihood of declining in-crop rain, he said conserving moisture from summer rain by spraying summer weeds was likely to become increasingly important.

Early sowing, including dry sowing if needed, was another tool to minimise potential yield losses from heat and dry conditions in the spring.

Another agronomic tool likely to benefit growers is no-till, with stubble retention, which helps reduce erosion and conserve moisture.



Farming During A Period Of Extreme Climate Variability co-author Brooke White said a suite of management options could improve farmers' viability.



Cotton grower Andrew Watson has successfully adapted integrated pest management techniques on his Boggabri property "Kilmarnock".

Tackling pests naturally

ASKED how much he has reduced his pesticide applications on cotton since the early 1990s, when it wasn't uncommon to fly on 11 to 13 chemical sprays a year, Boggabri, NSW, grower Andrew Watson says "about 100 per cent".

The biggest cut to pesticide spraying of cotton came with genetically-modified varieties engineered to resist the primary pest of Australian cotton, the heliothis caterpillar.

But that still left Mr Watson with three to four sprays a year to deal with secondary pests like myrids and aphids.

Now those are gone too, thanks to Mr Watson's decision to investigate how nature might help out if given the right support.

The cotton industry has invested heavily in research and education about the use of beneficial insects, and is a frontrunner in the use of integrated pest management (IPM).

But few growers have taken IPM as seriously as Mr Watson has on his family's 2700-hectare farm "Kilmarnock".

Here, pesticides have become a tool of last resort – which means they are practically never used.

Visually, secondary pests appear to be doing damage.

The crop drops buds (called

squares) and bolls, suggesting its yield potential is being compromised.

Wondering how much damage was actually being done, Mr Watson began a program of plant-mapping, recording the number of squares per metre and then later how much fruit stayed on for harvesting.

"One of the things it highlighted for me: it didn't matter whether we sprayed for these secondary pests or not," he said.

"The plant made so many squares it couldn't hold them anyway."

"I've had crops that have put on more than 500 squares per square metre, plus 100 bolls – 600 pieces of fruit per square metre."

"And yet a really big cotton crop will have only 200-plus bolls per square metre at the end of the year.

"That told me it didn't matter if we lost some of these squares."

He also started mapping insects.

"We found we might start to get a buildup of myrids but then we'd get a corresponding buildup in beneficials – ladybirds, red-blue bugs, damsel and assassin bugs.

"We were finding the beneficials were controlling those pest buildups."

And when secondary pests did build beyond the capacity of the beneficials to control them, it only

took a shower of rain to wipe the pests entirely from the crop.

As a result, Mr Watson doesn't spray his 500ha of cotton for pests anymore.

He doesn't get the best yields in the valley, because he doesn't aim for production records.

But his yields are still well above the valley and industry average.

"And invariably our costs are \$300 to \$600 less than anyone else," Mr Watson said.

"That's another bale or bale-and-a-half a hectare that others have to produce to make the same amount of money."

Mr Watson's strategy hinges on the native vegetation in and around "Kilmarnock", which acts as a harbour for beneficial insects.

To the existing corridors of native vegetation, Mr Watson is adding new plantings, in the keeping with his role as a member of the Boggabri Landcare Group.

"The Landcare message in the past was really focused on grazing, shelterbelts and riverbank regeneration," he said.

"This is where we're seeing the Landcare ethic fit with broadacre crop production."

Native vegetation harbours other benefits, too.

With researchers, Mr Watson is

investigating the potential of micro bats: the little palm-sized bats capable of eating their own weight in insects each night.

There is also evidence their ultrasonic cries disturb moths, preventing them from laying their eggs undisturbed.

Like much to do with ecosystem services, there is much to still be proven, but bat-aided pest control is an idea that appeals to Mr Watson.

Mindful that the little bats only work about 400 metres from tree-lines, he has installed bat boxes in some newer tree belts to encourage colonisation.

It's another way of landcaring; letting nature do a job that has to be done anyway and doing it for free.

With a Caring for Our Country grant, the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC is now working to teach other cotton growers the principles that have worked so well on "Kilmarnock".

There is one effect of free pest control that might not be to everyone's taste, Mr Watson observed: "At the end of the year when we're picking, the pickers are draped in spider webs. There are spiders crawling all over the place."

But maybe a cotton picker draped in webs will become the latest sign of cotton success.

Let nature do its job

THE cotton industry is one of the most high-tech sectors of Australian agriculture but research and experience is showing there's profit in encouraging nature to lend a helping hand.

The Cotton Catchment Communities Co-operative Research Centre (CCC CRC) has been supporting research into the role of "ecosystem services" in cotton farm productivity, and found nature didn't just sit around looking pretty.

As University of New England doctoral student Rhiannon Smith detailed in a CCC CRC-supported survey, nature provides a range of services that we take for granted, like erosion control or holding carbon in the landscape.

If farmers provide the right conditions, nature is also capable of doing a lot of the work farmers now expect to be done by chemicals.

For instance, work by Dr Nancy Schellhorn of CSIRO found, contrary to one myth, native vegetation on farm didn't act as a harbour for cotton pests. Instead, it sheltered the beneficial predators of the crop's pests.

The CCC CRC's catchment program leader Jane McFarlane said Dr Schellhorn's work pointed the way to better integrated pest control.

"The more native vegetation you have, the better connected your landscape, the more likely you will have predatory insects move into your crop early," Ms McFarlane said.

"Things that don't move much, like spiders, will come in."

"If you can get beneficials in your crop early you can keep pest thresholds lower for longer."

"If all that means you don't have to spray early, you're less likely to get a pest flare in the late season."

"This is genuine management option – although of course, if you don't have your landscape configured with native vegetation it is a very long-term strategy to do so."

Change moves slowly, even in the dynamic cotton industry, and the CCC CRC is still pushing this message out to the cotton grower community.

However, Ms McFarlane said the connection has definitely been made by production agronomists, who once only considered conditions in-crop but who now take into account the crop's situation in the landscape.

The beneficial role that native vegetation can play in mitigating pest loads offers a natural opening for Landcare.

Moree-based Gwydir Regional Landcare facilitator Sally Dickinson is doing an outstanding job of linking the environment to farm production, Ms McFarlane said.

"If we have a pest flare, Sally might have a field day on pest management and talk about beneficial insects, pointing out that if growers encourage these insects, they may not have a pest flare next year."

"The issues of environment and farming aren't separate."

Sally Dickinson is co-funded by Landcare, the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association, Cotton CRC and the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority.



The Australian Government is proud to continue its support for Landcare by funding a range of initiatives including Caring for our Country, Regional Landcare Facilitators and Landcare in Focus magazine.

To find out more, or to contact your nearest Regional Landcare Facilitator, Caring for our Country Regional Officer or Weeds of National Significance coordinator go to www.nrm.gov.au or call 1800 552 008 toll free.



Australian Government

Project boosts soil technology uptake

By TOM CLAPIN

WHILE traditional soil testing methods give farmers an idea of what nutrients are available in the most upper layer of their paddocks, many would be surprised as to what they would find further down.

Thirty farmers in WA's Great Southern region were given the opportunity to carry out some deep soil testing with the latest technology thanks to the Katanning, Dumbleyung and Wagin-Woodanilling Landcare offices.

The project was made possible through a grant from Caring for our Country and was aimed at giving farmers a better understanding of what was occurring on their properties at a sub-soil level.

Wagin-Woodanilling Landcare Group zone manager Danielle Peris was involved with running the program and said in the past farmers had only really worried about the top 10cm of soil on their property.

"But a lot of soil health constraints happen at a mid and sub-soil level," Ms Peris said.

"Thanks to the Caring for our Country funding, this project provided farmers with the latest technology to undertake deep soil testing and electromagnetic survey testing, or EM38 and EM31 as it is commonly known, in a facilitated and mentored environment.

"They could then use the information gathered to actually undertake on-ground works."

The project involved farmers picking two 10-hectare sites, having deep soil tests followed by the electromagnetic survey testing done on both sites and then looking at pH and salinity levels.

Participants then had the opportunity to get together at a data analysis day where they learnt

how to interpret the data from the soil tests.

The next stage allowed farmers to receive one-on-one, on-farm advice from an Evergreen Farming agronomist to look at potential soil problems and work out what options were available to best manage those problems.

The farmers were then eligible to apply for \$3000 in funding from their local landcare group to put on-farm works in place that managed the soil problems the program highlighted.

"The idea was to get the farmers to then sit down and look at their own data relevant to their own property," Ms Peris said.

"They could then make management decisions based on what they found and with help from the funding, implement the solutions gathered from the technical site visit.

"Sometimes it's hard for farmers to work out exactly where to start with paddock management.

"Making decisions such as where paddocks needed to be fenced off in order to best manage problems, the most effective way of liming problem areas to balance pH or even the planting of perennials or trees to combat salt can be tough, particularly when it's difficult to pinpoint the problem.

"This program basically gave farmers a better understanding of the extent of soil problems, while the funding gave them the opportunity to implement management tools to correct those problems."

Ms Peris said the program was very well received.

"Ultimately most farmers involved in the project found the information regarding pH levels as the most valuable because historically they hadn't looked at this issue closely," she said.

A field trip is planned in March 2012 to view the short-term results of the project.



Dairy farmers wise up on energy efficiency

AS THE climate becomes an ever-increasing topic of debate, a project funded by Woolworths and Landcare Australia has looked into how dairy farmers in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and increase the energy efficiency of their productions.

NSW natural resource management co-ordinator for Dairy NSW Jess Jennings based in Bathurst, said the project has had great success not only from a participation and results standpoint, but also when considering the growing concerns for climate change and its affects on the agricultural industry.

"What we found at the beginning of the project is that not a lot of farmers

were in a good position to mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions on-farm and that there was a need for the education of farmers in this area," said Dr Jennings (pictured).

"As a result, we engaged in a fair degree of consulting to increase the awareness among farmers of greenhouse gases and their apparent effect on climate change, as well as looking at the different strategies and options available for farmers to conduct on-farm mitigation practices."

Originally, he said, the project focused on farmers in NSW, but this



was soon extended to include farmers in Victoria and Tasmania, with different approaches undertaken by all three States.

"In Tasmania, they combined the on-farm strategies with scientific research from the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research, whereas in NSW and Victoria there were a lot of group discussions with the farmers themselves on how they could undertake to reduce their emissions and improve efficiency," Dr Jennings said.

"For electricity usage, this focused a lot on the milking equipment, such as pumps and refrigeration equip-

ment, as well as the irrigation systems on-farm, including pump efficiency; there is usually a good opportunity in these areas for reducing electricity costs and gas emissions.

"We also looked at feeding strategies – further research is being undertaken by Dairy Australia on this, so the jury is still out on what should happen and to what extent."

Thanks to the cooler climate of Tasmania, he said, they also looked at using nitrogen inhibitors to reduce the release rate of nitrogen in fertilisers.

The levels of participation, Dr Jennings added, exceeded their expectations for NSW involvement, with six focus farms involved in the project in Victoria, and four or five

farms selected for case studies in Tasmania.

"In NSW and Victoria, there are more farmers now actively engaged in on-farm mitigation of greenhouse gases, as well as about 30 NSW farmers being linked to the State Government's energy rebates," he said.

"With the increasing awareness of climate change, I believe this project has not only helped the farmers to reduce their emissions and energy costs but has also provided them with an increased capacity to address the issue of climate change as a community, and we fully appreciate the funding that Woolworths and Landcare Australia has provided so we could undertake the project."

The 2012 Woolworths Agricultural Business Scholarships

Together with the University of Western Sydney and the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, Woolworths is giving young Australians the opportunity to learn from some of the country's leading business experts through the Woolworths Agricultural Business Scholarships.

It's all part of our commitment to building leadership capacity in Agriculture.

Applications for 2012 scholarships will open in May and more information will be available at woolworths.com.au



Roper River rangers in control

IT HAS been 18 years since the Roper River Landcare Group (RRLG) formed, and it has ticked off a lot of projects and development in its time.

It began in a bid to battle a Parkinsonia infestation and has grown to adopt more Weeds of National Significance projects, track and fence line erosion control, feral animal control and fire planning.

It also tackles tourism impacts and water quality, helps maintain barramundi stocks, reduces litter and gets local children involved in the Landcare movement.

Thirty-two pastoralists and indigenous group members carry out these works spanning the 81,800 square kilometre Roper River catchment.

Under the RRLG's stock exclusion fencing strategy, more than 41,000 hectares of riparian zones have been fenced off to control feral animals and protect land.

In 2010 and 2011, the group's Manggarayi Indigenous Rangers conducted weed control over 16,500 hectares, targeting Mesquite, Prickly Acacia, Lantana, Chinee Apple and Bellyache Bush.

At the end of the wet season in the coming months, the group will begin to plan controlled burning and fire management.

Of the group's scope, three rangers and a supervisor from the Jilkminggan community on the Mangarrayi Aboriginal Land Trust (Elsey Station) span 5700 square kilometres.

They carry out land management practices observing traditional and contemporary knowledge and practices to protect biodiversity.

The rangers record areas of cultural



ABOVE: Rangers controlling Weed of National Significance Parkinsonia. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Jilkminggan children line up with Green Corps volunteers. **RIGHT:** The group records storylines and history.



significance and are currently undertaking a cultural mapping project to develop a storyline hoped to be illustrated on a five-metre long map.

The Northern Land Council has supported the project.

Building capacity for employment and land stewardship through knowledge and training are two key focuses of the ranger initiative.

"I think the main thing is there's not a lot of chance of employment, so it's to be able to give someone employment. And it gives them a bit of pride," RRLG facilitator Ian Rowbottom said.

The project also aims to secure land management contracts in NT Government, Parks and Wildlife, and local mines for the ranger group to move towards self-sufficiency.

The Manggarayi Indigenous Rangers are funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative.

Australian Government funding has also facilitated the purchase of essential equipment including quad bikes and a purpose-built boat to carry them, spray units, a Quik Spray unit, and a Toyota Troop Carrier.

"We've been pretty lucky with

CFOC funding," Mr Rowbottom said.

"It's given us equipment to be able to do the job we're doing. There is a lot of work in pretty hard to get to channels."

The RRLG is also supported through funding by Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) to deliver baseline activities to achieve on-ground outcomes from weed control to increasing land manager skills.

The group is currently reviewing its Roper River Catchment Natural Resource Management Plan to

ensure it ties in with the TNRM Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan 2010-2015.

Now, RRLG is also helping TNRM with voluntary conservation agreements.

Mr Rowbottom has been with the Roper River group for seven years.

He was first attracted to the position as a way to return to the Elsey Station community where he used to work as an overseer.

He said working on important sustainability projects alongside friends was a rewarding undertaking.

New Aboriginal Landcare group to protect, beautify Moree

FOR the first time in more than 10 years, a new Aboriginal Landcare group has been established in the Border Rivers and Gwydir region.

The Moree Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) has just registered with Landcare Australia, and planning is now underway for tree planting projects and other landcare activities.

"There's a natural fit between Landcare and Land Council groups," said Moree LALC chief executive Meryl Dillon.

"We have the same concerns about the protection of land and cultural heritage, so it's really an easy choice for Aboriginal people to get involved in Landcare."

Ms Dillon decided to pursue the

registration after attending a workshop in Moree aimed at engaging Aboriginal people in Landcare.

The workshop was organised by Liz Taylor, Aboriginal Liaison Officer with the Border Rivers – Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, and Sally Dickinson, Regional Landcare Facilitator with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association.

"The great thing about Landcare is that it can involve everyone from commercial farmers and landholders on lifestyle blocks through to the great work of the indigenous community," Ms Dickinson said.

There are currently 64 Aboriginal Landcare Groups in NSW, but the new Moree organisation is the only Indigenous Landcare Group in the

Border Rivers, Gwydir and Namoi regions.

Liz Taylor understands there was an Aboriginal Landcare group operating in Boggabilla over a decade ago but that organisation is no longer active.

The establishment of a new Aboriginal Landcare Group in Moree is very welcome.

"Landcare is a great way for Aboriginal people to preserve strong links with traditional country, and gives urban based families a great opportunity to take part in the practical management of land owned by Indigenous organisations," she said.

The Moree LALC owns about 5000 hectares of rural property, as well as

blocks of land scattered throughout the township, including an area on the river near the local golf course, and in the Stanley Village and Mehi Crescent residential areas.

Land Council chairman Carl McGrady said the council's urban landholdings would be the initial focus of the new Landcare group.

"We'd like to start off with a native tree planting project to create more shade and shelter in residential areas," he said.

"We also want to protect patches of remnant vegetation and encourage native birds and animals to become part of the landscape in town."

"Essentially, we want to make these areas into nicer places for the whole community to enjoy."

"Taking on projects in town also makes our Landcare work more visible to the general public and will hopefully increase awareness of the importance of caring for our country."

The Land Council Landcare Group is also talking to the Moree Shire Council about increasing appropriate tree plantings to provide more street shade in summer and to make the urban environment more visually attractive.

The Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority is looking forward to working with the new Landcare Group to protect and enhance local Aboriginal land assets in a partnership that will benefit the community as a whole.



Proud supporters of Coastcare

Coastcare is Australia's largest coastal community volunteer network and is engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at preserving and protecting our fragile coastal environment.

Club Marine is proud of its ongoing partnership with Coastcare to provide financial support and insurance cover for projects around Australia.

www.clubmarine.com.au



Ghost net clean up in Northern Territory waters

A 500 KILOGRAM "ghost net" retrieved off a reef at Cobourg Peninsula was one of 1042 untethered nets found in waters off the Northern Territory in 2011.

The deadly net was discovered snagged on a reef 50 metres offshore from Smith Point by Parks and Wildlife rangers.

GhostNets Australia Project Officer Grace Heathcote was in Darwin to give an update on ghost nets found off northern waters at the Territory Natural Resource Management and Landcare Forum on October 13.

The recent ghost net clean up is only one of hundreds performed by indigenous sea rangers, NT Fisheries, and Parks and Wildlife rangers across 1500 kilometres of coastline, and was significant considering the average size ghost net is less than 50 kilograms.

More than 20 indigenous ranger groups constantly patrol the north Australian coastline and retrieve the deadly ghost nets which kill turtles, sharks, fish, dugong and even crocodiles that become entangled as the nets are carried by sea currents from nearby fishing grounds.

An estimated 90 per cent of ghost nets come from international waters.

GhostNets Australia is funded by the Federal Government's Caring For our Country program and administered by the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group.

Grace Heathcote's position is hosted by Territory Natural Resource Management.

Ms Heathcote said the Gumatj Marthakal Rangers at Elcho Island retrieved 48 tonnes of ghost nets in one big clean up in 2010, with the nets found mainly around the Wessel Islands off the Arnhem Land Coast.

A total of 6035 ghost nets were found off northern waters between the Torres Strait in

Queensland and the Northern Territory's Top End between 2004 and 2009.

Ms Heathcote warns that ghost nets have a deadly, strangling effect on marine life.

"Ghost nets don't just kill marine creatures, if they settle on a coral reef they can smother the coral and can be a safety hazard for boats," she said.

"We need to make more people aware of it so they know who to report to if they see a ghost net in the ocean."

The forum showcased natural resource management projects from across the Northern Territory including in local communities, against emerging threats and in indigenous land management.

Other project topics in the Top End included a fight against Mimosa weed, saving an ancient language of the Crocodile Islands, storybooks to fight feral cats and a dream time animation tool for natural resource management.

Territory Natural Resource Management Executive Officer Karen May said the forum was an excellent opportunity for Territorians involved in natural resource management to catch up with their counterparts from across the Territory.

"The Territory National Resource Management and Landcare Forum brings people from all over the Territory and from a diverse range of projects together to share stories and learn from one another and we are very proud to host such an event," Ms May said.

RIGHT: Dhimurru Rangers retrieve ghost net in Arnhem Land.

Photo: Jane Dermer.
Reproduced with permission from Dhimurru Rangers.



Tackling the plan to monitor, protect 'Turtles in Trouble'

THE thick adult shells of marine turtles are of little use during the most dangerous time in their lives – when they are growing in eggs buried on a beach, and the hatchlings' hazardous journey between egg and sea.

And a persistent predator of eggs and hatchling turtles is a familiar villain to farmers: the fox, who learns to dig up eggs and passes on the technique to the next generation.

Coolum District Coast Care Group

(CDCCG) has been tackling the fox problem in a Caring for Our Country program "Turtles in Trouble: Monitoring and working to protect endangered marine turtle species from the Maroochy River to Sunshine Beach, Sunshine Coast".

So far, predation of nests on Coolum Coast Care's beaches has not been a major concern.

However, turtle monitoring groups to the south of the group have real problems.

Part of the Coolum program

involves a detailed fox eradication program in collaboration with the Sunshine Coast Council and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

The initial phase of this program was to identify fox dens in the dunes.

CDCCG engaged a contractor, who located dens and recorded their position using a GPS.

Dens were tagged as either 'active' or 'inactive'.

One of the outcomes of the search

was to show there are no ready indicators as to where dens might be found, although access to fresh water was seen as important.

It also seems that dens are more likely to be found in proximity to a lot of human traffic.

In one case, a den was found under a boardwalk that carries a lot of people daily.

Another was just outside the boundary fence of a property.

The contractor also discovered evidence of predation of other

fauna, like quail and rail, in the immediate vicinity of a den.

Once the searching phase was complete, the information was passed onto the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, who is responsible for the eradication program.

One of the outcomes of this collaborative approach is there is a willingness by all parties to embrace an on-going program of fox abatement over a number of years.

QPWS are keen to follow a similar model within National Parks.

The National Landcare Conference & 2012 National Landcare Awards

The National Landcare Conference will be held this year at the Parkside Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour in Sydney from September 3rd to 5th.

The 2012 National Landcare Awards Gala Dinner will be held at the Darling Harbour Parkside Convention Centre Ballroom on September 4th.

More information about these events and how you can get involved will be announced shortly on the Landcare Australia website. www.landcareonline.com.au



CARING
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Ocean is key to sustainability

FIshing is the last surviving form of hunter-gatherer food production, totally dependent on wild-caught fish – and at the same time, fishing's sustainability is highly dependent on good agricultural management.

How so? Because, Brad Warren explains, the interface between land and sea is a vital zone for fisheries.

What is washed from land to sea has implications right through the marine food chain.

Mr Warren is executive chair of OceanWatch, a not-for-profit organisation financially supported by its fishing industry members to advance sustainability in seafood production.

OceanWatch's flagship program, SeaNet, employs extension specialists to take its messages of sustainability and stewardship to the seafood industry – and to stakeholders on land.

"We're building awareness that none of us live in isolation from the natural environment," Mr Warren said.

That means working with Landcare and other natural resource management groups in important catchments to remind landholders even activities far from the ocean can impact livelihoods of other primary producers.

"In the past, Landcare has focused on matters of particular interest to farmers," Mr Warren said.

"But when you take that idea further, it has to be also about minimising the impacts of farming downstream."

"We not only go to farms on an educational basis; we run some small devolved grant programs where we have been able to get some riparian areas fenced off, to keep cattle away from streams and allow riparian vegetation to regenerate."

Other projects have involved work with dairy farms to capture shed effluent and re-use it on the farm before it reaches waterways.

When fishers and farmers get together, they discover a lot in common as producers of food, Mr Warren observed.

But while farmers readily get up in arms about issues like coal seam gas, and the possibility that it will interfere with their capability to produce food, they seldom give thought to the



OceanWatchers Darren Reynolds and Zac Jordan inspect the four-inch catch

fact that their own activities can have drastic effects on estuaries and reefs, and the ability of the fishing industry to produce food.

The pressure to produce food for a growing global population has the potential to throw in some additional hazards for the seafood sector, Mr Warren said.

"We need to be careful while we are exploring different ways to produce food on land, we don't trash fishing," he said.

"One of the problems in Western society is we have used the interface between land and water as a political boundary.

"A river may be the border between two properties or two States."

"These are very dynamic environments."

"They need space to grow and recede over time, but unfortunately we've degraded a lot of areas with erosion control works or similar projects to try



OceanWatchers repair the conventional net.

and keep these dynamic places static.

"We end up damaging the natural processes fisheries depend on."

OceanWatch is funded through a levy on fish sold through Sydney Fish Market, while SeaNet shares in some

of the Federal natural resource funding that supports Landcare.

Mr Warren said for every dollar made through the levy, OceanWatch is estimated to return \$30 in value to the seafood industry.

Keeping fish safe

WHEN primary producers realise preserving the integrity of natural systems is in their own interest, great things can happen, as SeaNet's beach haul program demonstrates.

NSW SeaNet extension officer Michael Woode said little changed regarding the size of mesh nets used by commercial beach haul fishermen from the late 1800s, when reports from Botany Bay noted the nets were catching too many juvenile fish.

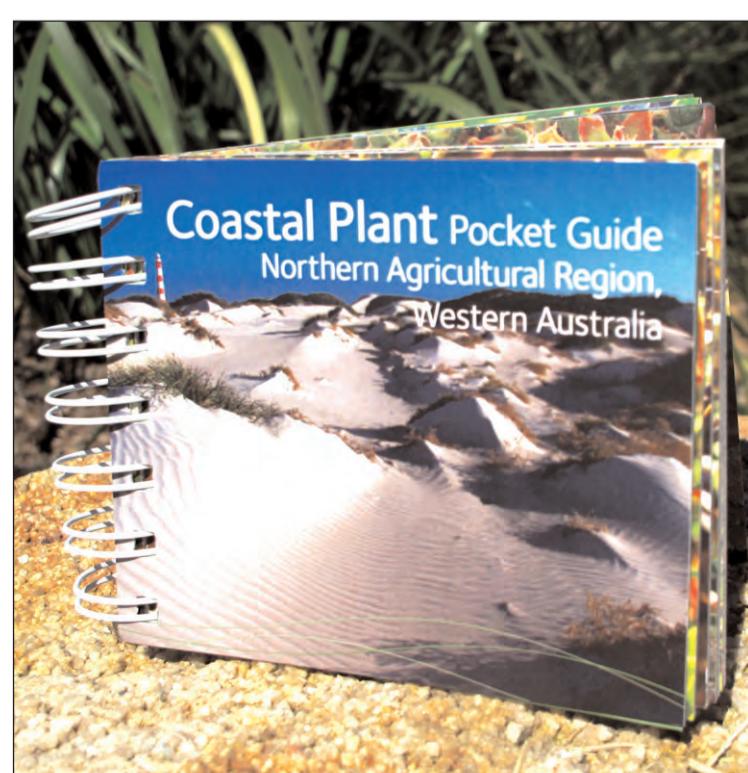
In 2008, there were less fish in the sea, and the issue of catching juvenile fish had assumed much greater importance.

Mr Woode said a SeaNet program initiated by commercial fishers decided to take a hard look at the juvenile catch of species like brim, tarwhine and blackfish, and address the problem – which involved a study of fish morphology versus mesh size, as well as some side-by-side testing of the new mesh against the traditional mesh at times of the year when a big juvenile catch was likely.

The results were stark, Mr Woode said.

In one place, more than three quarters of the brim taken with traditional mesh were under the legal minimum size, but 89 per cent of the fish caught in the new mesh at the same spot were legal.

This industry-driven project resulted in a legislative amendment to official beach haul net sizes, Mr Woode reported – and ultimately, a lot more profitable fish available to beach haul fishers.



Proactive pocket protection guide

ALL action is proactive, and being proactive can be infectious.

That principle is demonstrated by the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management's Coastal Community Engagement Program, supported by Gold Coast City Council.

Supporters of the BeachCare and CoastEd Programs are working along 42km of coastline, visiting libraries, community groups, schools and surf life saving clubs; facilitating dune care activities, litter pickups and auditing; talking to people and recruiting new "coastcarers".

Much of this activity has been driven by a single initiative; pocket-sized coastal plant booklets developed by Griffith Centre for Coastal Management through funding from EnviroFund.

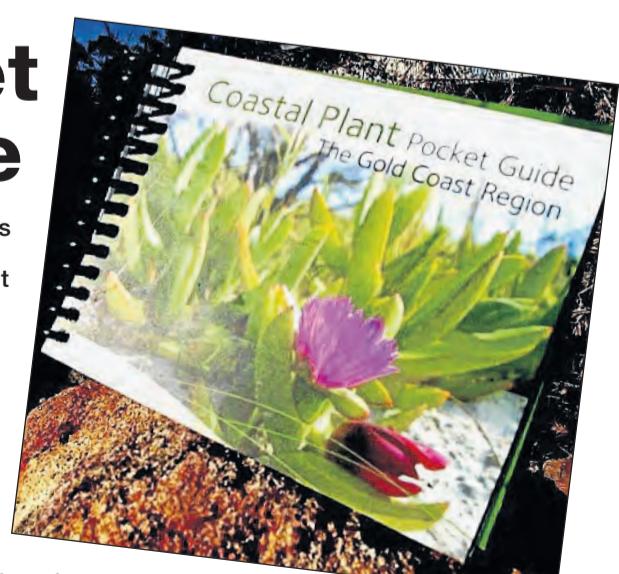
Designed to be slipped into

pockets, the booklets have now gone through multiple print runs and can be bought for just \$10.

As a result, there are now many more budding dune biologists in the semi-urban coastal landscape of the Gold Coast.

The idea has made its way to Western Australia, where in partnership with the Griffith Centre, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council produced their own version to raise awareness of the region's natural resources.

A simple idea, the pocket guide now spans the continent.



To find out how your coastal patch can get people engaged with their coastal environment along the principles of K.I.S.S. (keep it simple and sweet) contact Griffith Centre for Coastal Management on 07 5552 8506 or visit www.griffith.edu.au/coastal-management.



In Brief

Beautiful partnership:

Landcare Australia and Keep Australia Beautiful in Western Australia have entered into a project partnership which will see the organisations cross promoting each other's activities and programs.

Both Keep Australia Beautiful WA and Landcare Australia share the objective of working towards a more sustainable environment and a partnership to cross promote programs makes sense for each organisation to raise awareness of the work it is doing.

This partnership will add value to existing programs, build brand awareness and bring information to increased networks of Australians who are enhancing and preserving the environment.

It is hoped that the partnership will create opportunities for these networks and help build awareness of environmental issues in the broader public sphere.

Protected species:

Nominations are invited for the assessment period starting October 1, 2012, for any species, ecological communities or key threatening processes to be considered for listing under national environment law.

Threatened species and ecological communities listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 are protected as matters of national environmental significance.

The conservation theme for this assessment period is corridors and connecting habitats (including freshwater habitats).

Nominations consistent with this conservation theme are encouraged, but nominations outside the theme will also be considered.

Nominations close at 5pm on Thursday March 22, 2012, and should be submitted in the required format either electronically (preferred), or in hard copy with an accompanying electronic submission on CD.

Further information, including the nomination form and details of the nomination process and guidelines is available online at www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations

Email epbc.nominations@environment.gov.au or mail The Director, Species Listing Section, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, GPO Box 787, Canberra, ACT 2601.

Banding for better outcomes

LEADING environmental non-profit organisations Greening Australia and Landcare Australia have recently signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on projects and programs that can be delivered more effectively in partnership between both organisations.

Both will apply their extensive expertise and experience to determine appropriate opportunities to work collaboratively, which could potentially include opportunities under the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) and the Land Sector Package of the Clean Energy Future Plan, among others.

Greening Australia and Landcare Australia will develop joint submissions and support material to demonstrate their skills and the benefits of partnering with both organisations to deliver key government programs and

strong environmental outcomes.

Any work will be undertaken with full respect of the skills and intellectual property of both bodies.

Landcare Australia chief executive officer Heather Campbell welcomed the agreement as an exciting step towards working with another key player in the environmental non-profit space.

"At Landcare Australia, we recognise Greening Australia's impressive 30-year track record of focusing on community-led sustainable productive farming, environmental management and biodiversity and welcome this opportunity to work together in a way that is sure to be of benefit to sustainable land management in Australia," she said.

Greening Australia chief executive officer Brendan Foran also believed

the organisations coming together could make a bigger difference with regard to relevant government programs, than working separately.

"With federal government programs such as the CFI being introduced, it just makes sense for Greening Australia to partner with Landcare Australia," he said.

"Between the two organisations we have 50 years of combined experience supporting the Landcare movement.

"By working together, landholders will have the benefit of both of our dedicated teams working towards the common goal of helping them adapt to a rapidly changing natural resource management sector."

Greening Australia employs 250 staff across every State and Territory in Australia and has previously delivered many programs in partnership with

the Australian government, including Bushcare Support, a flagship program of the Natural Heritage Trust.

The organisation also runs national training programs including LEAP and Green Corps.

Landcare Australia is contracted by the Australian government to run the State and National Landcare Awards, Landcare Week and other national awareness-raising campaigns.

It also manages a number of corporate partnerships which provide funding and resources across the Landcare and Coastcare movements.

Both organisations welcome the appointment of the new Land Sector Advisory Board and look forward to working together to maximise efficiencies and ensure the greatest possible outcomes for landholders and the environment are delivered.



Gully improves water and soil at Crooble

"BULLALA" is an Aboriginal word meaning "two" – a fitting property name for Crooble, NSW, landholders Tom and Belinda Ledingham who have been working hard to improve the natural resources on their property over the past eight years.

A rock flume to reduce soil erosion has been built along a gully running through "Bullala", and has delivered the results the Ledinghams were looking for.

The flume uses large granite boulders to fill the most vulnerable point of the gully, which has prevented sediment

and excess nutrients from running into nearby Mosquito Creek.

Not only has this improved water quality in Mosquito Creek but has also ensured that valuable top soil is retained.

Around this site, 24 hectares of land has been fenced off to improve the riparian vegetation and water quality through extensive earthworks.

The gully is now well grassed with no evidence of soil erosion and there has been a vast improvement in water quality.

With the support of the Border

Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Tom is also in the process of fencing off 39ha of "Bullala" to manage a box gum grassy woodland, an iconic part of the eastern Australian landscape which is also a nationally listed threatened ecological community.

After fencing off the woodlands, the native grass cover will be improved through a grazing management regime to improve soil condition in this sensitive landscape.

These woodlands are dominated by white box (Eucalyptus albens), yellow

box (E. melliodora), Blakely's red gum (E. blakelyi) and (in the Nandewar Bioregion) coastal grey box or inland grey box (E. moluccana or E. macrocarpa).

This threatened ecological community supports more than 400 plant species, and animals such as squirrel gliders, goannas, regent honeyeaters, bush stone curlews and many more.

The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA has supported these projects through funding provided by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country initiative and the NSW Government.

Landcare Australia Limited – What is our role?

We are the official not-for-profit organisation, owners of the trademarks and directly responsible for the promotion and marketing of the Landcare, Coastcare and Junior Landcare volunteer network. We develop innovative campaigns that highlight the importance of caring for our natural environment and deliver our message through a comprehensive network of media avenues.

We are also tasked with establishing strategic partnerships with some of Australia's leading companies. Over the last 20 years we have developed a niche for brokering unique partnerships. Each partnership balances the needs and concerns of corporate, government and community

stakeholders to deliver meaningful environmental and sustainable agricultural projects. These partnerships are an invaluable contribution to the Landcare movement and help us distribute many millions of dollars worth of funding and in-kind support to Landcare groups and farmers each year.

Landcare Australia would like to thank all groups who have helped us achieve these outstanding results. We encourage all Landcarers to continue in their efforts as we commit to strengthening the Landcare community through ongoing promotional and financial support.

For more information about Landcare Australia please visit www.landcareonline.com.au



Landcare ambassador, Beau Walker with Landcare Australia Team: Odessa O'Brien, Heather Campbell (CEO) and Trish O'Gorman at the launch of the Be Natural Landcare grants program, August 2011.

The #hashtag breaking bush boundaries

LIVING in the Australian bush provides luxury levels of space and quiet but it also has a less desirable quality, that of isolation.

Now the famed isolation of the bush lifestyle is breaking down, thanks to the internet and its unexpected spawning of social media.

For the first time, a chat with friends or like-minded people – or, if you prefer, an argument with your foes – no longer requires you to all be physically at the same place.

For Twitterers or Facebookers, only the words and ideas matter.

Location is irrelevant.

It doesn't matter whether a tweet is tapped out in a cafe in Paris or London, or a farmhouse in Tasmania, or from a tractor in Queensland.

Which means suddenly, people who felt themselves geographically stranded outside the mainstream currents of society are mid-stream, and swimming hard, all without leaving the bush.

For Landcare, a social movement constantly bumping up against the tyranny of distance, social media is a

"It's a way for the general public – someone like me – to ask a question and find out how things work," said Canberra based #agchatoz co-founder Sam Livingstone.

"I was part of a conversation today where someone from a sheep dairy was asking questions about hormone-free meat.

"We had Richard Gunner (@Richard_Gunner, an independent South Australian butcher who sells hormone-free meat) and David Stoate (@dstoate, a cattle producer from the Kimberley region of northern WA) come in with their experience, giving suggestions about what she might consider and research – that's so much better than just swallowing the stuff that the supermarkets spit out."

Farmers are also using social media to communicate with other farmers, breaking out of the convention of socialising with farmers in their own district and conducting conversations that over the years fall into well-worn ruts.

"Farmers are not just about things

If the only thing that someone takes away from #agchatoz is to think about how sustainable their practices are, I think that's a win

– Sam Livingstone

on the farm, but about what's happening in their lives generally," Mr Livingstone said.

Often, a picture is worth much more than 140 characters – to describe the failure of a harvest, for instance, or its success.

The #agchatoz hashtag brings together these varied conversations via the virtual meeting place of Twitter every Tuesday night from 8pm to 10pm.

A pre-written set of questions is posted via Twitter and the Agchatoz Facebook page.

All posts include the #agchatoz hashtag to keep tweets together, and the moderators guide the conversation using the questions as a template.

Depending on the topic, the conversation can grow robust, with sometimes more than 100 people actively participating.

"We've had some really big chats on issues like live export and genetic modification," Mr Livingstone said.

"We thought those chats would be quite unpleasant, to be honest.

"Some people on the GM chat tried to start something. They weren't campaigners; they were angry people who had been told something and they blindly believed that.

reported from his tractor cab.

Sitting in a tractor cab is a shared experience for many of the developed world's farmers, and it's become an experience shared thanks to Mr Taylor's invention of the Twitter hashtag #tweetfromthetractorcab.

Farmers post pictures of the view from their grimy windows, comments on harvest or cricket scores to while away the long hours of auto-guided tillage or sowing.

Mr Taylor, like many, began his social media career on Facebook, where he joined in chats with distant friends.

While Facebook excels at linking friends, Mr Taylor found

that Twitter, which he discovered about 12 months ago, excels at linking people with shared interests.

In his case, that obviously means other farmers, but it has grown to cover those with an interest in farming.

"I've been talking with people who have nothing to do with agriculture, and it's been so educational to tell our story," he said.

"Farmers need to tell their stories a lot more."

Mr Taylor will be investigating how this can be ramped up as part of the 2012 GrainGrowers Australian Future Grain Leaders Program.

"If the only thing that someone takes away from #agchatoz is to think about how sustainable their practices are, I think that's a win."

Sometimes, Mr Livingstone said, he hears farmers say that getting to grips with social media is all too complicated but "if you're sitting on a machine worth half a million dollars, using GPS to navigate, that argument becomes a bit redundant."



From the tractor cab to the world

FROM his tractor cab on the family farm "Broadlea", near Warra, on Queensland's Darling Downs, 36-year-old Brendan Taylor has a view that covers the world.

The view is of his smartphone and his Twitter feed, through which he talks to connected farmers across Australia and the United States – in fact, wherever they are on Twitter.

Suddenly, Warra and the Taylors' 800-hectare farm isn't so out of the way anymore.

"The stuff I've learned about how people farm in other parts of the world in 12 months on Twitter is incredible," Mr Taylor

reported from his tractor cab.

Sitting in a tractor cab is a shared experience for many of the developed world's farmers, and it's become an experience shared thanks to Mr Taylor's invention of the Twitter hashtag #tweetfromthetractorcab.

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Perfect Patch of Green

Turf Australia is committed to making a positive difference to the environment for schools and youth groups.

Landcare Australia and Turf Australia will launch the Junior Landcare Perfect Patch of Green program this May. The program will give schools and youth groups across Australia the opportunity to win a free green makeover by laying real turf in their recreation area.

For more information about the Turf Australia Perfect Patch of Green program visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au



Celebrating farming for the future

A PHONE call to their local Catchment Management Authority became an important step in the rewarding changes Ross and Dimity Thompson made to the management of their farm near Bathurst, NSW.

The Thompsons operate a seed-stock beef cattle business on "Goonamurrah", a 951-hectare family property, near Bathurst.

They are an example of the farmers that the Central West Catchment Management Authority (CMA) wants to celebrate during the Australian Year of the Farmer.

Mr Thompson decided he needed to change his land management practices to improve the soils on his fragile Bathurst granite landscape.

After undertaking training in holistic farming he adopted new grazing techniques to help revegetate and increase ground cover across his property.

In the past five years, Mr Thompson has developed what he believes is a sustainable farming system delivering improvements in both the health of the land and water quality.

"I made one call to the CMA, which was the catalyst for a total change in our approach to the farming business

and land care," Mr Thompson said.

"I have received priceless, ongoing technical advice and support from Clayton Miller from the CMA, which has helped us to implement successful on-ground projects to tackle some serious environmental concerns.

"We have established perennial pastures, revegetated denuded areas, installed gully control structures, implemented a reticulated water system and undertaken a fencing program that recognises the capability of the land.

"These projects over time have increased habitat for wildlife, improved water quality and increased ground cover and now we are seeing a positive production impact through improved carrying capacity.

"Dimity and I feel very fortunate to be the custodians of a lovely piece of land and everything we do has a strong environmental focus.

"We are dedicated to landcare farming practices, learning from others and sharing our knowledge and achievements.

"This will help to ensure a sustainable and viable future not only for our farming business but for future generations to follow."

The adoption of sound land man-



The Thompson family: Ross, Dimity, Baby Twiggy, Olivia and Millie Thompson and Central West CMA's Clayton Miller on their Bathurst property.

agement practices and the willingness to change has reaped physical rewards and numerous accolades for Ross and Dimity.

In 2011 they were recognised for their innovative environmental rejuvenation work through the Central West CMA Champions of the Catchment Award for Primary Producers and Sustainable Farming Practices. At the Carbon Farming conference in Dubbo during September they were also announced as

the 2011 Carbon Cocky award winners for the Tablelands.

On the State platform at the recent NSW Landcare Forum and Awards in Parkes they were thrilled to be announced runner-up in the State Primary Producer Landcare Award.

The Central West Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is looking forward to working closely with Landcare in 2012 to celebrate Australian Year of the Farmer and recognise the fine efforts of our sustainable farmers.

Ross and Dimity Thompson are a great example of a Central West farming family caring for their land while increasing their production and profitability.

■ For more information on the Thompsons' farm and other examples of sustainable farming in the Central West or to find out more about what the CMA and Landcare are doing for the Year of the Farmer visit www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au

Landcare gets 'real' with social media



Ag Ex Social Media Project

by Michael Richards

Our first video was produced by ABC Open with Northern Sustainable Soils Chair and Agronomist Chris Davey. Chris and Northern Yorke Peninsula farmers are evaluating the impact from spreading a 50 mm thick layer of chaff material on transient salinity patches. The protective layer of fine chaff rapidly builds organic matter and reduces evaporation. Soil cover has improved & yields have increased by over 300% in dry years and 150% in wetter years on what were previously bare saline areas.

more:

opportunities for RLFs is a trial project allowing them to share the stories of Landcare in their area through electronic postcards on The PlaceStories program (www.placestories.com).

"Using a photo of a project and 100 words, RLFs are providing a snapshot of projects that can help motivate and inspire volunteers and groups many hundreds of kilometres away, or simply down the road."

The RLF postcard project began as part of a workshop with the RLFs

from across the country in November 2011, which not only provided an introduction to social media, but also linked this with the importance of telling the Landcare story.

The RLFs and their stories are as diverse as the communities they work in; from Thursday Island in the north, to Tasmania in the south, and the Gascoyne in the west.

While these Landcare social media stories by the RLFs are interesting on their own, when they are combined on a site like this, they are a great visual demonstration about the work that Landcare does and how social media can be harnessed to spread the message.

This project has only been underway for just over two months and already there are over 70 stories on the site.

To view the stories so far go to landcarefacilitator.com.au and click on the RLF Social Media Project picture to link through to all of the stories.

Some great examples of the stories being featured so far include:

- "Ag Ex Social Media Project" (pictured) by Michael Richards (Yorke Peninsula SA)
- "Splendour in the Grass" by Ashley Bevan (Bendigo Victoria) – about farmers attending courses in grass identification and management
- "We've Wiped Out Entire Species Before – we can do it again" by Adrian James from Northern Tasmania – about eradicating Serrated Tussock
- "Farming Apps for Smartphones" by Leighton Pearce (Berri, SA)



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Landcare in Focus is proudly supported by the Australian Government Caring for our Country program and published by Landcare Australia Limited.

For more information or to submit an article, email enquiries@landcareaustralia.com.au.

Please note that due to space restrictions we cannot guarantee that all submissions will be included. All submissions must adhere to the following guidelines and include:

- One article of no more than 300 to 600 words saved as a Microsoft Word document or a PDF.
- No more than 2 to 3 high resolution (must be at least 1MB in size) images that clearly illustrate the accompanying article.
- Full captions for each attached image that explain who is in the photos and/or what they illustrate. Please ensure we have permission to use these photos in Landcare In Focus from any people featured in them
- Contact information for more information if required
- The publication and submission dates for 2012 are:

Submissions
April 6
July 6
October 5

Publication
May 3
August 2
November 1

Carbon boost for jobs, production

After applying more than five years of effort to a national plan to cut carbon pollution, one national group is welcoming a comprehensive land sector carbon offset scheme.

Greening Australia's national carbon manager Michael Rooney has participated at both the policy and implementation end of the "ambitious" Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI), which he said is a "once in a generation opportunity" across all land sectors.

During a break from Greening Australia, Mr Rooney joined the government team responsible for developing the CFI framework and the first four offset methodologies over a 12-month period.

"For me, it was a unique opportunity. There was an obvious need for a policy to be developed and I was in a strong position to apply my practical background to the process," Mr Rooney said.

"Coming from Greening Australia, I was ideally placed to lead the development of a methodology for environmental plantings."

Under the model-based methodology, credits can be issued for permanent environmental reforestation.

In formulating the scheme, Mr Rooney and his government colleagues worked within certain parameters to meet national and international obligations.

"There are a large number of rules that need to be considered in order to ensure consistency with these obligations, as well as ensure the integrity of the scheme," Mr Rooney said.

"Importantly, these rules need to translate to practical on-ground outcomes."

These rules include the permanence of carbon storage and ensuring activity is additional to what would have happened anyway.

Methodologies also need to be comprehensive and verifiable, ensuring all emissions and all abatement is accounted for.

"So it was a quite a complex process to go through, with both policy and practical considerations," Mr Rooney said.

Streamlining the scheme and making it easy to use was a major part of planning.

"We set about writing the methodology based on the national carbon accounting system which is the main system the government uses to account for changes to national forest carbon stores," Mr Rooney said.

The model-based approach aims to enable smaller-scale projects to participate in the scheme without the ongoing need for on-ground monitoring and auditing.

There is still a lot of work to be done.

"Because this particular method is based on a modelling approach, there is need for continuous improvement," Mr Rooney said.

Work is being done on methods to feed data from direct sampling back through the model, creating a continuous improvement system.

For now, the CFI opens up a range of opportunities across the country, Mr Rooney said.

Sequestering carbon from native

planting and seeding and facilitating regrowth from existing seedbanks present big opportunities.

There is a whole range of other eligible activities offering opportunities for job seekers in the land sector.

Mr Rooney said the CFI could enable Greening Australia to capitalise on its mission and implement visionary landscape-scale projects.

"It's very rewarding for us to see a new market-based funding mechanism be introduced to support the outcomes we have been working towards for 30 years," he said.

The CFI is expected to deliver flow-on benefits to many facets of the economy through improved productivity gains and employment opportunities.

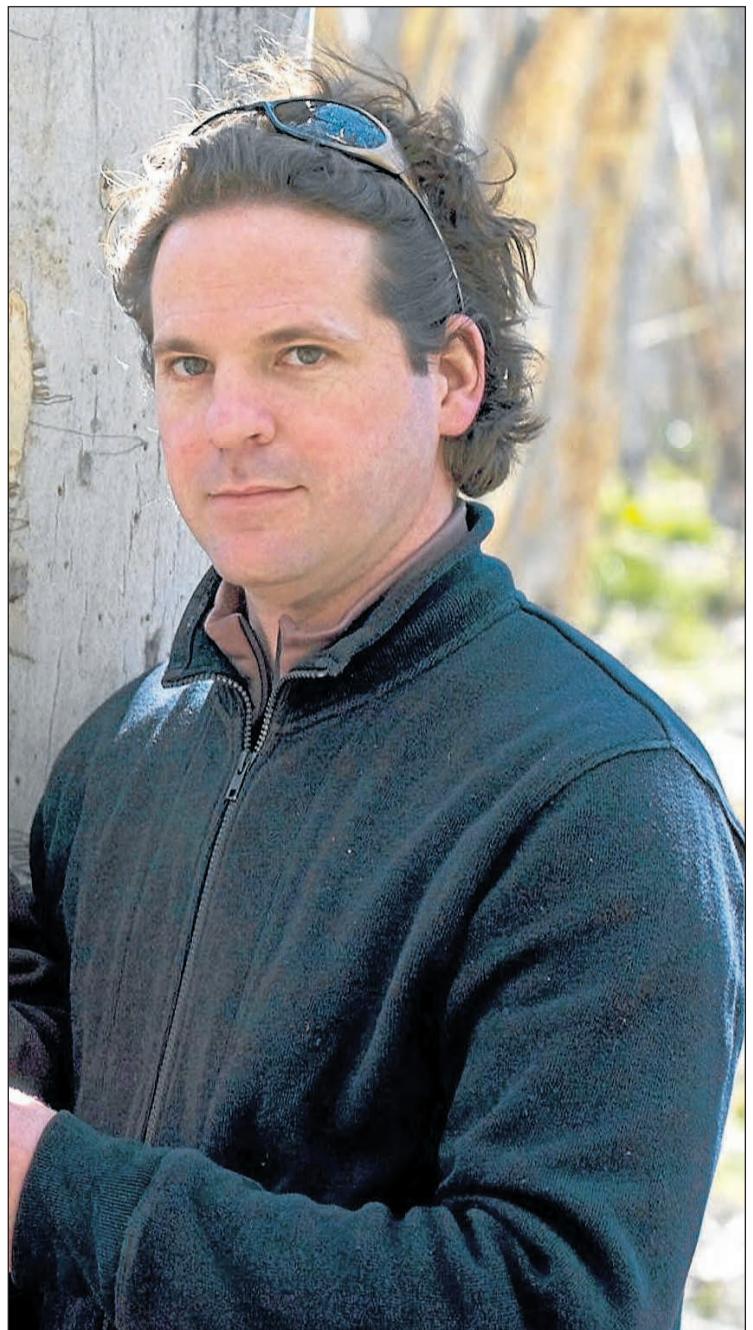
"This is one of more ambitious schemes in world in terms of land-based activities," Mr Rooney said.

The work is ongoing, with the understanding a number of rules and regulation are still evolving, which Mr Rooney hopes to see clarified in the coming months.

While this work is being completed, organisations such as Greening Australia are starting to work seriously on developing and implementing projects.

With the policy largely in place for developing methodologies, the next big challenge is building projects that meet these rules, while being able to generate financial return for invested capital.

"It's a stimulating work environment and brings with it a range of issues that need to be solved – very much in keeping with working in Australia's challenging landscape," Mr Rooney said.



Greening Australia's national carbon manager Michael Rooney was part of the government team responsible for developing the Carbon Farming Initiative framework, which he says will create a range of economical opportunities.

Equipping landowners to adapt to changing climate

MUCH has been said by farmers of the fallibility of weathermen, but research scientists at 25 locations across Australia are working co-operatively to take the guesswork out of adapting to changing seasonal conditions.

Australia's Farming Future is an Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry initiative, helping equip primary producers to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate through a number of research projects.

One project funded through the government's Climate Change Research Program, has scientists and extension experts working from Mt

Barker in Western Australia through to Cootamundra in NSW to develop practical on-farm strategies that can be implemented as climate patterns change across the country.

The Southern Livestock Adaptation Program is combining global circulation models and local weather data to refine the broad-brush climate predictions to be applicable at a regional and business level.

The program is coordinated by Meat and Livestock Australia and involves CSIRO, the University of Melbourne, State departments, Dairy Australia and Australian Wool Innovation.

National co-ordinator Russell

Pattinson said the program has found most future climate scenarios predict a shorter growing season and that some changes to farm management practices may be needed to adjust.

"The models show a range of possible scenarios including a tendency towards shorter growing seasons in spring, higher temperatures, higher carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels and possibly lower rainfall."

Mr Pattinson said producers wouldn't rush out and adopt new strategies immediately, but the data generated from the models arms primary producers with the information they need to deal with what the future holds.

The research also showed that some of the adaptations that may be beneficial in the future were actually worth pursuing right now.

"Whether it's changing the time of your lambing or calving or altering pasture species, introducing confinement feeding or concentrating on genetic improvement, this program identifies the management strategies that could counter the impacts of shorter growing seasons," he said.

"There is no indication from any of the models that changing entire enterprises is going to be a fundamentally sensible thing to do in the future.

"There is no one-size-fits-all approach – different strategies will have different effects in different areas.

"What we've been able to show is that in a number of areas, 2030 won't be too dissimilar from what people have experienced in the past decade in terms of climate, but other impacts on farm gross margins and equity levels must be considered."

■ For further information on any of the projects funded under Australia's Farming Future contact the Australia's Farming Future Hotline 1800 638 746 or www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/ccrp



Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grants Now Open

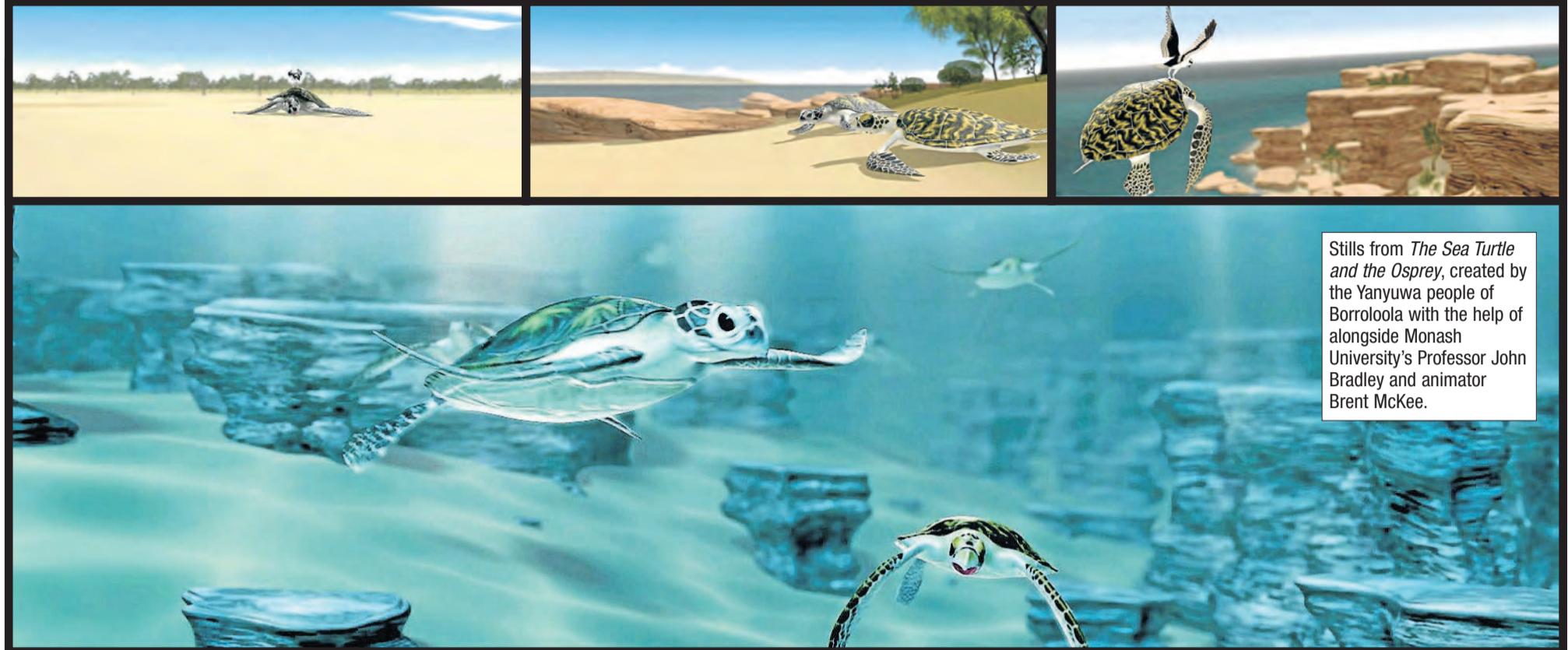
Since 2008 Coles has been providing School Garden Grants of up to \$1,000 to schools and youth groups to help create gardens in their grounds or community, such as bush tucker gardens, water wise gardens or veggie gardens.

These programs encourage students to learn about the environment through "outdoor learning" in developing their own school gardens.

To apply please visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au

coles





Stills from *The Sea Turtle and the Osprey*, created by the Yanyuwa people of Borroloola with the help of alongside Monash University's Professor John Bradley and animator Brent McKee.

Dreaming in amazing animation

THE Dreaming has come alive for a modern audience in the form of an 11-minute film, *The Sea Turtle and the Osprey*, created by the Yanyuwa people of Borroloola alongside Monash University's Professor John Bradley and animator Brent McKee.

Ten months of work went into perfecting the animation, so the swish of an osprey wing and splash of a turtle surfacing are rendered in intensely detailed graphics to recreate a segment of the Yanyuwa's creation songs.

The Yanyuwa people have their homelands on the south west side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, where only five traditional elders and Professor Bradley speak the Yanyuwa language.

Professor Bradley worked closely with each of the four clans of the

Yanyuwa people and animator Brent McKew to create six animated songlines using the same software that was used to animate the blockbuster movie *Avatar*.

The songline animation was premiered for the first time in Australia at the Territory Natural Resource Management and Landcare Forum in Darwin on October 14 last year.

It was one of the awe-inspiring natural resource management and Landcare projects from across the Northern Territory showcased at the forum.

The high calibre animation was received with a round of applause and high praise from local Territorians involved in natural resource management and Landcare in the NT.

The Sea Turtle and the Osprey ani-

mation was funded by Territory Natural Resource Management, through the Caring for Our Country program, as a way of preserving indigenous language and knowledge of the land but also as a tool to teach the next generation the value of protecting our natural resources.

Professor Bradley said while there had been other Dreaming stories animated in the past they were usually subject to European interpretation.

"This is the first time in Australia there has been a conscious effort to record information to keep it within an indigenous perspective and without a European translation or interpretation of it," he said.

Professor Bradley began working with the Yanyuwa people and learnt their ancient language when he

moved to Borroloola to teach at the local school 32 years ago.

The idea of preserving the traditional oral or "sung" culture of the Yanyuwa people came after working with the Yanyuwa elders to create an indigenous atlas for the north west area of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

"Oral recordings and translations alone are frozen in time but with animation you can hear what the language sounds like and see the amazing graphics that also tell the story," he said.

Animator Brent McKee visited Borroloola to gain insight into the landscape of the Dreaming story.

The duo worked with local Yanyuwa elders Dina Marrngawi, Mavis Muluwamara and Jemima Wuwarlu to recreate the life-like story.

Territory Natural Resource Management program manager Nigel Weston said the animation was not just a story, but a record of the sacred sites in the Borroloola area and will help teach local children the importance of looking after their country, the ocean and the creatures that inhabit them.

The visual tool will be used to support work done by the Lianthawirriyarr Sea Rangers including sea turtle and dugong tagging and management, school and community visits and working with traditional owners to safeguard sacred sites.

"The story is thousands of years old but its message is now in a form that the younger generation can understand," Mr Weston said.



Students have a go at bird watching at the inaugural Gulf Kids Environment Day held at Lake Belmore in north-west Queensland.

Gulf Kids delight in outdoor celebrations

IN 2010, students in Queensland's Gulf country got out of the classroom and into their local environment to celebrate all things to do with Junior Landcare.

The very first Gulf Kids Environment Day (GKED) was held on September 2 at Lake Belmore, near Croydon in north-west Queensland.

More than 60 students from Croydon, Georgetown and surrounding properties attended the Junior Landcare event, along with teachers, parents and home tutors.

After hearing talks on leadership, "weedbusting" and biodiversity the kids divided into teams for a range of activities, including waterbug monitoring, bird watching, insect catching, gardening games and lasertag.

They also contributed to making a mural of "Our Gulf Environment" with window art paint which went on display at the Barra, Beef and Bull-dust Expo at Karumba in November of last year.

Another highlight of the day was learning about and meeting some local

fauna with the Zoo to You roadshow.

Students got to hold or pat a blue-tongue lizard, a python and a baby crocodile.

Junior Landcare was celebrated with a barbecue lunch and a big cake.

At the end of the day awards were given for students showing leadership and teamwork.

All students took home a sample bag which included a Crikey Magazine, lots of information and activities on weedbusting and packets of seeds to grow at home.

The day was hosted by Northern Gulf Resource Management Group (NGRMG) with assistance from the Department of Environment and Resource Management's Natural Resource Awareness Grant.

NGRMG is planning to host a similar event next year, based on lots of positive feedback from teachers, home tutors and parents.

The kids not only learned about their local environment but also really enjoyed the day with one child giving it the ultimate thumbs-up: "It was the best day of my life – the best celebration ever!"

Funds to keep projects rolling

A TOTAL of \$125,000 of funding has been awarded to 28 local environmental volunteer groups across Australia as part of the Be Natural Landcare grants program.

The projects funded through this new initiative are diverse in nature and location and are supported by almost \$250,000 worth of in-kind support which has been secured by the groups themselves.

A revegetation project on Queensland's Gold Coast undertaken by BeachCare and the erection of a walking track by Cremorne Coastcare group to protect a coastal area in Tasmania, are two of the projects that have been awarded funding.

Other projects include the building of shelters for possums and gliders in Victoria by Pentland Hills Landcare and the revegetation of disturbed land by the Hunter Wetlands Centre in NSW.

Launched earlier this year by Landcare ambassador, Beau Walker, the Be Natural Landcare grants program was established to help local environmental community groups continue with ongoing projects which had not received funding in the past 12 months.

Through the initiative, Be Natural is also encouraging groups to find innovative new ways of attracting more volunteers to their groups and

Be Natural Grant Recipients

Macgregor Landcare Group: Ginninderra Creek restoration and membership drive, ACT

Coffs Regional Community Gardens Incorporated Association: Combe Street Reserve Wetland Project, NSW

Foundation of National Parks and Wildlife: Goat Island Rescue, NSW

Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia:

Wetlands Environmental Education, NSW

North Byron Shire Coastal Landcare Group:

Rangal Road Ecosystem Restoration, NSW

Project Penguin (NPWS Penguin Wardens Support Project): The Little Penguin Story, NSW

Reef Beach Dunecare Volunteer Group:

Reef Beach Back to Bush, NSW

Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc:

Summerama: Summer Activities Program, NSW

Uralla Rivercare Group: Uralla Creek's Riparian Health Project – Strength from Biodiversity, NSW

Young district Landcare Incorporated:

Environmental Displays

for Community Education, NSW

Willow Warriors: Upper Murrumbidgee and Hawkesbury Nepean Black Willow Monitoring, NSW and ACT

BeachCare: BeachCare = more plants to build dunes, Qld

Boonah and District Landcare Associationn Inc: Managing salt by restoring Brigalow, Qld

Mary River Catchment Co-ordination Association: Inspiring community connection to Mary River stories, Qld

Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network: Community Education for the Birdwing Butterfly, Qld

North Burnett Landcare Group Inc: The Friday Club, Qld

Marine Discovery Centre: Make a difference: Volunteer Support Program, SA

Pipe Clay Coastcare Inc: Protecting Cremorne Spit dunes from sand dispersion by constructing a single path for high tide access and undertaking site rehabilitation, Tas

Tunapi Wildcare: Tunapi Wildlife Care and Education Centre, Tas

Action Sweetwater Creek Inc: Getting The Locals Involved, Vic

Baw Baw Shire Council – Natural Environment Friends Groups: Supporting Friends Groups in Baw Baw Shire, Vic

Burnt Creek Landcare Group: Stewart Park Nature Trail – community links development, Vic

Crib Point Community Garden Inc:

Community Orchard demonstration site, Vic

Glenaroua Land Management Group:

Community Connections: Glenaroua Spray

Unit Retractable Reel, Vic

Pentland Hills Landcare: Possum and Glider Shelters for Myrmiong and Korkuperrimul Catchment Biolink, Vic

Seeding Victoria Inc: Seeding Assist, Vic

Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network: Landcare for Singles, Vic

Yarrawonga Urban Landcare Inc: Yarrawonga Walking Tracks Phase 2, Vic

Denver Booth loves learning how to love the beach more on the Gold Coast with Be Natural funded group, BeachCare.



projects and connecting with their communities.

Be Natural marketing manager Nik Scotcher is confident the grants program will have a great impact on local environmental issues and will provide the financial support many community groups badly need.

"By partnering with Landcare Aust-

ralia, we recognised we could make a real difference at a local level through supporting the amazing work that Landcare groups do," he said.

Landcare Australia has been in partnership with Be Natural Cereals and Snacks since 2010 and last year launched this grants program by bringing native Australia bushland to

the city through the recreation of an area of native vegetation in Sydney's Martin Place.

This activity raised the profile of the Landcare movement in an urban environment while highlighting the work that is taking place in everyone's backyard all year round by local volunteers.

Mobile Muster Grant Recipients

Cabarita Beach Dunecare and Cabarita Dunecare Nursery:

Cabarita Dunecare Nursery: Seed collection and propagation, NSW

Foundation of National Parks and Wildlife: Goat Island Rescue, NSW

King George Bushcare Group: King George Park "two kings" tree planting program, NSW

Lennox Head Residents Association Coastcare Group: Dune Rehabilitation, Accretion And Protection, NSW

Maria River Landcare Group: Maria River Revegetation Project, NSW

Mowbray Road Junior Landcare Group: Trees for Glossy Black Cockatoos, NSW

Port Macquarie Landcare Group Inc: Rain Forest Trees at Lighthouse Beach, NSW

Wareemba/Brown Bushcare Group (Hornsby Shire Council Bushcare): Eradication of Arundo donax and replanting with Natives, Qld

Cooloola Coastcare: Erosion Control and Weed Management on the

Cooloola-Southern Great Sandy Coast, Qld

Friends of Federation Walk Inc: Federation Walk Coastal Reserve Restoration Project, Vic

Johnstone Region Landcare Group: Riparian restoration post Cyclone Yasi at Moresby, Qld

Torquay Coast Action Group:

Revegetating our Iconic Coastline, Vic

Peregian Beach Community Association Inc: Riparian "Reno" On Lorikeet Creek, Qld

Toomulla Coastcare: Toomulla Beach Revegetation, Qld

Coastal Dry Tropics Landcare Inc: Native seed collection and propagation for community revegetation projects in the Townsville region, Qld

Friends of Moana Sands Conservation Park: Woody weed control in Moana Sands Conservation Park, SA

Mambray Creek Landholder Environment Group: Regeneration and Revegetation of the Mambray Creek, SA

Mullaloo Beach Community Group Inc: Key West Revegetation Project, WA

Sandpiper Place Dune Corridor Group (City of Charles Sturt Council): Revegetation and Rehabilitation of the Coastal Dunes, SA

Portland Coastal Cliffs Inc: Restoration of Cliffs Street Cliffs Area, Vic

Lilli Pilli Reserve Bushcare: Lilli Pilli Point Reserve Revegetation Project, Vic

Bellarine Secondary College and Bellarine Landcare Nursery: Bringing back Indigenous Plants to the Bellarine, Vic

Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network: Protecting Outlying High Value Natural Assets with Surf Coast and Inland Network, Vic

Esperance Weeds Action Group Inc: Weed Eradication and Revegetation Salmon Beach Project, WA

Ledge Point Coastcare Group: Plants for Regeneration of a Dune Blowout at Ledge Point, WA

Mullaloo Beach Community Group Inc: Key West Revegetation Project, WA

Mustering carer support

THANKS to many Australians recycling their old mobile phones and accessories as part of MobileMuster's "Old phones, more trees" campaign, more than 20,000 trees will be planted around Australia's coastline by volunteer Landcare and Coastcare groups.

MobileMuster is the mobile phone industry's official recycling program.

This year, more than 30 tonnes of mobile phones and accessories were collected for recycling during the "Old phones, more trees" campaign which ran from June to September.

"As a result more than 260,000 handsets, batteries and 15.5 tonnes of accessories have now been diverted from landfill and will be recycled," said MobileMuster manager, recycling, Rose Read.

"It also means 25 Landcare and Coastcare volunteer groups will each receive a \$2000 grant from MobileMuster to help regenerate our coastline one tree at a time."

The "Old phones, more trees" partnership between MobileMuster and Landcare Australia was established in 2007.

Since then more than 179 tonnes of mobile phones and accessories have been recycled by MobileMuster, helping Landcare organisations plant more than 275,000 trees.

Landcare Australia chief executive officer Heather Campbell said enthusiasm among the Landcare community for the MobileMuster grants was fantastic.

"Landcare and Coastcare groups are doing terrific work to care for our iconic beaches," she said.

"Each of the 25 grant recipients will use the MobileMuster funding to support projects that will have a significant impact on their local area and community."

The MobileMuster grant recipients will use the funds to support projects such as dune and weed management, native seed propagation and to purchase trees, encouraging revegetation and biodiversity.

"MobileMuster is looking forward to seeing the great results achieved by each of the volunteer groups and continuing "Old phones, more trees" in 2012," Ms Read said.

Boost for degraded land, waterways

LANDCARE Australia has announced funding for 13 community environmental groups in NSW through the Raymond Borland Bequest grants program, which launched earlier this year.

The funding will support community groups and other organisations in NSW to undertake projects that will repair and restore the natural environment thanks to a generous bequest from Sydney businessman, Raymond Borland, to Landcare Australia.

The projects are varied in nature but all fulfil the criteria of the bequest which is to repair and rehabilitate degraded non-urban land and non-tidal waterways in NSW.

Funded projects include the restoration of critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforest linking Nightcap and Goonengerry National Parks by EnviTE

Environment; native wildlife corridor plantings by Conservation Volunteers Australia in the Capertee Valley to help create habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater; and the rehabilitation of habitat for the endangered Southern Pygmy Perch in Holbrook by Holbrook Landcare Group.

Landcare Australia chief executive officer Heather Campbell applauded the great difference that Mr Borland's generous bequest can make through the grants program.

"Raymond Borland greatly valued the Australian landscape and admired the work that Landcare groups undertake repairing degraded land and preserving our natural environment," she said.

"Through this community grants program his generous bequest is being put to the best possible use."

During journeys through country NSW, Mr Borland became gravely concerned about the extent and severity of landscape and water quality degradation that he often encountered.

He was also impressed by the outstanding achievements of local Landcare groups in repairing degraded areas, such as eroded gullies and riparian areas, and protecting the biodiversity of native habitat.

Mr Borland resolved to assist future generations preserve and enjoy the integrity of our natural assets and as a result, his estate provided a bequest to Landcare Australia to be used for the preservation and rehabilitation of degraded natural environments in rural and non-tidal areas of NSW.

■ For more information on the Raymond Borland grants program, please visit www.landcareonline.com.au

Raymond Borland Grant Recipients

Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers trading as Conservation Volunteers Australia: Boosting the Capertee Valley Regent Honey Eater Recovery Program

Big Scrub Rainforest Landcare Group Inc: Lowland Rainforest Restoration at Mortons Scrub and Booyong Flora Reserve

Byron Creek Catchment Landcare Group Inc: Riparian Rescue of Byron Creek

Eurobodalla Shire Council on behalf of Deua Rivercare: Deua River Riparian Weed Eradication/Revegetation

Dunedoo Area Community Group Inc: Project Gully Remediation: Gully Erosion in Grassy Box Woodland

EnviTE Environment: Wompoo Gorge Rainforest and Riparian Restoration

Gunnedah Urban Landcare Group: Cushans Reserve Regeneration Project

Holbrook Landcare Group: Rehabilitating habitat of the endangered Southern Pygmy Perch

Nambucca Valley LandCare Inc: Girralong Reach Project

Orara Valley Rivercare Groups Management Committee Inc: Orara River Raingorest Regeneration at Coramba

Queanbeyan Landcare Inc: Habitat Improvement at White Rocks

The Crossing Land Education Trust: Biodiversity riparian corridor linking koala habitat

Trees in Newcastle: The Martinsville Melaleuca biconvexa Missing Link

Jerrawa Creek widens war on tussock

The Upper Lachlan Landcare Committee has joined the Jerrawa Creek Landcare groups' successful Tussock Tamers Program, extending it throughout the Upper Lachlan Catchment.

The Tussock Tamer Project aims to bring community members and land managers together to effectively manage the challenges posed by serrated tussock.

The program was started by the Jerrawa Creek Landcare Group, and has become a partnership with the Upper Lachlan Shire Council and The Lachlan CMA.

The program of workshops, field days and farm visits is gaining momentum as more and more landholders sign up to Tussock Tamers.

The two day workshops, run by well-known rural educator Alison Elvin, have been well attended.

More than 180 farming families have attended the workshops in the past six months, learning the latest skills and techniques on how to control weeds like serrated tussock effectively and economically.

Participants learn how to identify serrated tussock and other weeds in all seasons, and differentiate weeds from native grasses.

They learn about the many different control methods available to suit conventional, organic and biodynamic style farming.

With aerial photography, participants divide their property into eradication, containment and exclusion zones depending on the amount of serrated tussock or other weeds and prepare a hands-on, cost effective Weed Management Five Year Action Plan.

These plans assist farmers to comply with legal obligations under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993.

Participants are encouraged to put signs on their property to show they are part of the program.

The focus is on taming serrated tussock, but the workshop also looks at other problematic weeds like Chilean Needle grass, African Love Grass, St John's Wort and Sifton Bush.

The program includes one-on-one farm visits for those who have not made it to the workshops.

Already Ms Elvin has visited 50 farms in the catchment, with more to come in the coming months.

Additional field days are planned for weed and native grass identification.

Workshops have been held through-



ABOVE: Sinclair Bell, Bruce Treloar, Margie Fitzpatrick, Jenny Bell, Alan Howard and Alison Elvin at the Breadalbane Tussock Tamer Workshop.

out the Upper Lachlan Catchment, but there has been considerable cross border support and interest in the program.

■ For further information about the Tussock Tamer Program please contact Nerida Croker at Upper Lachlan Landcare on 02 4834 2133.



Bruce Treloar, Chris Barber and Alison Elvin at the Breadalbane Tussock Tamer Workshop.

In Brief

Online events calendar: Is your group planning events this year?

Why not add the information to the Landcare Australia free online events calendar?

Simply email the details of your event to events@landcareaustralia.com.au for inclusion.

Please include the venue, date and time of the event, what form it will take and what people need to do to register or what they need to bring in order to take part.

Group logo design available: Does your group need an up-to-date Landcare or Coastcare logo?

Landcare Australia can design a logo which incorporates your group name with the recently refreshed Landcare and Coastcare logos.

If you would like Landcare Australia to design a free logo, email tarryn.whitfield@landcareaustralia.com.au

Scouts overhaul their Landcare badge rules

AFTER 18 years, the Landcare badge awarded to Scouts has been given a makeover, resulting in a rush of new awards.

Gus Lloyd, the Scouts' national environment advisor, said the Landcare badge was introduced in the early days of the Landcare movement to give Scouts "an environmental resource".

The badge has been very popular, with an average of 600-800 Scouts a year doing the minimum 14 hours a year in Landcare necessary to qualify.

However, Mr Lloyd said the understanding of the requirements for getting a Landcare badge had become muddled through the years, with some Scouts managing to qualify in a weekend while others took six months.

In his capacity as environment advisor, Mr Lloyd worked with Landcare Australia and the Scouts movement

for more than two years to revise the requirements for getting the badge, along with a physical redesign.

"The new rule is a youth member in Scouting is required, in any 12-month period, to attend three nationally-recognised Landcare projects or associated groups."

"The programs have to be associated with Landcare, but don't have to be specifically Landcare."

"It means a Scout can choose from programs like Planet Ark or Clean Up Australia, as well as attending sessions with volunteer Landcare groups."

It also means Landcare can look at Scout programs and assess whether Scout activities might integrate with Landcare activity.

"We also added that if a youth member is already a member of a Landcare group, they qualify for the

badge immediately," Mr Lloyd said.

"For the sake of the kids, we came up with a better, broader package that had more distinct rulings and didn't leave any grey areas."

Since the revision came into effect in late 2011, about 125 Scouts have qualified for the new Landcare badge.

Mr Lloyd said despite the problems with the old badge, it helped channel an enormous contribution from Scouts into Landcare and Landcare-related activities.

With 600-800 badges earned a year, and a minimum of 14 hours required to get one, "it's quite an investment back into the community", he said.

Scouts have always been involved with the environment: the commandment "A Scout cares for the environment" is part of scouting law.

For some time, Mr Lloyd said, the

environment had taken something of a back seat in the scouting world.

But that is changing.

The World Scout Environment badge was introduced only 18 months ago, but about 400 Scouts have already qualified for it.

"This is obviously the youth community saying that it wants more to do with the environment."

"In NSW Scouts, their State Environment team is made up purely of youth members, and they advise the adults what they want done."

Late last year, the team decided to have laminated copies of the Scout Environment Charter put up in all of NSW's 650 Scout halls.

"We're seeing environmental issues strongly resurgent in Scouts, and the interest in the new Landcare badge is a tangible sign of this."

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Protecting Barwon River

The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA is joining forces with the local indigenous community to rescue critical areas of the Barwon River system and tributaries.

The CMA has successfully bid for more than \$375,000 in funding to protect endangered aquatic ecosystems on the Barwon, using a local aboriginal team to control weeds and pest animals, restore riparian vegetation and native habitat, and stabilise stream banks.

Funding for the project came from the Australian government's Caring For Our Country program.

On-ground work will begin in the Mungindi region in a few months.

"Our aim is not only to make a significant difference to the health of the Barwon River but also to provide new employment and training opportunities for indigenous people in the north west," said project manager, Harry White.

"The project will also enable aboriginal people to have a greater involvement in the management of a river system which plays a key role in local indigenous culture."

The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA's Aboriginal Reference Advisory Group (ARAG) will work with Mr White and other members of the project committee to oversee progress through until completion in 2013.

Key ecological threats to be tackled include invasive weeds such as lippia, water hyacinth and salvinia, and pest animals including pigs, carp, foxes and cats.



The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA is excited to be launching this innovative project in close partnership with local indigenous organisations to protect aquatic ecosystems on the Barwon River.

On-ground works will also include fencing to exclude stock from fragile areas and the restoration of native plant species.

Work will be carried out primarily

on publicly owned land and country managed by Aboriginal land councils, with an emphasis on engaging the indigenous community in reducing ecological threats and improving

habitat on the Barwon River.

Accredited training will be provided to enhance the project team's skills in natural resource management.

Get on board now for National Tree Day activities

PLANET Ark is calling on all landcare groups to get involved in National Tree Day and help inspire their local communities to value and care for the environment.

National Tree Day will take place on Sunday, July 29, with Schools Tree Day scheduled for Friday, July 27.

Planet Ark is encouraging landcare groups to register and run local tree planting sites.

National Tree Day is a fantastic opportunity for groups to showcase the work they do to the wider community, recruit new volunteers, and teach future generations how to care for and protect their native environment.

National Tree Day site coordinators are required to organise and supervise their registered tree planting site. Planet Ark provides support to all

registered site coordinators through its National Tree Day Hotline and website, which includes an online RSVP system for volunteers, downloadable resources and a step-by-step guide, plus tools to help you promote your tree planting event.

■ Visit treeday.planetark.org or contact the National Tree Day Hotline on 1300 88 5000 to find out more about coordinating a National Tree Day event.



Inspiring generations

GRANT Good, a committed landcarer and long-term National Tree Day coordinator, has been inspiring kids in the southern suburbs of Adelaide to care for the environment for decades.

A former primary school teacher and volunteer fire fighter with a passion for nature and the outdoors, Grant began the Friends of Kyeema Conservation Park in 1983 in response to the devastation caused by the Ash Wednesday bushfires.

Kyeema Conservation Park, a favourite hiking spot for Grant and the site of many nature camps for his students, was completely destroyed by the fires.

"Kyeema was a sea of blackened skeletons of trees," Grant said.

"I decided something had to be done and came up with the idea of getting kids to help with replanting the area."

Grant estimated that the Friends of Kyeema Conservation Park, with the help of hundreds of school students and other community volunteers,

have planted around 80,000 trees at the park since 1983.

In 2011, Grant and his wife Trudy organised six National Tree Day events at Kyeema, including five Schools Tree Day events for students from Reynella East College.

Grant taught at Reynella East College for five years before retiring, and still works closely with students at the school to propagate the seedlings used for National Tree Day events at Kyeema and other revegetation activities in the local area and further afield, such as the "Trees for Tumby" project, a bushfire rehabilitation project in the Lower Eyre Peninsula in 2006.

Grant said it was the sense of personal satisfaction and the feedback he got from current and former students which motivated him to organ-

Mt Barker Chicken project takes flight

SIGNS of progress in the Ranges Link Project of south-west WA were reviewed by Mt Barker locals late last year at a community conservation day at the Twin Creeks Reserve in Porongurup.

On a special bus tour, locals were shown how degraded wildlife sites in the region have flourished thanks to a strong partnership between funder Mt Barker Chicken and community groups, government and Landcare Australia.

"Mt Barker Chicken is committed to environmental sustainability in the region, and we are very proud to be able to support these crucial projects which will reconnect the ecological areas between the Porongurup and Stirling Ranges", said Mark Rintoul, Mt Barker Chicken's general manager.

Mr Rintoul also announced Mt Barker Chicken would be supporting the Ranges Link Project with a further three years of funding.

The Ranges Link project, which falls within the greater Gondwana Link project, aims to connect bushland along the Kalgan Valley.

The project has built more than 130 km of fencing in two years.



Together we can make a difference - Opportunities to leave a Bequest to Landcare Australia

Landcare and Coastcare volunteer groups have received enormous support from Bequests made to Landcare Australia.

By including a Bequest in your Will for environmental or agricultural projects, you will help Landcare Australia to support the national network of volunteers to:

- plant trees,
- improve our farmlands,
- breathe new life into waterways,
- urban action – protect our urban environment and so much more,
- protect our coastline,
- restore wildlife habitats.

If you wish to support the conservation work throughout Australia by Landcare and Coastcare volunteer groups or would like to discuss this further, please call (02) 9412 1040. All bequest information discussed with Landcare Australia is held in the utmost confidence.



In Brief

Victorian Landcare Calendar:

The 2012 Victorian Landcare Calendar has been published by the Victorian Landcare Council with support from Landcare Australia and the Victorian CMAs.

The calendar celebrates 25 years of Landcare in Victoria and showcases the partnerships, projects and people that make Landcare a vibrant movement who have had a real impact on local communities.

You can purchase a calendar by contacting the Regional Landcare Coordinators who work at each Catchment Authority in Victoria. For bulk orders, please email Roger Hardley at wilddogs2@bigpond.com

Coles Junior Landcare grants:

Now is the time to apply for a Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grant.

Coles has been providing School Garden Grants of up to \$1000 to schools and youth groups since 2008, to help create bush tucker gardens, waterwise gardens or veggie gardens in their grounds or community.

These programs encourage students to learn about the environment through "outdoor learning" and interaction in developing their own school gardens.

For more information on this grants program and to download an application form visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au

Closing dates for 2012 applications are:

- Round 1: Closes Friday, February 17, 5pm (EST)
- Round 2: Closes Friday, May 4, 5pm (EST)
- Round 3: Closes Friday, July 27, 5pm (EST)

Landcare Mini Muster:

Landcarers in the Lake Macquarie region got together for the inaugural Landcare Mini Muster in September and the success of the event suggests it won't be the last.

The event was held at the Landcare Resource Centre at Teralba, allowing Landcare volunteers to demonstrate some of the valuable groundwork being conducted throughout the region.

The enthusiasm of the existing Landcare network was instrumental in producing a batch of new volunteer registrations on the day.

Murray the Red Tailed Cockatoo and Fairy Anika kept the children entertained, while the adults circulated through the diverse selections of plant species on display as part of the Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC) native plant giveaway.

LMCC horticulturists helped community members select nearly 5000 native plants of various species and habits to plant out in their gardens.

The LMCC Backyard Habitat for Wildlife launch was also a tremendous success, with about 270 people joining the new program with a personal pledge to create a wildlife-friendly habitat for native fauna by doing something as simple as planting native shrubs, installing a frog pond, building a birdbath, or providing hollow shelter.

Growing community bonds

THE ongoing success of bankmecu's Conservation Landbank project, an idea born in 2008, was celebrated at the first Conservation Landbank property at Minimay, Victoria in November.

The Conservation Landbank was established by bankmecu to offset car loans as a carbon neutral business.

Landcare Australia assists in the co-ordination of the project with bankmecu and the many stakeholders involved.

The Conservation Landbank has evolved into a project that truly engages in meaningful community partnerships.

Trust for Nature assists bankmecu with the selection of appropriate properties for the Conservation Landbank, based on their conservation values and appropriateness for landscape scale biodiversity protection.

Trust for Nature is also responsible for developing conservation covenants to protect these properties.

The project is managed by the Kowree Farm Tree Group, which invests considerable hands-on involvement, passion and drive into the project.

The Tree Group invites local groups, including schools and service clubs, to participate in planting days and other activities.

Parents and Friends of St Malachy's Primary School, Edenhope, assist the Kowree Farm Tree Group; for every tree they plant they receive funding which they feed back into the school.

In the past this has translated into ICT equipment and a lawnmower.

This structure provides benefits for all of those involved in the Conservation Landbank project.

Another example of community engagement has been the education-



al opportunities embraced by the local schools.

In 2011, Year 7 students at Edenhope College undertook an investigation into the "Ozenkadnook Tiger" that is rumoured to have once roamed the area.

The students created sculptures of the Ozenkadnook Tiger, which will go on display at the Ozenkadnook property.

In late 2011, a shed was erected at the Minimay property which will provide a useful shelter for users of the property including the Goroke P-12 College.

This will be further enhanced in 2012 with the construction of a toilet.

Greening Australia have also been involved with the Conservation

Landbank, running a biochar trial on one of the properties.

This project has grown since 2008 to include four properties in the Wimmera district.

Equivalent in size to 90 Melbourne Cricket Grounds, the properties are home to Victoria's most iconic yet endangered bird, the south-eastern Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo.

Only an estimated 1000 of these birds are believed to be alive, and these properties, with their Buloke and Desert Stringybark woodlands, provide an ideal habitat for this rare creature.

In addition, the Conservation Landbank is also home to the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass-frog and Striped Legless Lizard.

The Conservation Landbank also sits within the broader framework of Habitat 141, an impressive landscape scale conservation project which is reconnecting habitat from the outback to the ocean.

This is an important project in a changing climate and aims to enhance species mobility and survival.

The Conservation Landbank is a project that really captures the essence of Landcare projects – many stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds coming together to achieve a common goal of improving, enhancing and protecting the environment.

An added benefit of this project is in its ability to bring the local community together and to provide positive social outcomes as well.

West Arthur's environmental effort earns award

WEST Arthur has become Western Australia's latest Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities State title.

The West Arthur community has demonstrated excellence across a variety of categories, including improving and maintaining their town's appearance and working towards environmental sustainability.

West Arthur has a proud record in the Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities awards, with previous regional wins in the categories of General Appearance, Natural Heritage Conservation, Recycling and Waste Management, Enhancing Cultural Identity and Water Conservation.

Each year the most successful Tidy Towns Committees involve a range of different organisations, groups and individuals in planning and implementing community projects.

Judges are particularly impressed if entrants have engaged or involved local government, youth, schools, business and industry.

This year's regional winners, as well as finalists for the State Award taken out by West Arthur, were Northampton, Paraburdoo, Collie, Quairading, Albany and Southern Cross.

Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities is supported by Keep

Australia Beautiful WA, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Waste Authority.

West Arthur's win was announced in Fremantle on November 18 by His Excellency, Mr Malcolm McCusker AO CVO QC, Patron of Keep Australia Beautiful WA.

Other State category winners included:

- Community Action: Southern Cross
- General Appearance: Karalundi
- Recycling and Waste Management: Albany
- Natural Heritage Conservation: Albany

Landcare celebrates Australian Year of the Farmer

Australian Year of the Farmer is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the contribution of our nation's farmers, farming groups and agricultural organisations across the country.

They are key managers of our natural resources and providers of the food and fibre that sustains us all. We applaud their actions to sustain our fragile environment through the implementation of the Landcare ethos into their operations by utilising research, knowledge sharing and improved sustainable practices and technology.

Their significant contribution to the Australian landscape not only helps protect our environment and support our communities, but ensures that our land is cared for and protected for future generations of Landcare farmers.



Australian Government



Australian
Landcare
Council



Landcare
Australia



National
Landcare
Network



LEFT: Kowree Farm Tree Group president Andrew Brady addresses a luncheon to celebrate the ongoing success of bankmecu's Conservation Landbank project at Minimay, Victoria.