

Building on land connection

CENTRAL and northern Yorke Peninsula has long been considered a prime agricultural region. But a group of men with a passionate interest in regeneration have their sites set on a 303-hectare property called Millers Farm near Weetulla for very different reasons.

Part of it is still leased for cropping, but the Gynburra Narungga Men's Group (GNMG) wants to phase out farming altogether and turn the property into a cultural 'eco-healing' sanctuary.

Chairperson David Wilson says he and secretary Owen Karpany came up with the idea to establish a drug- and alcohol-free native bush property in 2001-02.

"If the land was a farm, and indeed this has been the case with the Millers property, then we envisioned re-vegetating it back to native status," he said.

"The reason we had this approach was to have a place where Narungga people could have access to land that resembles the country in which their ancestors lived on and a place that could facilitate healing

"Hence our motto: 'Heal the land and the land will heal you.'"

"We got some other men on board with the idea and formed the group and then Millers Farm became available and we applied for a grant from Indigenous Land Corporation to purchase it.

"In the meantime, the organisation called Narungga Nations Aboriginal Corporation for Land was formed to hold all lands for Narungga people and we subsequently sub-lease our property from then."



Gynburra Narungga Men's Group chairperson David Wilson at wetlands north of Adelaide with treasurer Micheal O'Loughlin and secretary Owen Karpany.

The name Millers Farm is being used on a interim basis with the farm to be changed to a Narungga name in the near future.

GNMG plans to revegetate by reintroducing native plants to the property as well as building on the native

vegetation already present.

Carbon credit schemes are on the cards, along with natural energy and recycling systems, such as solar power and ongoing research into alternative energy sources.

Feral animals are to be eradicated

and kept out along with pest plants, and low-impact trails and amenities – including walking pathways, viewing platforms and open areas – will be established.

"Since its purchase, the men's group has sub-leased the property to a farmer," Mr Wilson said.

"Within the last couple of years there has been a push to return to the original idea of creating an eco-healing sanctuary.

"During the past two-year period a lot of work has been done to move towards this objective."

A property management plan was developed for the group by revegetation experts EcoProTem while the groups' own skill set ranges from conservation land management, farming, computing, finance, board management, marketing and promotion, and liaison.

"We're on the verge now of going for grants," Mr Wilson said.

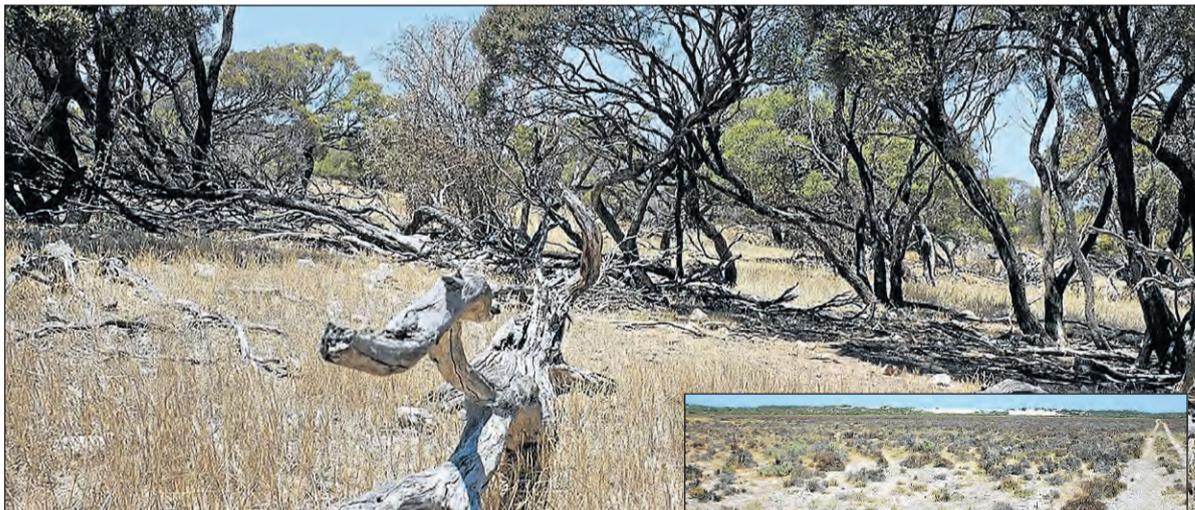
"One way or other we're going to do this, whether we do it incrementally or whether we get all the money, as in big biodiversity grant.

"Either way it's going to be pretty good."

A new generation of ideas

WITH a property management plan established for their Millers Farm regeneration project, Yorke Peninsula, the Gynburra Narungga Mens Group has listed a number of benefits they hope to receive. This includes increased:

- biodiversity knowledge and participation
 - physical benefits
 - spiritual connection to country
 - emotional and social well being
 - knowledge of natural energy and recycling systems
 - self determination
 - reconciliation through stakeholder interactions with non-Aboriginal groups
 - knowledge of conservation and land management
 - knowledge of new carbon initiatives process, and
 - satisfaction for playing a role in biodiversity growth for land, sea, animals, plants and humans.
- GNMG chairman David Wilson says the group also wants to reduce carbon emissions and identify training and professional development opportunities.



Millers Farm at the top of Yorke Peninsula includes areas of remnant revegetation and, (inset) a large sand dune ecosystem with pristine beaches on the seaside.

Community Action Grants give landcarers a boost

Comment by JOE LUDWIG, Minister Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

THE sustainability and health of our natural environment and productive lands is dependent on the wonderful work being done by community and farming groups.

Their dedication is driving wonderful results using programs like Community Action Grants, programs that provide funding to local community groups across Australia for conservation of the Australian landscape.

That's why I took such pleasure in recently announcing a new grants program that will support

community groups involved with landcare projects.

The new Community Landcare Grants build on the success of the Community Action Grants with a renewed focus on sustainable farming and fisheries, agricultural innovation and community capacity building.

Grants between \$5000 and \$50,000 are available to assist community and farming groups and support their work to manage their natural environment and productive lands.

The name, Community Landcare Grants, was chosen to reflect the widespread support for the Landcare movement.

Recent surveys have found farmers, community groups and other

volunteers associate themselves with this dynamic movement, even if they're not involved in a formal Landcare group.

It was with pleasure that I announced these new grants after meeting with groups in Queensland and visiting some of the projects they are undertaking to improve their local natural environment.

Projects like these are underway across Australia and the Community Landcare Grants were developed to recognise the importance of supporting people to bring about change in the landscape.

The Community Landcare Grants are open to a wide range of groups and I encourage all groups involved

in natural resource management and capacity building projects to consider applying.

I also encourage applications from community farming systems groups with projects designed to increase the participation in sustainable agriculture of young people, Indigenous Australians, women or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, demonstrating, trialling and adopting cropping or grazing practices that improve soil condition and reduce wind and water erosion, demonstrating fishing practices to minimise impact on the marine environment and non-target

species as well as surveys or other sustainable resource management awareness raising activities.

These grants were created in response to the strong feedback received during the review of Caring for our Country and are delivered under the Sustainable Agriculture stream of Caring for our Country.

Through the agriculture stream of the next phase, the Gillard Government will support activities that will help achieve a sustainable, productive and resilient agricultural base for Australia.

Applications for the first round of Community Landcare Grants close 20 March 2013.

■ Visit nrm.gov.au

In Brief

Landcare Council appointments:

In December last year Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Joe Ludwig announced new appointees Kate Jones, Jackie Jarvis, Lynne Strong and Ron Archer to the Australian Landcare Council.

The Australian Landcare Council is the government's key advisory body on natural resource management and Landcare.

All appointees are active members of their local communities and well equipped to carry out the functions of the council and foster community, industry and government partnerships in the management of natural resources

For full member biographies or for more information on the Australian Landcare Council, visit www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/council

Landcare Eureka Prize:

Nominations opened earlier this month for the Landcare Eureka Prize for Sustainable Agriculture.

The award promotes excellence in research and innovation in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management, including climate adaptation.

As the global demand for food increases and we face the effects of climate change, leading research, science and innovation in sustainable agriculture will ensure Australia's agricultural land is well-placed to respond to these challenges.

Open to an individual, group or team for outstanding agricultural scientific research, development or innovative application of sustainable agricultural practices that has improved, or has the potential to improve, the sustainable use of our natural resources.

For more information on the Eureka Prizes, including the Landcare Eureka Prize for Sustainable Agriculture visit www.eureka.australianmuseum.net.au/about

ALC News in Brief:

The 54th Australian Landcare Council meeting was held in the rural West Australian town of Katanning in November 2012.

As part of this meeting, the council visited a diverse range of Landcare sites in the area, meeting with farmers, small landholders, local Landcarers and other community volunteers.

Council members were impressed with the passion and hard work shown by the locals and took away many key lessons, including the importance of whole-of-farm planning and landscape management the advantages of paid Landcare support staff, and the multiple benefits Landcare has for communities.

The Community Call for Action was discussed at the meeting, with the council initiating two working groups to manage responses received from the public and to generate the council's own response.

All Landcare stakeholders are encouraged to develop their own complementary strategies to the Framework for Australian Landcare's Community Call for Action and to declare their commitment to Landcare through the council's website.

The council's research projects on the multiple benefits of natural resource management and Landcare and Successes and Barriers to Indigenous engagement in NRM are expected to be completed before the next council meeting, to be held in Canberra next month.

■ For more information on the council's activities, visit www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/council.

Sustainability support

REGIONAL Landcare Facilitators are working with farmers across Australia to increase the uptake of sustainable farm and land management practices and to promote the Landcare philosophy and ethic.

Funded under the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative, Regional Landcare Facilitators are located in each of the natural resource management regions where they assist community Landcare and production groups and support land managers to meet challenges including climate change.

A recent independent evaluation of the Regional Landcare Facilitator initiative highlighted the many and varied achievements of facilitators and praised the flexibility within the initiative, which enables the facilitator role adapt to support the needs of communities in diverse agro-ecological landscapes.

In the Eyre Peninsula of South Australia, three part-time Regional Landcare Facilitators support broad-acre farmers and farming groups to address challenges such as wind erosion, salinity, and soil acidity and alkalinity which have the potential to affect farm business profitability and the sustainability of natural resources.

The facilitators link a network of more than 20 farmer and agricul-

tural groups across the Eyre Peninsula and collaborate with a range of grower-driven organisations, industry, and government to promote and implement new technologies and sustainable land management practices.

"A pivotal part of my role on the Upper Eyre Peninsula is working with farmer groups; healthy groups mean an efficient way of transferring information," said Regional Landcare Facilitator Linden Masters, who is hosted by the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board.

"Farmers want to improve problem areas or paddocks and are asking what to do on soils they can't currently do anything with."

With help from the facilitators, farmers have received on-farm visits and technical advice on how to best manage their problem areas.

This has resulted in demonstration sites which allow other local farmers to learn from and adopt improved farming practices such as fencing to land class, sand hill blow out rehabilitation and soil amelioration.

By working closely with land managers and industry groups the Regional Landcare Facilitators are able to support landholders to address challenges and adopt more sustainable agricultural practices.

In the Torres Strait, the challenges



Regional Landcare Facilitator George Saveka shows off the banana harvest at St Paul's Community Garden on Moa Island, Queensland.

for sustainable agriculture are quite different.

Traditional gardening systems have declined since the introduction of reliable food stores and shipping in food has an extremely high transport energy demand.

"My passion is to strengthen our cultural inheritance to younger generations by linking modern horticulture techniques with traditional knowledge," said George Saveka, Regional Landcare Facilitator with the Torres Strait Regional Authority's Land and Sea Management Unit.

George works with Islander communities across the Torres Strait to establish local food gardens, supporting Torres Strait Islanders to reinstate their self-reliant food production capacity through sustainable methods, while also improving dietary outcomes and preserving and strengthening the cultural heritage of the younger generation.

Interest in sustainable agriculture has escalated throughout the islands with many new community driven initiatives including garden, fruit tree and nursery establishment as well as weed control and degraded site rehabilitation.

George has developed a strong Landcare ethic among the Torres Strait communities and as a result all primary schools within the

Torres Strait are now engaged in Landcare projects.

The evaluation also found that the Regional Landcare Facilitator network is not only making a positive contribution to the uptake of sustainable agriculture practices but has also had a range of other positive impacts including improving regional partnerships and increasing the flow of information among those in the natural resource management and agriculture communities.

In particular, Regional Landcare Facilitators play a role supporting the Landcare community, especially in regions where Landcare is facing difficulties with membership, funding and resources.

"The RLF helps to source funding for us and shares information about opportunities so we can access funding," said Megan Munchenberg from Gregory River Landcare Group in the Southern Gulf region of Queensland.

"They also fill the knowledge gap. People up here are time-poor but the RLF has the capacity to find out what people's problems are and find solutions and share that information with landholders".

■ To contact your Regional Landcare Facilitator visit www.nrm.gov.au/contact/officers.html



Regional Landcare Facilitator Linden Masters (left) supports Sam Britza (right) to address soil constraints on his property at Lock, South Australia.

Community Landcare Grants—Applications now open

Are you a local Landcare, Indigenous or community volunteer group, actively involved in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management?

The Australian Government is now seeking applications for Community Landcare Grants as part of the Caring for our Country initiative. Grants of between \$5000 and \$50 000 are available to support the natural resource management community to ensure Australia's agricultural base is sustainable, productive and resilient. Funding is available to:

- help build a skilled and capable Landcare community
- encourage community participation and engagement in Landcare
- share information and learnings in sustainable agricultural techniques
- reduce the spread of pest species, and
- encourage the adoption of improved sustainable land management practices.

Projects may include activities that demonstrate, trail and lead to the adoption of practices that improve soil condition or activities that raise awareness of sustainable resource management.

To find out if your group is eligible, or to apply for a grant, visit the Caring for our Country website at www.nrm.gov.au or call 1800 552 008
Applications close 5pm (AEDT), 20 March 2013



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Traditional touch in the Top End

THE knowledge accumulated by the Larrakia “saltwater people” through thousands of years in the Top End is being cultivated to bring a fresh, yet ancient, dimension to Landcare.

With help from a grant from the Qantas Foundation, the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation aims to build “culturally appropriate resource management” by increasing connections with the region’s traditional land managers.

Using traditional ecological knowledge is a relatively new concept to natural resource management, but increasingly accepted because it is knowledge firmly rooted in reality.

It has been built through keen personal observation, interaction and thought, sharpened by the daily rigours of an uncertain survival.

For the Larrakia, the environments around Darwin Harbour are “cultural landscapes” that are vital to wellbeing.

Today, Darwin Harbour and surrounding catchment has a population

of over 120,000 people and faces increasing population and industrial growth.

This growth will only intensify pressure on the harbour environment and the wildlife it supports.

The Qantas Foundation project has supported the Larrakia people’s desire to increase respect for sacred and significant indigenous sites among the general community.

The Larrakia people began a unique indigenous training and education project with the support of Qantas Foundation funding in 2009 and with ongoing support in 2010-11 also trained female participants.

Men and women have undertaken a range of activities to become Larrakia Rangers, including ship safety workshops and Coxswains certification (mastering a water vessel up to 12 metres) allowing the rangers to assume responsibility of fisheries survey vessels to carry out site surveys and sample shellfish collections.

The Larrakia Rangers now also have

the ability to analyse shellfish samples in a Department of Fisheries laboratory.

Shellfish study partner, the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), broadened the study to include other indigenous cultural heritage and food sources, such as oysters and mudcrab, for the testing of heavy metals and potential viral infections as markers of pollution.

Results of the Larrakia Rangers’ shellfish analysis formed part of an overall water quality and state of the harbour reporting by NRETAS.

Larrakia Nation member Donna Jackson was delighted the group of women had gained certification.

“For some more senior Larrakia women, like myself, it’s been a long held dream to obtain a Coxswains ticket (certification), and after 13 years we are finally able to do the training,” she said.

“Everyone gained a lot more confidence and knowledge about natural resource management, ship safety, radios and fire safety.”



Mud crab sampling on Darwin Harbour.



IF THE organic compounds being assessed under the Woolworths-Landcare Australia program do their job, Chad Simpson says consumers will benefit from better quality fruit on the table, grown from healthier trees in healthier soil.

Simpson Farms will assess the post-harvest quality of fruit from the trial through new processing procedures.

“We anticipate that differences in the post-harvest fruit quality, especially those due to disease incidence, will be observable,” said Mr Simpson, who anticipates field days will be held for interested avocado producers during the trial, which is due to finish in 2014.

Higher fruit quality will give Simpson Farms good standing in the supply chain and will potentially lead to higher returns.

“Should the organic treatments prove successful, growers will have confidence to use these products to reduce their chemical inputs – therefore increasing their profitability – and lessening their impact on the environment.”

The company has about 180,000 avocado trees producing Hass, Shepard, Wurtz and Reed varieties, and about 200,000 more trees will come into full production in the next five years.

Simpson Farms also supplies about 290 tonnes of mangoes to the Australian market each year and operates a pack house and avocado processing plant on-site.

Fighting root rot organically

AUSTRALIA’S biggest avocado grower is using organic compounds to improve soil health with the aim of combatting the disease phytophthora.

It is hoped the research, being carried out at Simpson Farms in Childers, Central Queensland, will help reduce the avocado industry’s reliance on synthetic chemical fungicides.

Simpson Farms produces about 11,000 tonnes of avocados per year – about two million trays or 20 per cent of the nation’s annual production – and distributes them to Woolworths stores across Australia.

The company also exports to a range of markets, mostly in Asia.

Company agronomist Chad Simpson said phytophthora root rot was the major disease problem facing the company and the wider avocado industry in Australia.

The fungus kills feeder roots, which slows the tree’s nutrient and water uptake.

This causes progressive tree decline, lower fruit yields, and small, poor quality fruit.

“It is a big issue for us in terms of yield losses and for the wider industry, with an estimated 10 per cent of the total avocado tree area affected,” Mr Simpson said.

A \$55,000 Woolworths Fresh Food Future grant, administered through Landcare Australia, is being used to set up a 10-hectare trial at the Simpson Farms property.

It will assess the efficacy of organic amendments, including molasses and humic acid, in arresting tree decline due to root rot.

The trial will also investigate the nutritional benefits of the organic compounds to avocado trees and the impact on fruit yields.

Mr Simpson said, if successful, the organic compounds could set up a more natural biological system to combat microbial root rot disease and improve soil structure.

Sugarcane and tomato growers have long recognised the benefits of amending soil with molasses and other organic additives to lift yields and increase populations of beneficial microbes that fight root parasites.

Mr Simpson believes the avocado industry could learn from their experience.

Simpson Farms sits near sugarcane producers, so molasses is readily available at low cost.

At the Simpson Farms trial site, each of the organic compound treatments was applied to the soil in January 2012 in individual rows of six-year-old Hass avocado trees.

Regular follow-up applications are being carried out during the three years of the trial.

Healthy Hass trees at the top of the rows will be compared to unhealthy trees at the end of each row to monitor tree health improvements.

The trial plots will be run under the same standard commercial management as the remainder of the farm’s orchard, so the treatment rows will receive supplementary fertiliser applications, and pest and disease control measures, as required.

Mr Simpson expects the avocado trees and soils receiving organic compounds in the trial will become healthier in the long run, as root rot problems are overcome and organic soil matter builds up.

The aim is to reduce tree decline (caused mainly by phytophthora root rot) by about 25 per cent within 18 months.

Within 24 to 36 months, significant improvements are also expected in avocado fruit yields and tree health among trees already in decline.

Improved tree health should boost water and nutrient use efficiencies, irrigation efficiencies and productivity, and the avocado trees should have a reduced dependency on root rot chemical fungicides (mainly phosphoric acid).

Across the property, the aim is to cut the use of synthetic fertilisers by 10 per cent within three years and reduce chemical weed spray applications, tractor use and irrigation pump time.

A combination of these factors should lead to a smaller carbon footprint and significant cost savings.

It has been estimated the company’s main farm produces about 2.6 tonnes per hectare of carbon emissions each year.

Mr Simpson said although this level was low, the company would benefit from any carbon footprint reduction that could result from using organic fertiliser compounds on trees.

“A smaller carbon footprint for us equates to better production efficiencies, lower costs and higher returns,” he said.



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Saving bilbies in the Territory

REMOTE sensor cameras set up in the Tanami Desert are capturing photographs of threatened species that could prove crucial to saving them from extinction.

Night shots of the Greater Bilby (walpajirri) scampering across the ground and sharing the same burrow system with rabbits and echidnas are an invaluable record of the rare marsupial.

The cameras were installed in June as part of a project to maintain and protect the bilby population and reduce predation by foxes at Sangster's Bore (Lungkartajarra), which is listed as one of the most significant sites for threatened species conservation in Central Australia.

Sangster's Bore provides critical habitat for three species classified as vulnerable to extinction – the Great Desert Skink, Brush-tailed Mulgara and Marsupial Mole. The site is also an important management zone for the Southern Tanami Indigenous Protected Area.

The project is funded by Territory Natural Resources Management and is a collaborative effort between the Central Land Council, Warlpiri Rangers and Desert Wildlife Services.

CLC Regional Land Management Officer Richie Brittingham says the rangers' traditional knowledge and expertise in animal tracking was used to find active burrows to locate seven of the 17 remote sensor cameras. The remaining 10 cameras were put near the fox-specific baiting dispensers to make sure non-target species such as dingoes, lizards and birds were not affected.

As well as evidence of bilby populations and the presence of rabbits and feral cats, the cameras have captured



Territory Natural Resources Management Warlpiri ranger Preston Kelly working in the field.

a fox taking bait from a specially designed dispenser for the first time ever seen in the wild.

Richie says the information gathered by this project will help with strategies to protect the bilby in the area, and with developing a model for protecting other isolated populations of threatened species in the Northern Territory.

"I see it as a long term project that

can not only maintain bilby populations in their natural habitat but also provide valuable information for other land managers in Central Australia facing the same problems with threatened species," he said.

"It is a combination of using new tools like remote sensor cameras and the ecological knowledge of rangers and senior traditional owners.

"The cameras and traditional

knowledge skills complement one another. Over the past three field trips the senior ladies were tracking an echidna and were very keen to find it – it was only after we checked the cameras one evening and its picture appeared that they could say, 'Yes, that's it, that's the one.'"

"It brought an immense amount of satisfaction, laughter and pride."

Warlpiri ranger Madeleine Dixon,

who has been working on the Sangster's Bore project since 2007, says she is sad that the number of bilbies has declined.

"In the past my people would see lots of bilbies everywhere," Madeleine said.

"The bilby has a dreaming story about the people who looked after them before and we have to look after them now. We have to bring back endangered animals, bring the populations back."

Madeleine has been tracking the bilbies as part of the fox baiting project including a recent 50 kilometre stretch recording animal activity and strategically laying and checking baits. The project is already collecting invaluable information on the threatened species.

"The cameras have shown three to four different types of animals sharing the one burrow including bilbies, echidna and rabbits... you can see introduced and native species co-habiting," he said.

"By investing in this project we are introducing new ways and using local traditional knowledge to really understand what is going on out in the desert."

The project will use funds next year to undertake an aerial survey to estimate distribution and number of bilbies across an additional 100 kms of the potential core habitat area.

Over the past year Territory NRM has funded 37 groups including 13 Indigenous land management groups, four pastoral landcare groups, eight pastoralists, four educational institutions, four conservation organisations, three urban land care groups and four local government and industry groups.

In Brief

Resources for groups: Does your Landcare group need some help promoting its activities? Maybe you'd like to run a Trees for Mum or Landcare for Singles event but aren't sure where to start.

The Resources section of www.landcareonline.com.au is jam packed full of useful brochures, templates, and how-to guides that are free for Landcare groups to download.

There is also free, customisable artwork available for bumper stickers, flyers, posters, and email signatures using the graphics from the new Landcare Community Service Announcement Campaign, LIFE – Landcare is for everyone.

Bankmecu video: Landcare Australia and bankmecu have been in partnership since 2008 to support the innovative and significant Conservation Landbank project in Victoria.

To learn about the Conservation Landbank and its outstanding work in restoring biodiversity across the five Conservation Landbank properties, you can watch a video explaining the project on the Landcare Australia YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/LandcareEducation

Other videos recently added to Landcare Australia's YouTube channel include National Landcare Conference delegates describing what Landcare means to them, profiles of the three finalists in the inaugural Bob Hawke Landcare Award, and an overview of last year's Westpac Education finalist outing in Taronga Zoo.

Adventure Conservation: Adventure Conservation is an opportunity to have fun and make a difference at the same time. Adventure Conservation activities support local Landcare efforts and deliver important conservation outcomes that could not be done by conventional paid staff because it is too expensive or logistically impossible.

In partnership with Landcare groups from across the catchment and beyond, the Hawkesbury-Nepean CMA in New South Wales has produced an exciting new brochure highlighting a range of Adventure Conservation activities.

The booklet can be downloaded by visiting www.hn.cma.nsw.gov.au

Assessing WA nitrogen to boost production

IN SOUTH-WEST Western Australia, the Gillamii Centre is finding that broadening its scope has strengthened its role in educating landholders about farming systems and the environment.

While the Cranbrook-based group was heavily geared to fencing remnant vegetation and revegetation in its early years, its role has changed as landholders' priorities have evolved.

A key component of the centre's current activity is being involved in profitable and sustainable agriculture.

Gillamii staff are developing activities focussed on productive agricultural systems, like researching methods of addressing non-wetting soils, field trials of new annual and perennial pasture species and Yield Prophet trial sites to assist with nitrogen decision-making based on soil water.

But Gillamii also continue to pursue strategic biodiversity activities, such as involvement in the Gondwana Link Project and a recent Biodiversity Fund project in partnership with the neighbouring North Stirling's Pallinup Natural Resources group to establish 1000ha of native vegetation per year over four years.

Since 2004 Gillamii has had a strong focus on increasing the adoption of perennial pastures, especially on under-productive land, with tall wheat grass and kikuyu becoming the two most



DAFWA Geraldton researcher Stephen Davies discusses setting up air seeders to band wetting agents at a non-wetting soil day.

widely adopted perennial pastures in the 400- to 500-millimetre rainfall zone on the South Coast.

A recent project addressing a gap in perennial pasture agronomy was a natural progression from this.

Gillamii teamed up with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) and North Stirling's Pallinup Natural Resources to develop a nitrogen response trial.

There had been very little work

undertaken in WA on efficient nitrogen rates for both kikuyu and tall wheat grass.

The Gillamii Centre set about to address this issue and to determine the most effective rates of nitrogen to profitably improve production.

Though the results are still undergoing analysis, the research has clearly demonstrated that the use of strategic nitrogen can increase the level of production of

these pastures to the point where they become a key performer of the farming system.

By maintaining a strong member base and keeping the conversation flowing with their key stakeholders like the Cranbrook Shire, South Coast NRM and DAFWA, the Gillamii Centre plans to keep evolving to provide a relevant service for both their large and small landholders.

Big moves for Little River group

By BRETT de HAYR,
National Landcare Facilitator

LANDCARE groups across the country are changing and innovating to meet the needs of their community.

In the process, they face funding challenges, and the need for increasingly time-poor people to fill organisational roles.

A series of case studies on innovative groups and organisations with the Landcare movement has been developed to track this process.

The case studies are different, but a common element is staying true to what their community wants and needs and the preparedness to try new approaches.

This first case study is the story of Little River Landcare, an agriculture-focused group in the Central West of NSW.

The organisation tackles issues with a triple-bottom-line approach, acknowledging that in order to bring about long-term environmental outcomes, you must work with the people and economics of the catchment. Little River Landcare's chief execu-

tive officer Pip Job said a critical element of its strategy was the employment of local staff, "not necessarily with previous experience in the field of natural resource management, but rather with skills in business management and the ability to communicate with the people they live with in their community".

Experience has given Little River Landcare an impressive track record in efficiently meeting the needs of its community; 91 per cent of every dollar in funding received is spent doing on-ground works and capacity building programs and only nine per cent is spent on overheads, including salary. This model of good governance, networking and professionalism paid good dividends for the organisation over many years.

But in 2011, Little River Landcare hit a major roadblock caused by uncertainty over funding.

After a rocky 12 months of analysing the organisation and its financial position, the Management Committee decided to shut the doors.

This announcement sent a ripple through Central West NSW communities.



Little River Landcare group field day in the Cumnock area of Central West NSW.

"Other Landcare groups were saying, 'If Little River goes, what chance have we got?'" Pip said.

At a public meeting in April 2012, the members strongly expressed their disapproval of the closure.

This brought about multiple changes that have launched the organisation into an exciting new future.

In a rural area where many community groups have folded and community services such as banks, shops, newsagencies and more have long since shut their doors, to lose the Landcare group was to lose one of the last and most significant social conduits for the community.

Pip said members shared an almost unanimous consensus that Little River "isn't just about environmental projects, but about people".

A new committee with a new vision was formed in August 2012.

Little River has a new committee structure that will focus on strategically on portfolios such as finance, partnerships, community:economic and community:social.

The new structure will allow for co-opting others to help them in areas where their own knowledge might be lacking, building a "brains trust" around the subject.

The committee members and their chosen associates will develop quarterly, annual and five-yearly goals for their portfolio.

The committee is focused on developing a robust business model for the organisation to help build resilience in the Little River catchment, its families and also the catchment's economy.

Why is the future promising?

Because Little River Landcare is focusing on a business model that is highly responsive to the needs of the catchment today.

As Pip said: "We are prepared to step away from "normal" Landcare activities and tackle some of the challenging issues facing rural communities."

"We are setting goals to become financially independent from government funding.

"We want to stand on our own two feet and develop relationships with investors who share our vision and can be incorporated into our activities.

"It's simple: Little River Landcare is evolving to meet the needs of its catchment and our timing couldn't be better!"



South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) board chairman Mark Uren with Fosky, SGLN's mascot.

Support Landcare on the road

VICTORIANS can now show their support for Landcare by choosing a special Landcare number plate for their vehicle.

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Ryan Smith launched the nation's first Landcare number plates at Waratah Bay in South Gippsland late last year.

"Driving around with Landcare number plates is a great way for people to fly the flag for this iconic grassroots movement," Mr Smith said.

Victoria is the first State to have special interest number plates dedicated to Landcare thanks to the efforts of the South Gippsland Landcare Network.

The number plates have a distinctive Landcare look with green lettering and its iconic hands.

"This is an innovative and fun way for Victorians to show their support for Landcare," Mr Smith said.

Each Landcare number plate has the slogan "Supporting Landcare" and motorists can choose a number between 001-LC and 100-LC, depending on availability.

"Out of Landcare's thriving community of more than 60,000 members across Victoria, the South Gippsland Landcare Network was the first to come up with this great idea and turn it into a reality," Mr Smith said.

"It's this kind of creative thinking, hard work and spirit that has kept Landcare thriving for a quarter of a century and it gives me great confidence that the movement is in good hands."

Mr Smith congratulated South Gippsland Landcare Network Facilitator Belinda Brennan for helping to develop the number plates.

The Coalition Government has provided \$12 million to fund 68 new Landcare facilitators across Victoria to support Landcare groups and networks, build expertise and partnerships, and assist with advice on project development.

The funds raised from the Landcare number plates will assist the South Gippsland Landcare Network to continue its work for the environment and community in protecting remnant vegetation, creating koala habitat and rehabilitating land slips.

Perfect Patch of Green

From sports fields and playgrounds, to recreation areas Turf Australia is supporting 15 schools and groups across Australia to experience a real green makeover, with the support of the local Turf Growers.

Real turf will be supplied by Turf Australia members to make a positive difference to "outdoor classrooms" for children and young people across Australia to enjoy.

For more information about Junior Landcare visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au



Tending to gardens for the future

THE motto: "Work responsibly to maintain, protect and enhance local and global environments", embedded in Scotch Oakburn College's Vision for Learning, has found expression through the Claremont Gardens project.

With a Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grant, Scotch Oakburn College purchased two compost bins, two worm farms, gardening tools, seeds and seedlings, and created seven garden beds.

During construction, a veggie gardening workshop was held along with days where several parents assisted classes with fencing, bird netting, and general work in the gardens.

Every class spent time each week, if not each day, tending their veggie garden and managing shared resources such as fruit trees and flower gardens.

Each class developed a plan for preparing the soil, watering, planting, weeding, mulching, and tending the vegetables as they grow.

Students were responsible for managing the composting systems and for collecting food scraps from the Boarding House each day – an activity which reduced the amount of food scraps going to landfill.

They co-operatively decided how best to harvest their food and learnt healthy ways to turn their veggies into tasty meals and condiments.

The project also took a wider view. Students learnt about "food miles" and the carbon and ecological footprints involved in food getting from seeds to the dinner plate, as well as wise water use, prevention of nutrient run-off into waterways and companion planting combined with garden design to minimise pests.

The school's curriculum has a "Sustainable Communities and Living Dimension" that considers how



Students from Scotch Oakburn College get involved in Junior Landcare.

communities are learning to live within our ecological, economic and social limits – a trend critical for our quality of life both now and in the future.

Students developed their ability to make sustainable living choices, adapt to rapid change and to under-

stand the many inputs into sustainability.

Scotch Oakburn College is a very active member of the global Round Square Schools Association, which has environment as one of its six precepts.

Students are taught the importance

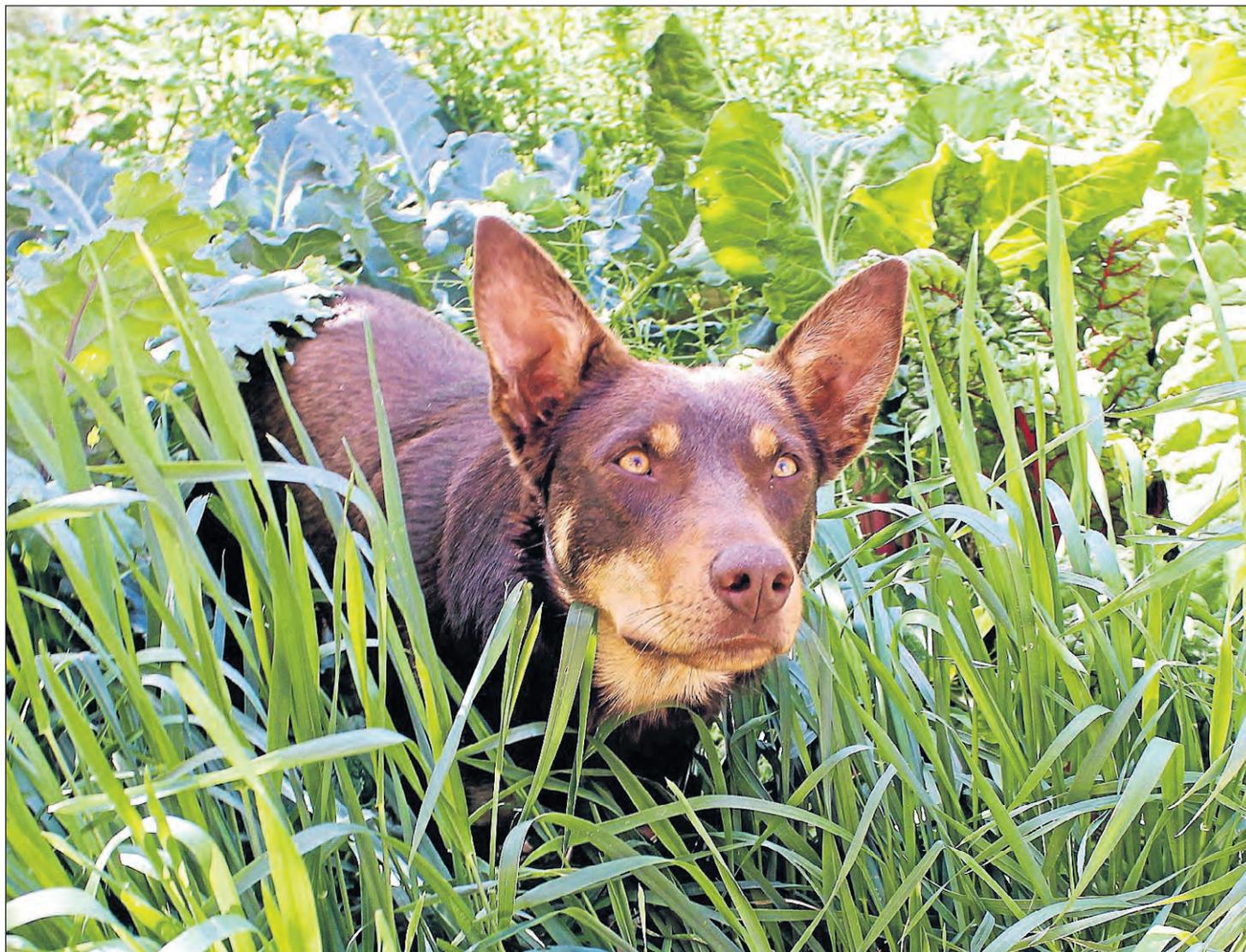
of tending to the future of the planet.

Round Square students are expected to demonstrate an active interest and concern for all natural environments, to be aware of proven problems and to play a practical role in tackling environmental issues.

Students are taught the fine balance

and the interdependence needed to maintain a healthy relationship between human beings and the planet.

Applications close for the first round of Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grants in 2013 at 5pm (AEDT) on February 15 and the second round closes on May 10.



Winner of the 7 years and under photo category in the Yates Junior Landcare Backyard Challenge "Boy in the spelt grass" by Dougall Hughes, 5.

Juniors capture backyard magic

THE Yates Junior Landcare Backyard Challenge winners have been announced, with children sharing their passion for their local environment and flair for photography and film making.

Participants were asked to submit entries that answer the question "how does your backyard grow?"

The winning photos and videos included themes of gardening, sustainability, water and drought.

Winner of the 8 to 11 years photo category Natasha Webb told the story behind her winning photograph.

"My backyard is filled with so many different colours. Every plant and flower is that colour for a reason, it sends a message to the birds and insects so they know what is safe to eat. Being different is a good thing."

Judy Horton, Yates Communications Manager, was thrilled to see such high-calibre entries from kids all over Australia that were passionate about their backyards.

"It's so wonderful to see kids discovering how their backyard grows and showing their appreciation for their local environment," she said.

"It's also exciting to know we have an up-and-coming generation of children that are so enthusiastic about gardening and the environment."

The entries were scored by a panel of high-profile judges, including Landcare Ambassadors Catriona Rowntree and Jack Thompson.

Among the prizes for the winners are Canon cameras and video cameras, and Yates and Junior Landcare prize packs.

■ To see a selection of the best images from the challenge, visit our YouTube channel, Landcare TV, and watch the Yates Backyard Challenge video, www.youtube.com/landcareeducation



The Lion-Landcare grant enabled Ged and Robyn Plunketts' Tamborine Pastoral Company to build a pad for building compost.

Building sustainable systems, cutting waste

DAIRY farms across southern Australia have made substantial gains to their management of pasture nutrient and dairy waste with the help of the Lion and Landcare Australia Environmental Sustainability Dairy Grants Program.

Henry, Annette and Neville Lindberg, who dairy in the Denmark region of Western Australia, worked with the Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee to design and determine the best location for a new solids trap.

They used the funding to buy pumps, pipes and fittings, the central elements in a system which has helped them control the dairy solid waste entering natural waterways.

An additional effect has been to increase the wellbeing of cows.

Instances of lameness are lowered because they tread through less waste in the dairy.

By allowing re-use of the waste, there is also the potential to decrease the use of manufactured fertiliser on pastures.

The project has included substantial community engagement.

The Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee was involved in the design and location of the solids trap and the Lindbergs encourage school excursions through the Mt Barker community college.

Two events to showcase the project

saw more than 100 people attend.

In south-east Queensland, the Lion-Landcare grant enabled Ged and Robyn Plunketts' Tamborine Pastoral Company to construct a one-hectare pad for building compost, along with a nutrient catchment dam to catch any run-off from the pad in wet weather.

This allows old hay, silage, manure and effluent to be turned into compost over a month-long process.

Any water collected in the catchment dam is recycled and sprayed on the compost to enhance the process.

As a result of the project, solid waste from the feed bay, hay racks, and runoff from the compost pad have been prevented from entering the Albert River Catchment.

The Plunketts have reduced their fertiliser inputs, leading to improved soil health and less environmental contamination.

The compost pad has become a demonstration site on the benefits of recycling.

Several field days have been held to discuss composting, with participants ranging from farmers, dairy suppliers and staff from the University of Queensland's Gatton dairy division.

"We now know how to improve our soils with compost while being environmentally friendly," said Robyn Plunkett, a veterinarian.

"We are most grateful to Landcare for the opportunity to progress our composting project and in doing so assist other farmers to look closely at soil and plant health."

Other recipients of the Lion-Landcare grant have also reported fulfilling results.

"Better utilisation of nutrients is a win-win situation for the environment and the farm business operator," said Craig and Tamara Zilm of Birdwood, South Australia.

"We thank Lion for the opportunity for us to do some environmental work on our farm that would otherwise not have been possible."

Robert McIntosh of Berry, NSW, agreed financial and environmental restraints would have meant such a project as effluent ponds, tree planting and extra fencing would have been impossible from normal farm cash flow if not for the assistance of Lion and Landcare Funding.

The 22 farms that received grants in late 2011 embarked on a wide range of projects, including new solids traps and storage pads, pump and effluent irrigation systems, composting of solid waste, concreting of main laneways, new effluent management infrastructure, improvements to effluent dams and laneways, and tree planting and fencing to protect riparian areas.

Be Natural boost for grassroots projects

A Christmas funding boost arrived for 20 community projects across Australia, courtesy of the Be Natural Landcare Community Garden Grants.

The successful projects, which will each receive funding of up to \$2500, share the common theme of focusing on engaging with local communities, fostering grassroots projects, encouraging sustainable living and raising awareness of the importance of local environmental action.

The grants go to community groups and schools working on a range of projects, including developing community gardens from the ground up, planting harmony and interactive sensory gardens, hosting bush tucker workshops, and collecting seeds to propagate seedlings.

Be Natural spokesperson Nik Scotcher said the company was delighted to continue its partnership with Landcare Australia, which since 2010 had supported 34 local environmental projects.

"It's great to see communities come together and develop plans

for such innovative and worthwhile projects," Mr Scotcher said.

"Be Natural is committed to helping people reconnect with nature and is delighted to be able to work with Landcare Australia to support these fantastic community projects.

"I really look forward to seeing the results."

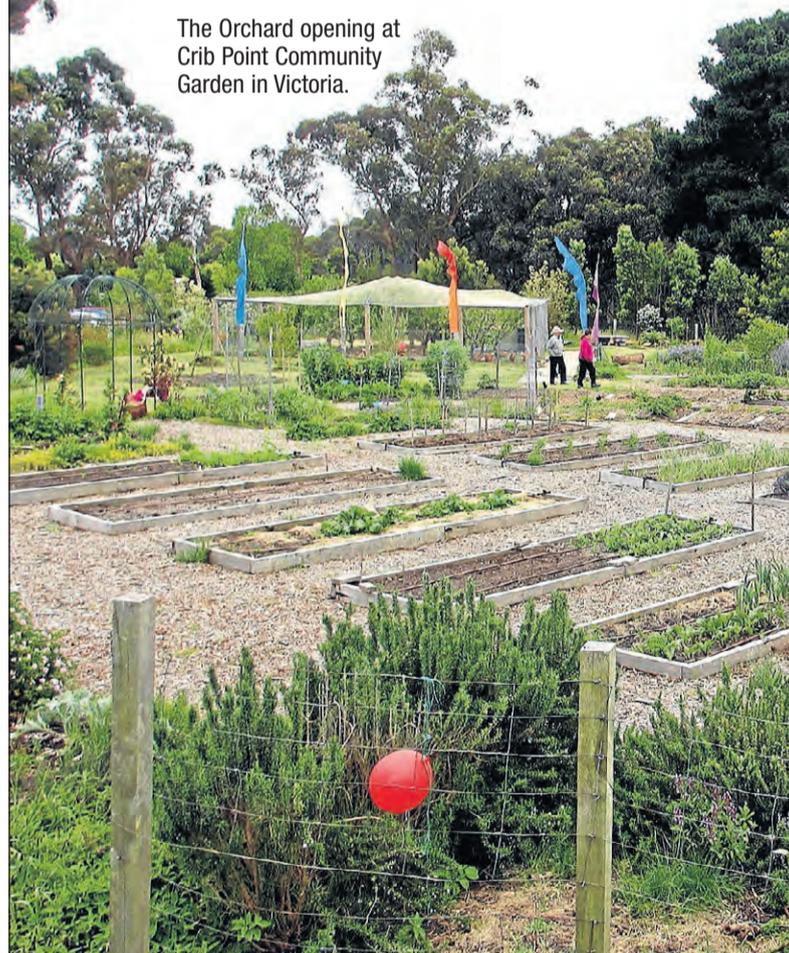
Landcare Australia chief executive officer Heather Campbell believes the projects funded through the grants program will be of great benefit to the local communities involved.

"The array of projects being funded through this grants program with Be Natural is a fine example of what can be achieved when communities work together, which is what Landcare is all about," she said.

"The gardens not only raise awareness of sustainable living, but also involve local people in redeveloping landscapes into productive natural environments."

■ To see the full list of grant recipients visit www.landcareonline.com.au

The Orchard opening at Crib Point Community Garden in Victoria.



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.



coles
HELPING AUSTRALIA GROW™

That's why, since 2008 more than 1500 grants have been provided through the Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grants program, to help Aussie schools and community groups establish their own garden projects.

coles.com.au/helpingaustraliagrow

To apply please visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au



BPAY's push for paperless to save trees

IN 2012, BPAY partnered with Landcare Australia in a campaign to encourage people to save trees by making the switch to paperless billing.

The "BPAY View" product seeks to eliminate paper bills by sending bills electronically, directly to your online banking.

In 2013, this initiative will fund two environmental groups to plant trees and support local volunteers to regenerate and revegetate their local patches.

The Billyrambija Landcare group in the beautiful highlands of NSW will be funded to plant over 2700 native seedlings to help rebuild the local landscape.

In Ivanhoe, Victoria, Friends of Burke Road will remove exotic weeds and plant a range of native seedlings around some of the most beautiful billabongs still in urban Melbourne.

Billyrambija Landcare group was formed in 2002 and has more than 35 members, all committed to environmental rehabilitation on their properties along the Wollondilly River and around Tarlo River National Park.

The group, which is made up of neighbouring landholders, is working together to restore river banks, improve water quality and revegetate wildlife corridors.

In the past 10 years the group has fenced vegetation remnants and planted wildlife corridors linking these remnants with a view to

increasing vegetation and biodiversity in the Billyrambija landscape and decreasing environmental problems such as weed invasion and erosion.

The group was also part of The Billyrambija Joint Venture project, which aimed to reintroduce koalas into Tarlo River National Park, along with the University of Western Sydney and the University of Sydney.

Planting of native seedlings to increase habitats for the new population of koalas is ongoing and the project has seen some success with group member Jorgen Nielsen reporting six rescued koalas have been successfully relocated to the park, from which three joeys have been born.

"The joint venture has been operating for six years, during which time, our Landcare group has had the task of radio-tracking the collared koalas," Mr Nielsen said.

"Thank you to BPAY for supporting our group to purchase 2700 seedlings for the autumn planting season, including a range of native species and koala food trees that will provide suitable habitat for koalas and increase local birdlife and other native animals in the area."

Tens of thousands of drivers on Melbourne's Eastern Freeway are unaware they are passing within metres of one of the last natural billabongs along the Yarra River.

Burke Road Billabong Reserve is a 9.5-hectare site on the Yarra River in East Kew.

The reserve is part of the Yarra



Jemina is one of six rescued and relocated koalas who now calls Billyrambija home.

wildlife corridor and is being replanted with indigenous plants.

The main Yarra trail passes through the reserve and joins the Koonung trail within the reserve.

The Friends of Burke Road volunteer group has been busy removing large areas of invasive weeds such as Wandering Tradescantia and Creeping Moth Vine, allowing the dormant seed bed beneath to regenerate.

Corporate volunteer teams organised by Landcare Australia have

recently helped out with bush regeneration and planting activities and RMIT university students have also been involved, conducting field trips and restoration work and writing a management plan for the site.

With the support of BPAY View and Landcare Australia the group hope to increase the number of regular volunteers and provide essential tools and resources to work more effectively.

The group also plans to purchase a range of new tools and protective

clothing that will allow volunteers to effectively remove noxious weeds.

Stanley Barker, team leader for the Friends of Burke Road, said the group is grateful for the support.

"The area is now being reinhabited by owls, parrots, possums and frogs, providing habitat for water birds when wet, and forming part of a corridor linking healthy vegetation along the Yarra... thank you to BPAY for recognising our work and supporting our actions!"

Honouring mums and growing a greener future

WHEN Angela Van Dam attended a Trees for Mum event in Sydney after losing her mother to cancer a couple of years earlier, she found it to be an "emotional yet fulfilling experience".

Two years later, having relocated, Angela worked with her local Landcare group, Woodend Landcare, and with the support of North Central CMA, to run an inaugural Trees for Mum event in the Victorian town. It was a great success.

Angela promoted the event through social media, local newspapers and even took to the streets with a group of friends and their babies to do a flyer drop.

People were encouraged to register in advance to ensure a tree would be available for them on the day.

Angela said the day itself was a great success, a trend she hopes to continue.

"We had about 150 people and we planted about 200 trees and grasses," she said.

"The feedback was overwhelming and we'll definitely be running it again this year."

Trees for Mum in Woodend is just one of many similar events that will take place on Sunday, May 12.

If you are a member of a Landcare group and have a planting

project that needs more hands than your group can access, why not think about getting involved in Trees for Mum?

Since it began as a single planting event in Sydney in 2002, Trees for Mum has since grown into a series of planting events, held on Mother's Day each year, to remember Mums who have passed away as well as celebrate those who are still with us.

Landcare Australia teamed up with Trees for Mum last year to develop a project kit and free promotional resources for any group or organisation that would like to get involved and run their own Trees for Mum event.

The Trees for Mum project kit gives a detailed outline of what's involved in running an event, and people can also download artwork for flyers, posters, registration form, event checklist and more, from the Landcare Australia website.

So if you have a lot of trees to get in the ground and May 12th works for you, why not plant some Trees for Mum this year?

■ **Download the Trees for Mum project kit and promotional templates from the resources section of www.landcareonline.com.au**



Angela Van Dam (third from left) and two other Woodend Mums celebrate their first Mothers Day at Trees for Mum with husbands and bubs.

Holden HELPs rebuild habitats

ON FEBRUARY 8, 2009, one of the Black Saturday bushfires that swept Victoria roared through Wildhaven Wildlife Shelter at St Andrews, killing 800 animals and incinerating 22 years of work by Alan and Stella Reid.

It has taken two-and-a-half years for the Reids to rebuild.

Following Black Saturday, Holden helped bushfire-affected communities, including St Andrews, by donating 300 vehicles to be used in bushfire relief efforts.

As a way of continuing and strengthening this support, Holden and Landcare Australia developed the Holden HELP program in 2010 to help rebuild native habitats affected by bushfires across four States and help ensure the safe rehabilitation of native animals.

Wildhaven Sanctuary was one of the first participants of the program and has been actively involved ever since.

Wildhaven Sanctuary owner Alan Reid said the HELP program "was made for us".

"We were delighted to be involved with Landcare and Holden and thrilled they cared about what we were doing," he said.

"We had been struggling and appeared to be falling through the cracks for anyone to help us."

A number of major projects have been completed as part of the Holden HELP program.

An enclosure to house kangaroos and wallabies prior to their release into the wild was built and a fire shelter was also constructed.

This shelter will accommodate young animals on high danger fire days to help avoid the tragic loss of those housed in the nursery that occurred in 2009.

The first aid enclosure provides an undercover respite and recovery area for wallabies and kangaroos, and is being rebuilt through the program.

Holden employees have also supported Wildhaven by volunteering their time to plant trees and grasses and undertake general maintenance jobs.

Stella Reid believes the sanctuary

would be lost without the Holden Captiva received as part of the Holden HELP program, used to transport injured and rescued kangaroos, wallabies, koalas and wombats.

"When I am rescuing and transporting wildlife, people see the branding and are very surprised such a big company cares about our wildlife.

"We have had many people say they will now buy a Holden knowing they care and are doing something practical to support bushfire affected communities."

Alan and Stella work closely with Healesville Sanctuary.

In future, they hope to collaborate on projects addressing endangered species and help them with evacuation in the event of another fire.

With ongoing support from Holden they are also working to bring koalas back to the areas where they were before Black Saturday.



LEFT: The Holden kangaroo enclosure sign, produced by Wildhaven to highlight the support they receive from Holden and Landcare Australia.

RIGHT: Two rescued baby wombats, will be cared for at Wildhaven for at least two years before being released into the wild.



A Ray of sunshine at Ourimbah

A SYDNEY labourer who found Landcare after a lack of work forced him into Centrelink's volunteer program has become one of the most dedicated members of Palm Grove Ourimbah Creek Landcare.

Ray Galway relocated to the NSW Central Coast 12 years ago, but found secure employment hard to find.

He was motivated to lead a productive life in his new home and began working with Palm Grove Ourimbah Landcare as part of Centrelink's volunteer program.

That means he has to travel up to 70 kilometres a week to attend the group's twice-weekly bush regeneration sessions.

Palm Grove Ourimbah Creek Landcare was established by a group of enthusiastic local residents who were determined to restore old farm paddocks on 23 hectares of public land near the Sydney Newcastle Freeway.

The site is a biological hotspot. About 190 plant species, 171 types of fungi and 117 bird species, including threatened species like *Melaleuca biconvexa* and *Syzygium paniculatum*, the Giant Barred Frog and Powerful Owl.

It is also part of an important wildlife corridor linking significant forested reserves to the north and south of Ourimbah Creek.

One of the first projects Ray worked on was the construction of a shelter with seats, now a hub where the group meets for morning tea.

Ray was also involved in the construction of 150 habitat boxes that have provided habitat for a variety of animals over the years. As he has worked on these projects, his skills in bush regeneration have developed.

Twelve years ago he didn't know the difference between privet and a rose bush: now he has the skills to identify weeds and propagate native plants.

Ray is no longer part of Centrelink's volunteer program, but he is an integral part of Palm Grove Ourimbah Creek Landcare and attends its meetings out of commitment to the group.

"I look around me and reflect on what we have here and thinking back to what this area was like 12 years ago, I feel a sense of achievement" said Ray.

"We have done so much in 12 years." He is also motivated because of his

love of animals. The group's work has provided important habitat for native animals like swamp wallabies, platypus, wombats, bandicoots and snakes.

For their part, members of Palm Grove Ourimbah Creek Landcare are delighted to have Ray as part of their group and feel he has contributed in many ways especially with his knowledge of local birds.

The group has received funding from the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to enhance native vegetation on part of the land they are working with, including a wetland site, and recently received a \$240,000 grant from the NSW Environmental Trust to be spent over six years on weed removal.

The weed removal project aims to help regenerate this section of Ourimbah Rainforest which will not only improve biodiversity but also reduce sediment entering Tuggerah Lakes from Ourimbah Creek.

■ Visit sites.google.com/site/palmgroveourimbahcreeklandcare/ for more details about the work of this group.

Do you have an interesting Landcare story?
Are you a land owner that is doing something different or a volunteer that has a Landcare story that will inspire and encourage others?

Send your stories to enquiries@landcareaustralia.com.au for potential inclusion in upcoming issues of Landcare In Focus. Landcare In Focus is a 12 page colour publication that appears inside Rural Press weekly newspapers around Australia.

If you would like free copies of Landcare In Focus to circulate to members of your group and network, send us an email with your postal address and the quantity you need to enquiries@landcareaustralia.com.au or call (02) 9412 1040



Landcare In Focus
LANDCARE AUSTRALIA'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Published courtesy of



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Budgewoi's winning restoration

NEARLY 50,000 hours of on-ground work across 17 years earned Budgewoi Beach Dunecare the prestigious Biodiversity Conservation Award.

The award, part of the 2012 Keep Australia Beautiful Australian Sustainable Cities Awards, recognises the long effort undertaken by volunteers on the NSW Central Coast in restoring two kilometres of dune vegetation at Budgewoi Beach.

Local volunteer and president of Budgewoi Beach Dunecare Phil Heaton said the dunes looked like a "pasture of Bitou Bush" 17 years ago.

Now, Mr Heaton describes the dunes as "a thriving and balanced coastal ecosystem", with key access points and raised viewing platforms allowing greater protection and appreciation of the coastline.

The eradication of weeds such as bitou bush has been a key focus of the group.

It developed a systematic program involving primary, secondary and follow-up maintenance weeding.

More than 50,000 local native provenance plants such as the *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, assorted Banksia and Eucalyptus have also been propagated in a nursery onsite and planted during the most favourable months, from March through to October.

The group has actively engaged with local residents through community planting days and site visits that attract Landcare organisations, school groups, TAFE, the University of Newcastle and the local community.

Budgewoi Dunecare recently partnered with the Hunter-Central Rivers



Members of Budgewoi Dunecare earned the Biodiversity Conservation Award for their efforts in restoring two kilometres of dune vegetation at Budgewoi Beach.

Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Wyong Shire Council through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country to remove noxious weeds and

plant natives in a wetland adjacent to the dunes and the Budgewoi Holiday Park.

"The people of Budgewoi can enjoy a coastal environment that has a

more stable dune system that has been transformed from fragmented weed-ridden sections of vegetation to a more connected ecosystem providing a healthy habitat for local

wildlife," Mr Heaton said.

■ For more information about Budgewoi Dunecare visit www.budgewoibeachdunecare.com.au/

Investing in a sustainable future for 50 years

AUSTRALIANS have a long and proud history of "giving it a go", but it takes more than blood, sweat and tears to go the distance and build a company that represents the world's largest integrated bauxite mining, alumina refining and aluminium smelting system.

This year Alcoa of Australia celebrates 50 years of operating and investing in Australia and its people; and it is a time to reflect on past achievements, challenges faced and celebrate the people who made the achievement possible.

The company's rich history started out in Western Australia's Darling Range in 1957 when the Western Mining Corporation (WMC), then one of Australia's most successful mining companies, began exploring for bauxite.

After deposits were confirmed and prospects deemed bright WMC invited two other Australian mining companies, Broken Hill South Ltd and North Broken Hill Ltd, to form a new company and develop an integrated aluminium industry.

An injection of funds was needed, so the new joint venture approached the Aluminum Company of America for help to develop the sizable bauxite deposit.

The companies struck up a partnership, forming Alcoa of Australia in June 1961.

Alcoa's first bauxite was mined from Jarrahdale, east of Perth, in 1963, supplying Alcoa's Kwinana refinery on the coast 35



Alcoa employees and community members.

kilometres south of Perth.

The first alumina shipment left Kwinana port aboard the *Lake Sorrel* on 22 February 1964 bound for Alcoa's Point Henry smelter in Geelong, Victoria.

One month later the first export shipment of aluminium ingots was despatched from Geelong to Japan.

Together with Alcoa of Australia's Mining Operations, Kwinana Alumina Refinery and Point Henry Smelter also celebrate 50 years of operations this year.

Alcoa of Australia's managing director Alan Cransberg has been with the company for more than 30 years, from the early days as a graduate civil engineer to leading a 5000-strong workforce today.

"It's a remarkable milestone and testament to the many talented, courageous and industrious people who have worked and currently work for Alcoa," he said.

"We have many long-term employees who have clocked up 25, 30 and 40 years of service;

without their continuing dedication and commitment we would not be here today celebrating this remarkable achievement.

"And while Alcoa has contributed to the nation's economic and social prosperity, through royalty and tax payments, local purchasing, jobs and wages, it's the regional communities in which we operate that are the real beneficiaries.

"Each year we invest around \$5 million in a variety of

community programs and dedicate hundreds of hours in people time and in-kind support. "Our employee volunteering program is second to none and each year we hold our Month of Service initiative for employees to show how much change can occur by working together within our communities."

One community partnership that has stood the test of time is Greening Australia, the environmental landscape protection, restoration and education organisation.

Alcoa and Greening Australia celebrated a 30-year milestone last year in what is thought to be one of Australia's longest and most successful corporate and environmental NGO partnerships.

With Alcoa's past built on the qualities of aluminium – known for being lightweight, endlessly recyclable, corrosion resistant and integral to everyday life – its future certainly looks bright as look around and see the multitude of products now using aluminium.

Planes, trains, cars, buses, laptops, iPads, mobile phones, DVDs, building materials, outdoor furniture, screw cap bottle tops, beverage cans, aluminium foil, the list goes on.

It is hard to imagine what the next 50 years will bring but you can be sure aluminium will feature strongly, as will Alcoa of Australia.

Both are committed to advancing each generation to create a sustainable future.

Powerful alliance boosts school Landcare learning

IN LATE 2012, Huntly Primary School and Northern Bendigo Landcare Group took on a joint project, Kids Teaching Kids, with funding from CitiPower and Powercor and Junior Landcare through their Powerful Partnerships Grants Program.

The grants, distributed late last year, enabled schools and Landcare groups across Victoria to undertake joint projects.

Huntly Primary School and Northern Bendigo Landcare group, who have been working together for the past three years, used the funding to undertake their joint project, Kids Teaching Kids on the Bendigo Creek.

This full-day event, held in November 2012, saw kids from Huntly Primary School lead students from other local schools in a range of practical on-site environmental activities.

The Northern Bendigo Landcare Group worked closely with the students on the activities, which included treeplanting, habitat surveys, Indigenous heritage, stormwater education, water quality testing and macroinvertebrate sampling.

CitiPower and Powercor regional asset manager Peter Church is delighted to see the significant impact the program is having with local community groups.

"We are proud of the services we provide to local communities, both as a distributor of electricity and as a supporter of local programs and initiatives," he said.

"The Powerful Partnerships Junior Landcare Grants program has enabled local schools and Landcare groups to work together to develop and undertake environmental projects that will make a real difference to their communities.

"We are thrilled to have been able



Huntly Public School students Bryce, Abby and Grace with Peter Church, Nicole Howie and Amy Gillett.

to help them meet their environmental goals."

To be eligible for a grant, primary or secondary schools needed to partner with a Landcare group and undertake environmental ac-

tivities in their local area.

The grants were available to schools and Landcare groups in the CitiPower and Powercor distribution areas of inner Melbourne and central and western Victoria.

■ To learn more about the CitiPower and Powercor Junior Landcare Powerful Partnerships Grants Program and read a full list of recipients, visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au

In Brief

LIFE website needs your input: Does your group need some new volunteers or maybe you have a one-off project that requires some additional support?

You can now actively search for volunteers by posting an ad on our new LIFE jobs board.

It's free and easy to use and will help you reach people who want to get involved in Landcare.

Our new LIFE Stories section is all about sharing the fantastic stories that are out there in the Landcare community.

So if you have a great Landcare story to share, simply submit 300 words and a video or photo and it will be shared for everyone to enjoy.

■ Visit www.landcarelife.com.au to see how you can get involved.

Bushfire recovery: Our thoughts are with those affected by this year's bushfire season across the country.

As we go to print, Landcare Tasmania has information on its website about donating to the Bushfire Recovery Appeal through the Tasmanian Landcare Fund and relief funding for farmers in affected areas.

The organisation is also compiling a list of businesses in the state offering special support.

See www.landcareaus.com.au to find out more.

If you would like to help in any of the bushfire-affected areas across the country, you can contact groups in your local area.

Organisations such as your local Landcare group or BlazeAid may need assistance for recovery operations.

■ Visit www.blazeaid.com for more information.

Durham Downs gets social: Rural women from across three States gathered at Durham Downs Station in far western Queensland late last year to learn more about the use of social media in natural resource management and sustainable grazing techniques.

The women engaged in a workshop with 'advocate' and Twitter queen Stephanie Coombes, who designed and established the Careers in Australian Agriculture website, and regularly uses social media to communicate the message of agriculture, bridging the rural urban divide.

Desert Channels Queensland was also on hand at the event to provide women with access to further information on sustainable land management and network with women across the Desert Channels region.

The workshop was coupled with various workshops and guest speakers as part of a larger Durham Downs Station Ladies Day that encouraged women to develop self confidence, sense of responsibility and well-being, encouraging their involvement in natural resource management decision-making in a familiar, comfortable and supportive environment.

The social media workshop was possible thanks to assistance from Desert Channels Queensland.

Discover many ways to care at Melbourne

STILL looking for a new year's resolution? Stop by the Landcare marquee at Melbourne's Sustainable Living Festival from February 15 to 17 for some ideas on how make a difference to the environment.

"About 120,000 people are expected to visit the festival, so we're looking forward to sharing with people how easy, fun and rewarding it is to put their hand up to get involved in Landcare," said the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Landcare project officer John Robinson.

"Landcare groups welcome volunteers whether they have an hour, a day, or can help out more regularly with on-ground projects."

Traditional forms of volunteering with Landcare remain popular, with newer, more flexible ways emerging to accommodate the growing need for short-term, one-off, or occasional volunteering opportunities.

At the marquee, the Landcare team will share information on the different options for getting involved.

"Volunteering with Landcare is a great way for people of all ages, backgrounds, interest and skills to meet like-minded people making a

difference to our environment," Mr Robinson said.

"Opportunities range from a day out planting trees to an afternoon helping clean up weeds around the local community – it all needs many hands to achieve."

Children visiting the Landcare tent will have the opportunity to learn about and interact with a range of bugs, including katydids, dung beetles and butterflies.

Also on offer will be opportunities to learn more about ways to get involved with urban-based groups who care for and restore areas of public land, including local parks and reserves.

Visitors can also pick up tips on how rural landowners, groups and local communities come together to plan, organise and collectively develop practical ideas to address land management and environmental issues.

■ Visit the Landcare marquee at the Sustainable Living Festival, which will be on the river promenade from Federation Square to Birrarung Marr, between Friday 15 and Sunday 17 February 2013, or to find out more about Landcare visit www.landcarevic.net.au



Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Landcare corporate partnerships facilitator Karen Brisbane and Department of Sustainability and Environment Landcare project officer John Robinson in the Landcare marquee at Melbourne's 2011 Sustainable Living Festival.



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 the deadlines below and must include:

- One article of no more than 300 to 600 words saved as a Microsoft Word document or a PDF.
- No more than 2 or 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. Also, please ensure we have permission from any people featured in the photos to use these photos in Landcare In Focus
- Contact information for more information if required

Dates for 2013 are as follows:

Publication Date	Submission Deadline
May 2	March 29
August 1	June 28
November 7	October 4



Aboriginal artist Walangari helps to create a traditional mural and sculpture with students.

Garden rejuvenation

THANKS to a Westpac Student Sustainability Leadership grant through Junior Landcare, students at Northside Montessori School in Sydney have transformed a weedy disused area of land into an interactive and productive indigenous garden.

"This experience has been so empowering and positive for the children," said Northside Montessori School principal Barbara Maxfield.

"Through Junior Landcare and Westpac, the children were able to see a project go from a sketch to a reality.

"This not only increased their appreciation of the environment and of Australian Indigenous culture, but it also helped to create a community spirit where everyone contributed toward a shared goal."

The students researched, selected and planted the native garden after separating the area into three distinct zones – bush tucker, bush medicinal and bush craft.

Introduced weed species were removed from a 28 square metre area and were replaced by over 40 Indigenous plants.

Through their research and interaction with the space, the students now feel a strong connection to this area – they realise how they can have a posi-

tive impact on the environment.

Students tested the acidity level of the soil and in groups researched the particular needs of each plant.

After removing the weeds, adding native top soil and organic material the pH level was adjusted so it was more suitable for native plants.

These steps were valuable activities, in the science curriculum particularly, giving insight into the needs of plants, ecosystems and land use.

Students then researched and used computers to create individual plaques which contained information on classification, plant uses, history and distribution.

Since the garden has been planted, the children are taking turns watering, weeding and tending the garden.

As the plants grow they hope to harvest some of the plants and use them in cooking and to make bush craft.

With help from Aboriginal artist Walangari, students studied traditional Aboriginal symbols and created a garden mural and a sculpture.

Walangari spoke with the children about traditional Aboriginal people, land use and the spiritual connection with the land.

He also turned the garden into a

beautiful 3D dot painting by placing stones in patterns around the plants, explaining to the children that like the circular rings of stone that connected the plants, they too were connected to nature.

The whole "village" has been involved with the Indigenous garden project including parent volunteers, together with students who helped to clear the area of weeds and prepare the soil for planting.

A parent volunteer who is a landscape gardener helped considerably, and a local primary school, the Bush School, donated raw materials for the garden sculpture.

Local high school Forestville Montessori High School allowed students to visit and watch their bush regeneration project in action.

Students were able to discuss local traditional Indigenous land use and the importance of protecting native plants.

Local nursery Harvest Seeds and Native Plants in Forestville helped source the plants and provided an excellent resource for information about plant needs and traditional plant uses.

Several parents donated books on Indigenous studies, gardening and Aboriginal art.

Seed search is on to maintain native biodiversity

PROFESSIONAL seed collectors are searching north-western NSW for stocks of wild seed from more than 100 different native species, particularly from rare and endangered ecological plant communities across the Brigalow Nandewar region.

The aim is to collect at least 200 kilograms of local provenance seed that can then be used in plantings to re-connect key remnant areas of native vegetation.

These plantings will increase biodiversity in the region and extend habitat linkages for native species that may be forced to migrate to survive as climatic conditions change.

Five professional collectors are harvesting seed on behalf of the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

The seed will be used to help re-establish threatened ecological plant communities in high priority areas.

Ecological Consultant Dave Carr is co-ordinating the collection process.

"We've already collected a substantial quantity of Red Ash and Sticky Wallaby Bush seed from a semi-evergreen thicket plant community on the slopes of the Nandewar range between Bingara and Boggabri," he said.

According to Mr Carr, many of the

target species may never have been collected for seed propagation before, so there are likely to be some exciting discoveries ahead.

"We'll be sending the seed off to the University of New England (UNE), where PHD student Lorena Talona, will identify the conditions necessary for germination," he said.

"If the germination process is simple, we may be able to plant the seed using direct drill equipment.

"However if species prove more difficult to germinate, propagation in a nursery may be required."

"Acacia species are particularly suitable for direct seeding, which is a fast and cost effective method of revegetation compared to planting individual seedlings.

"However, some key target species such as Brigalow and Weeping Myall are difficult to source as the flowering and seeding times of these trees can be unpredictable."

These species often need to be collected from Threatened Ecological Communities which requires a scientific license.

"We have also been chasing seed of other Acacias, Sennas and Eremophilas, with the grasses to follow during summer," Mr Carr said.

"With other species, adequate quantities are much easier to obtain.

"With Eucalypt seed, you don't need a lot, as a little goes a long way.

"When harvesting Silver Leaf Iron Bark or Bimble Box, you can gather 10,000 individual seeds in just a gram of seed material."

The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA's seed collectors are searching for complete collections of plant types that make up each native vegetation community, including trees, shrubs, grasses, and vines.

Seed collectors must keep accurate records of where each species has been collected, so the seed can then be best matched to revegetation sites, particularly with regard to soil type, rainfall, and temperature range.

"We need to ensure the seed can adapt to the new revegetation site, which is why it's so important to collect local provenance seed, that's seed that has originated in the same area in which it will be planted," Mr Carr said.

"Local provenance seed has a much greater propagation success rate and is more likely to survive long enough to germinate seed that will produce a second generation of vegetation.

"When we're revegetating sites on



PHD student Lorena Talona and Nick Reid from the University of New England inspect the CMA seed bank at Moree.

the plains, we need seed that can cope with a hot summer climate, whereas on the high country, plants need to be frost tolerant.

"Collectors are also asked to collect from at least 20 different plants that are well spaced apart at each harvest site, in order to increase the likelihood of genetic diversity."

Prior to planting, the seed has to be stored in cool, dry conditions to

maintain viability, so the seed will be refrigerated in air tight containers at the CMA's seed bank storage site in Moree.

The seed collected through the Brigalow Nandewar Biolinks Project – Connecting Cattle, Crops and Creatures will be planted in new revegetation sites as the project is implemented over the next four years.



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