

Starting a new conversation

THE 2014 National Landcare Conference set the scene for a frank and robust conversation about sustainable land management challenges.

According to the post-event survey, attendees enjoyed the 25th-themed event. In particular a CSIRO Futures presentation on megatrends and 94 per cent said they would apply learnings from the three-day biennial gathering in their Landcare work.

A quarter of a decade since Landcare was launched nationally, the conference debated what next for Australia's biggest volunteer environmental movement.

That question was considered by a diverse panel, within a context framed by pioneers opening the historic conference. Panel members included the likes of Australian Conservation Foundation former head Phillip Toyne and the first National Landcare Facilitator Andrew Campbell.

First assistant secretary of the Sustainability and Biosecurity Policy Division within the Australian government Department of Agriculture, Ian Thompson, discussed the new National Landcare Program and outlined the department's views on whole-of-government approaches to natural resource management, while Environment Minister Greg Hunt set aside a prepared speech, going into overtime answering questions.

Minister Hunt outlined the Australian government's vision for Landcare and detailed new funding opportunities, such as revegetation under the Renewable Energy Target.

He has also indicated additional resources will be available under a 10-year scheme targeting feral cats, which number about 20 million in Australia, as a key strategy to protect threatened species.

Professor Campbell, now director of the Research School for the Environment and Livelihoods at Charles Darwin University, told

Landcare in Focus a re-think was needed to ensure Landcare continued to thrive locally and set an example on the global stage.

"Australia has all the pieces of the jigsaw to have the world's best natural resource management framework: local grassroots voluntary groups; regional bodies that take a whole-of-landscape perspective across all land tenures; the ability to take a targeted national approach to national assets," he said.

"We have a market mechanism that actually provides incentive to get private sector investment in a lot of those things."

Professor Campbell said the recommendation in his first national report in 1990 for all Landcare co-ordinators and facilitators to be employed at a local government level was still relevant today.

"If all those positions had been held in local government, you would have had a massively greater buy-in by local government; the vast majority of decisions that affect natural resources or waste – they are made at a local government level," he said.

Other ideas floated by the forward-looking panel on the final day of the Australian government-funded conference, co-ordinated by Landcare Australia, were as diverse as its participants, but they shared a belief: Landcare should remain enmeshed in Australian life.

There is an imperative that the movement grows, several panelists said.

"We have a finite planet with only so much capacity to support humans, and the evidence is that we're currently exceeding that capacity by about half the human population," said the Australian Conservation Foundation's Kelly O'Shanassy.

"What I think we need to do in the next 25 years is to massively boost what we're doing."

Farmer and the Climate Institute chair Mark Wootton, from Hamilton,



TV gardener Costa Georgiadis presents the Junior Landcare Team Award to Lansdowne Crescent Primary at the 2014 National Landcare Awards – a key part of the National Landcare Conference. Winners details and case studies are available at landcareonline.com.au/2014nationalawards.

Victoria, said there were considerable counter-stresses on Landcare.

On one hand, rural areas can't get enough people to properly run volunteer fire services or football clubs. The response to Landcare in peri-urban areas is still strong, Mr Wootton said, but for 70 per cent of the land mass, people are scattered and time-poor.

On the other, the models are saying that large areas of Australia won't be able to produce food in the way they have done in the past, so some areas will have to produce food to a level they haven't done before.

"Landcare sits in there in making sure that intensive food production goes with a whole lot of other outcomes, including biodiversity, getting rid of carbon pollution – really fundamental things."

But he said more leadership was needed, including bipartisan support from politicians, conservation groups and farmers groups.

One thing that Landcare need not panic about, said Ella Maesepp from Katanning, Western Australia, is the lack of youth within its ranks.

"Landcare issues are important; we just have to make sure the systems make them want to engage." Ms Maesepp said.

She produced a report, "Engaging 20-somethings in Landcare", for the former Australian Landcare Council.

As well as connecting with youth, Landcare could greatly benefit from stronger connections to the city, suggested Stefan Hajkowicz, leader of CSIRO Futures division.

"Food connects city and country, but it also connects farmers to consumers with buying power," Dr Hajkowicz said.

"We're heading into a future where funding is less secure."

"I think that's a fact not just in Australia... Connecting with the consumer is part of that answer."

National Farmers' Federation sustainability committee chair Gerald Leach pointed to growing Asian demand for food that is known to be safe and ethically produced.

Australia's challenge is to demonstrate the quality and ethical attributes of its food to this vast market.

"I think we really have to be on the front foot," he said of the phenomenon.

"And Landcare has put us in really good stead."

"In 25 years we've gone from the place as a bit of a mess, to being confident that we haven't just repaired some of the damage – some, not all –

but we're anticipating what might need to be done. We've really got to get ahead of the game, rather than just patching up as we go.

"The important thing from Landcare's perspective is that we have to look at alternative sources of funding. Let's see how we can make it work."

Mr Leach noted the Australian government's initiative for the biggest environmental deployment and outlined this as part of the solution. "We have to embrace the Green Army," he told the audience.

The key thing for Landcare is to keep going, Ms O'Shanassy said.

"I look at the changes we've made in the past 25 years."

"A wind farm is now cheaper to build than a new coal plant because of leadership, pride and people like you."

"We need to get more people to lead and grow."

"The model is great; we just need to get bigger to join the pockets of hope across the country."

■ Key presentations from the National Landcare Conference can be viewed at landcareonline.com.au/nationalconference. Continue the social media conversation via #Landcare25.



LEFT: National Farmers' Federation sustainability committee chair Gerald Leach.

Encouraging innovative rural research partnerships

A NEW \$100 million Australian Government grants program, Rural R and D for Profit, is now open for applications.

The program aims to improve farm-gate profitability and deliver real outcomes for Australian farmers.

Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce launched the \$100 million rural research and development (R and D) grants program at the Regional Outlook conference in Armidale.

In the program, all 15 rural research and development corporations (RDCs) can apply for funding.

However, to be eligible, RDCs must partner with one or more researchers, research agencies, funding bodies, businesses, producer groups, or not-for-profit organisations, and

the partnership should provide a contribution (cash or cash/in-kind) at least equal to the requested Commonwealth grant funding.

"This program is a practical investment in the future of Australia," Mr Joyce said.

"It will fund nationally coordinated, strategic research that delivers real returns at the farmgate."

"Rural R and D for Profit is designed to deliver research that directly improves productivity and profitability across Australian agriculture."

R and D makes a significant contribution to growth in agricultural productivity—in fact, ABARES estimates for each dollar the government invests in agricultural R and D,

farmers generate \$12 within 10 years.

"Rural R and D for Profit will focus on delivering cutting edge technolo-

This program encourages industry, researchers and private organisations to think outside the box and develop new collaborations

– Barnaby Joyce

gies and making research accessible for primary producers, while better leveraging co-ordination and co-operation between stakeholders," Mr Joyce said.

"This program encourages industry, researchers and private organisations to think outside the box and

develop new collaborations that form the basis for ongoing innovation and growth of Australian agriculture and achieve demonstrable benefits for

our primary industries."

In round one, applications must address one or more priorities in the following research, development and extension areas:

- increase the profitability and productivity of primary industries
- increase primary products' value

- strengthen on-farm adoption and improve information flows

- strengthen primary producers' ability to adapt to opportunities and threats.

"There are a range of issues in Australian agriculture that could be managed through this process, such as improvements to wild dog control, better techniques to control parthenium and blackberry control using pathogens," Mr Joyce said.

■ Applications for the first round must be received by the Department of Agriculture by 11.59pm (AEST) on 15 December 2014. For more information about the Rural R and D for Profit program visit agriculture.gov.au/rd4profit

In Brief

Shaping national program:

The National Landcare Advisory Committee has been established to advise the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board on the development and implementation of the National Landcare Program.

The committee will provide advice on the effective and efficient achievement of program priorities and advise on options and opportunities for continual improvement, particularly in relation to engaging stakeholders and maintaining community participation.

■ Visit nrm.gov.au

Green Army project help:

Landcare Australia is inviting Landcare groups to contact them for help applying to be a Project Sponsor for the second round of Green Army projects which have just been announced.

The latest round of applications, closing on December, 9 allows the Department of the Environment to match a Landcare group with a service provider it has worked with in the past.

Landcare Australia, in partnership with workforce expert ManpowerGroup, is one of five service providers tasked with ensuring selected project sponsors receive the necessary support to meet the logistical and administrative requirements of each project.

■ To find out how you can get a Green Army team in your area, visit landcareonline.com.au/greenarmy, email greenarmy@landcareaustralia.com.au or contact project officer Bruce Ashley, (02) 8440 8805.

LANDCARE in Focus is proudly supported by the Australian government Department of Agriculture 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 300-600 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 that we have permission from any people featured in the photos to use

National Landcare Programme

these photos in Landcare in Focus

● Contact information for more information if required

This is the last issue for 2014 – we hope you have a restful and productive New Year!

Dates for 2015

| Publication | Deadline |
|-------------|------------|
| February 19 | January 15 |
| May 21 | April 16 |
| August 20 | July 16 |
| November 19 | October 15 |



ABOVE and RIGHT: An eroded gully. A dam wall was built to stop erosion, the area was fenced and treed and is now a permanent water supply and wildlife habitat.

LEFT: Victorian finalist in the 2014 Bob Hawke Landcare Awards Cam Nicholson and his Kelpie mate.



ABOVE and RIGHT: A run-down paddock was fenced with direct tree seeding and sown to permanent pasture.



Regeneration success stories

Cam Nicholson's property at St Leonards, 30 kilometres east of Geelong on the Bellarine Peninsula.



What Landcare's 25th means

UPDATE

Tessa Jakszewicz

LAL chief executive



LANDCARE Australia was launched with support from government, farming and conservation communities to raise funds and awareness for one of Australia's leading volunteer movements and last month we celebrated our 25th anniversary.

To mark the occasion, we have taken an in-depth look at what we have achieved – and are delighted to articulate how our work has played a crucial role in supporting the grassroots work of Landcare.

In a quarter of a century we have

to play an important role in sustaining Landcare's legion of volunteers and also engages our business leaders and the Australian public in Landcare's purpose.

Engaging with the non-government sector is crucial in building support for Landcare by creating understanding of the important role our farmers play in producing our food while protecting our landscapes and the responsibility we all have to protect our environment.

Our awareness campaigns helped rapidly build the number of Landcare groups and community participation in Landcare activities.

Today there are some more than 5300 Landcare, Bushcare and related groups and more than 11,000 Junior Landcare groups and schools registered on the National Landcare Directory, which we manage.

movement, it has become one of Australia's most recognised brands.

Landcare Australia also does its bit to connect communities in rural and regional areas and help bring the bush to the city through educational activities and distributing grants for gardens and other sustainability initiatives.

This past financial year, we answered about 7000 inquiries from the general public and directly engaged more than 3000 corporate employees across Australia who dedicated a day of volunteering at more than 125 corporate environmental volunteering events and their organisations also provided supporting funds to the host local Landcare groups.

You can read about what was achieved in 2013-14, as well as detailed analysis of our performance and future aims, in our upcoming annual report on our website before the year's end.

The charter of Landcare Australia has remained consistently to:

- promote the Landcare principles of protecting, restoring and sustainably managing Australia's natural environment and its productivity;
- promote the achievements of the Landcare movement;
- attract non-government funds to support local Landcare, distribute funds to support on-ground projects, and
- educate the community and schools about Landcare.

Earlier this year, Landcare Australia, in partnership with ManpowerGroup, was announced as one of five service providers to have oversight of projects selected under the federal government's Green Army Program.

With the second round open for applications for potential project sponsors until December 9, Landcare Australia would like to encourage you to contact us for guidance and support in developing a project sponsorship proposal or to assist with any queries or advice.

In this latest round, applicants can identify their ongoing relationship with Landcare Australia, which may help to secure us as your service provider.

Where possible, the government will take this into when allocating projects to each service provider.

Landcare Australia will work collaboratively with selected project sponsors to guide Green Army projects to achieve the best possible results, both for the Landcare community and the environment.

We will continue to work hard to ensure the Landcare community makes the best use of resources and funding available, while educating and promoting Landcare and seeking new opportunities for the next 25 years and beyond.

Much has been achieved but there is much more to do!

We wish you a restful summer break and look forward to working with you in 2015.

Landcare Australia in just 25 years has raised more than \$50m from non-government sources, funding 10,000 projects... in a time of government fiscal restraint, this type of funding will become increasingly important for Landcare

raised more than \$50 million from the corporate sector and individual donations, funding about 10,000 projects.

In a time of budget constraints, non-government funding continues

Our first annual report in 1990 describes the creation of the Landcare logo "depicting two hands cradling Australia" – becoming known as the "caring hands".

With support from the Landcare

Green Army projects call to arms

RESTORING habitat, weeding, planting, revegetating parks, catchments, foreshores and wetlands are all in a day's work for landcarers and local volunteers.

For hundreds of young Australians, these activities present a unique opportunity to learn valuable new skills, knowledge and experience.

Across the country, Green Army projects are hitting the ground with teams of young Australians putting their energy into conservation activities that will make a difference to their local community.

Community is at the core of the Green Army; projects are guided by local needs with a hands-on, practical, grassroots approach.

For Landcare and community groups, the Green Army provides an opportunity for organisations to propose projects and set their own environmental priorities.

In return, groups receive a Green Army team for 20 to 26 weeks to help communities manage and protect their natural assets.

For each project, the Green Army

Program provides project specific materials such as seeds, seedlings, herbicides and tree guards.

It also covers costs associated with the Green Army team including allowances, personal protective equipment, safety equipment, basic materials such as hand tools, training costs, transport costs and insurances.

The Green Army provides a pathway for experienced and passionate landcarers to mentor Green Army participants, imparting knowledge, passion and skills to a new generation.

With many pairs of hands ready to help with the work that needs to be done, it also gives young people the chance to up-skill.

In this first round of Green Army projects, local Landcare groups are sponsoring eight projects across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, with additional teams working directly with or supporting the activities of local Landcare groups.

Two Landcare led projects are underway in Victoria.

The Boolarra South Landcare Group is improving connectivity,



Green Army participants in Dandenong, Victoria.

biodiversity and access at the Boolarra Old Mill Site Park.

The Green Army will undertake surveys and track work to widen existing tracks to allow better access.

The team will also build a small bridge, install drainage and revegetate areas of forest to enhance habitat for flora and fauna species. Participants will monitor wildlife, control weeds, identify plants and collect native seeds to be grown out and used in the forest.

The Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network's project involves activities at seven different sites across the Mornington Peninsula.

The Green Army will rotate through these sites during the project

to undertake a range of activities including landscaping and revegetation, weed control, track restoration, and habitat enhancement.

This is the first major project of the recently-formed Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network and will help further strategic Landcare activity on the peninsula.

The Department of Environment has supported the project.

"Landcare groups are invited to look for opportunities to link with Green Army projects in their region or to create their own Green Army projects for future rounds," said a department spokesman.

"Landcare groups are crucial in identifying and setting local priori-

ties for environmental action."

Landcare Australia, in partnership with ManpowerGroup, is one of five official service providers for the Green Army Program, tasked with delivery of teams on the ground in conjunction with project sponsors.

Other providers include Conservation Volunteers Australia; Job Futures Limited; Workskil Australia Incorporated, and Campbell Page Limited with Skillset Limited.

■ **Round two of the Green Army Program is open until December 9, providing opportunities for young people and local community and Landcare groups. For more information, including project guidelines, visit the Green Army website, www.environment.gov.au**

Bob Hawke Landcare Award linking global cropping pioneers

FARMER and pasture cropping pioneer Col Seis plans to use the 2014 Bob Hawke Landcare Award to build

on the pasture cropping concept with ideas drawn from other countries.

Specifically, Mr Seis, from Gulgong,

NSW, hopes to build an international conversation about evolving pasture cropping toward multi-species pasture cropping.

The idea, Mr Seis said, is to combine his renowned pasture cropping concept – growing a single crop in a diverse mix of perennial species – with the cover cropping ideas being explored by leading farmers in the United States.

A group of US farmers learned sowing a diverse mix of annual species in a field, and then sowing a crop into the mix when the annuals have died off, produces a "soil priming" effect that boosts soil nutrient and structure more effectively and cheaply than out of a bag.

Mr Seis is exploring the possibility of turning the concept on its head, and sowing diverse crop species into a diverse perennial pasture base for a two-way effect: more diversity to build soil, and a more widely nutritious crop to feed off to stock.

In the past five years he has been

experimenting with sowing a mix of oats, forage brassicas and field peas.

Some of the "tillage radishes" punched tubers deep into the soil, physically opening it up; the legumes added nitrogen, and the general diversity supported a greater variety of soil microbes, each of which contributed to soil structure.

The idea didn't preclude a grain harvest, either, said Mr Seis (pictured).

Stock tended to graze off the broadleaf species so, with good timing, the oats could be locked up to produce a crop.

An incidental effect was better stock health. When he has fattened ewes and lambs on diverse crops species, they didn't lose any performance to scouring – a hazard when feeding on a single species.

Mr Seis has identified up to 10 annual species that might be sown together in a crop; he'd eventually like to see more than double that go

down the sowing boot.

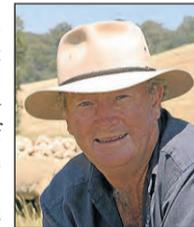
Fortunately, he's tapped into an international conversation about the environmental and economic benefits of cover cropping.

Gabe Brown, North Dakota, a pioneer of the farm soil health movement in the US, and Gail Fuller, Kansas, who leads no-till cover cropping, are sharing

information that is rapidly building a body of hands-on knowledge about the role of plant diversity in farming.

Mr Seis hoped to use some of the \$50,000 funding from the Bob Hawke Landcare Award to better tap into that conversation, and help it spread through Australia.

■ **Previous page: Victorian-based Cam Nicholson – a highly commended Bob Hawke Landcare Award finalist – took photos of significant re-invigoration on his farm, reproduced from a display at the National Landcare Conference.**



Smarter conservation

IN THE NSW town of Gundagai, farmer and Bob Hawke award runner-up Sam Archer is pondering how the "internet of everything" might help on-farm conservation.

Mr Archer, who is also the chair of Riverina Local Land Services (LLS) believes there is immense scope for cheap sensors and communications to ease the cost of managing land, ensure timely action, and amass data to inform future management.

For instance, there are 88,000 hectares of travelling stock route in the Riverina.

What if all landholders adjacent to a stock route had access to a reporting tool on their smartphones, allowing them to remotely report broken fences, overflowing troughs or invasive species?

It would ensure landholders were more actively engaged with LLS on stock route management, and reporting would enable LLS to efficiently schedule work programs.

The concept would be more equitable for those who used the route, Mr Archer said, and less demanding of stock inspectors' time.

It was also feasible that remote reporting could apply to landholders across the LLS, in a form like the Atlas of Living Australia, which gives smartphone users more than 300 million records of when and where Australia's living things have been sighted. It allows users to add their own data, either visual or text.

The recent Panboola Bioblitz, sponsored by Landcare Australia, is part of the Atlas and in addition to recording biodiversity, volunteers also took beautiful photos.

■ **See the impact of the Panboola bioblitz, p7.**

■ **Videos of the Bob Hawke Landcare Award finalists were due to be available this month at youtube.com/user/LandcareEducation**



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture

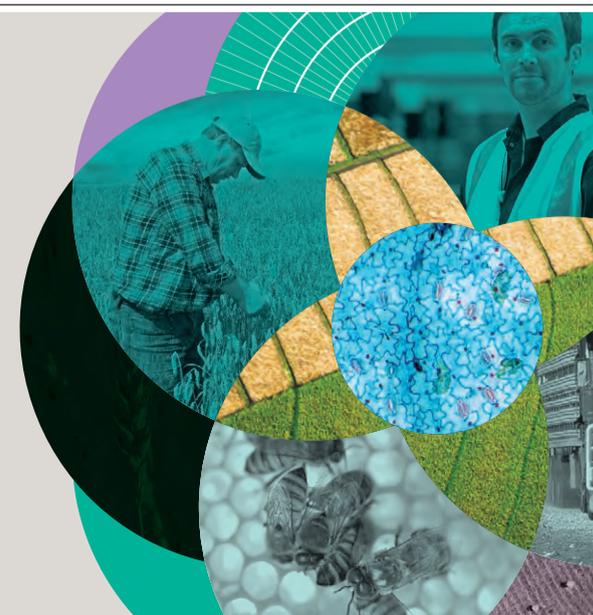
Rural R&D for Profit Grant applications now open

Keeping Australian farmers at the cutting edge

Applications are now open for the Australian Government's \$100 million Rural Research and Development (R&D) for Profit programme. This competitive grants programme will fund strategic research aimed at delivering real, practical outcomes for Australian primary producers, to improve farm gate productivity and profitability.

Rural R&D for Profit aims to encourage industry, researchers and private organisations—including those beyond the primary sector—to think outside the box and form new collaborations.

Find out more at agriculture.gov.au/rd4profit



Improving Wheatbelt soil acidity

EIGHTEEN hundred and sixty farmers, members of 22 farmer groups, in the West Australian Wheatbelt have participated in Caring for our Country's Improving soil acidity management project.

The project, delivered by Chris Gazey from the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia, Precision SoilTech and Désirée Futures, has helped farmers understand the impact of acidification on their soil and productivity.

Soil acidification (pH decline) is a slow process which, if unchecked by regular liming, leads to subsurface acidity and results in reduced agricultural productivity. Soil acidification is a natural process accelerated by agriculture.

The effects in the topsoil include reduced nutrient availability, and decreased legume nodulation and nitrogen fixation in pastures.

In subsoils, aluminium toxicity results in poor root growth. Soil acidification is widespread in southern Australia and common in tropical

horticulture, sugar cane and dairying.

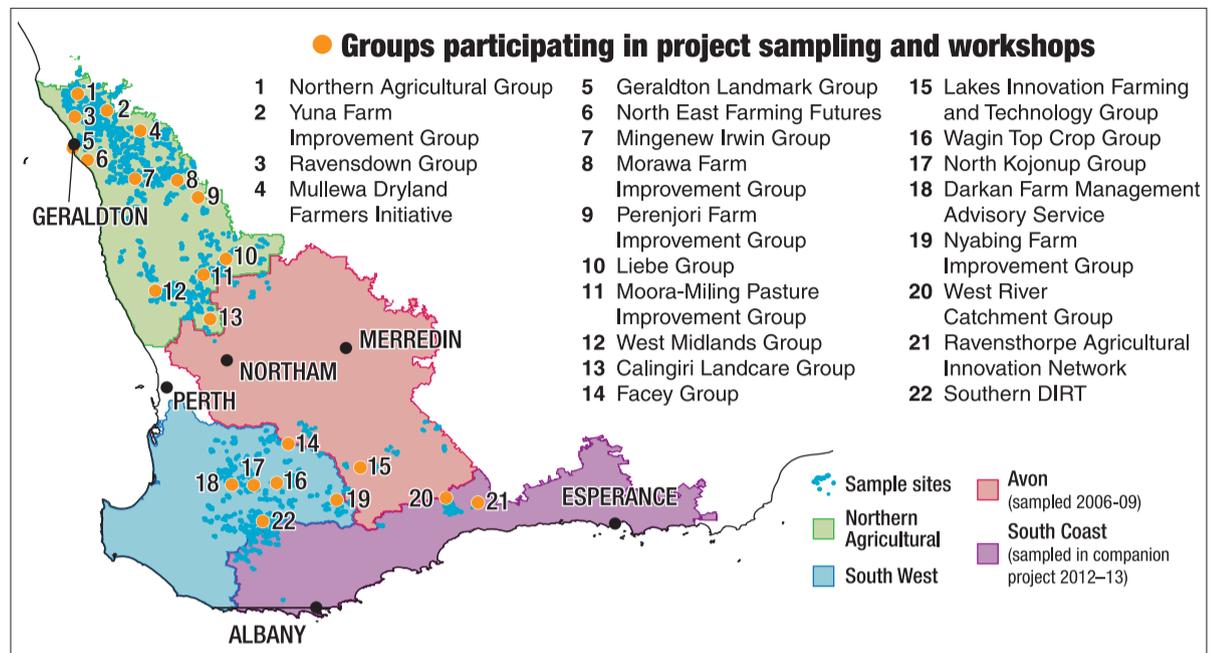
Soil sampling done for the project showed that subsurface soil acidification is extensive in the West Australian Wheatbelt where farmers are losing an estimated \$498 million (9 per cent of the annual crop value) to soil acidity.

Much of the loss is thought to be due to subsurface acidity preventing crop roots from growing deep into the soil to access moisture and nutrients at the end of the season.

Seventy six events were held with farmer groups to present information on soil acidity for their district, how to test pH and develop a liming program to maintain soil pH (calcium chloride) values at or above 5.5 in the topsoil and 4.8 in the sub-surface, and the best ways to apply lime.

Three hundred and sixty farmers participated in pH sampling and analysis on their farms, receiving a pH management report and recommended management strategy.

Agricultural lime sales (1.6 million



tonnes in 2014) in Western Australia have more than doubled since the project started, and Australian Bureau of Statistics data show by

2011-12, 45pc of broadacre cropping businesses were applying lime products.

An estimated 2.5 million tonnes

need to be applied annually to treat existing and on-going acidification in the West Australian Wheatbelt.

A creative approach to making connections with the land

THE environment has always provided inspiration for the arts and a new initiative – Reading the Land – provides people with creative responses or just plain curiosity, the opportunity to examine and learn about a landscape and to learn from and with people who know that landscape well then interpret what has been seen and learnt in a creative response.

With the theme of Connections, 40 people recently participated in Reading the Land at Berry on NSW's South Coast.

The theme supports physical connections through the establishment of a vegetation corridor between the coast and the escarpment - this corridor is part of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative – protecting and connecting habitat from western Victoria to Far North Queensland.

The theme also speaks to spiritual connections people feel to a landscape.

After meeting at Berry Sport and Recreation Centre, the group left in buses for a tour of the area.

Leading conversation with the group, sharing knowledge, understanding and connections to the area, were three local people: outdoor educator and historian Art Lidbitter, local Koorie artist Jason Groves and environmentalist Alasdair Stratton.

At the sites visited, the group learned about the significance of particular areas to Aboriginal people and of their connections to the place and interactions with nature.

From a Landcare perspective, Kim Dove from Berry Landcare spoke of

how regeneration work on a remnant of Illawarra subtropical rainforest had not just been good for the rainforest but had regenerated the group.

The group heard of the vast amount of red cedar that had been shipped out in the early 19th century and of changing values.

Rubbish no longer goes in to the creek. A quarried road they walked along, were it to be built today, would not be built by boys, State ward residents of the Berry Training Farm that operated from 1934-77.

At lunch at the sport centre, conversation turned to shared experiences and insights gained from the tour, before participating in collaborative art, which was later exhibited.

"This is a great opportunity for people who care about the environment to express that care and share it with others," said participant Jenny Rich, who also wrote an essay about the experience.

Reading the Land is an initiative of Shoalhaven Landcare.

"This is a new approach to engagement with Landcare," said Shoalhaven Landcare president Greg Thompson.

"We're reaching a different audience and we're really pleased with it."

Reading the Land was first held in Huskisson on World Environment Day last year.

About 30 people explored the man-

groves of Currambene Creek, the adjacent bushland and a native plant garden. This led to an exhibition at Huskisson's Lady Denman Gallery.

At events earlier this year, 70 people participated at Sanctuary Point, Bomaderry and, again, Huskisson.

These workshops explored both the natural and the built environment and took the theme of SOLACE=Comfort.

Art from these workshops was exhibited at the Nowra School of Arts.

And as part of the annual Milton-Ulladulla ARTfest, Reading the Land focused on endangered shorebirds at Ulladulla's Rennies Beach, with the theme of Co-existing at the EDGE.

Shoalhaven River later hosted Reading the Land, with participants responding to the question: What is a River for? Both these events preceded art exhibitions.

Reading the Land is as much about participation as artistic output, taking the view that everyone is an artist and has creative responses to issues, ideas, places.

The program has evolved to encompass a range of visual arts along with poetry, prose, fabric art and musical interpretation.

The Reading the Land approach to community engagement can be applied anywhere – introducing new people to the land and growing land-caring in the arts.



Participants collaborated on an impromptu artwork on returning to NSW South Coast's Berry Sport and Recreation Centre after a Reading the Land experience.

A Landcare Legacy

Mr Raymond Borland greatly valued Australia's landscape and the work Landcare groups do to repair it, so he made a significant bequest to Landcare Australia to help this valuable work continue. His bequest is funding two significant biodiversity projects, Living

Landscape and the Durness-Borland Landcare Corridor, and 13 local community projects across New South Wales.

To read about other Landcare legacies, please visit www.landcareonline.com.au/bequest

Landcare's first patron

SOILS and the land seem unlikely obsessions for a military man, but former governor-general the Hon. Michael Jeffery believes stewardship of the land should be one of the nation's most important objectives.

Major-General Jeffery, appointed Australia's first Advocate for Soil Health, told the 2014 National Landcare Conference and Awards the Landcare movement is making "a big difference" in caring for and repairing the country.

"Of particular importance is the work Junior Landcare does to encourage young people to develop a sense of responsibility to the land and other natural resources and play an active role in the future of our Australian landscape and environment," he said.

"The next generation is the basis for an even stronger and more resilient

town of Wiluna in Western Australia.

The son of a stockman, his subsequent career took him across all quarters of Australia's inland.

He was dismayed at the land degradation he witnessed, and on his retirement from official life he formed not-for-profit Soils for Life, an organisation dedicated to promoting the tools and techniques of soil-friendly agriculture.

More than 60 per cent of Australia's old and fragile soils are classed as severely degraded with low productivity, while at the same time farmers are being asked to nearly double food and fibre production by 2050.

During a visit to Holbrook recently at the invitation of the local community, General Jeffery viewed some private properties and met Holbrook Landcare.

After being shown compelling



The Hon. Michael Jeffery in a video to the National Landcare Conference.

of improved soil health and sustainable farming.

But it can't be just farmers, General Jeffery had said when appointed as "Advocate for Soils".

He said we have "a huge opportunity to get things right, to get all our parliaments and politicians onside and to work together to transform the landscape, look after our farmers and get the best outcome for the country".

"Farmers and landowners are the key carers of our soils and country;

they should be recognised not just for their food production but as stewards of our landscape and if they make improvements to their soil, that is something we as citizens should jointly financially support."

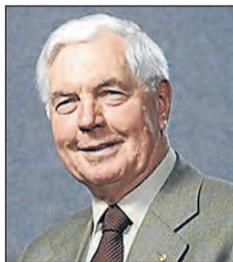
In the past 25 years, he observed, farmers and environmentalists have joined forces in the "unlikely alliance" of Landcare, which has become one of Australia's best-recognised conservation movements.

A strength of the movement is that it embraced bush and city, bush and coast.

General Jeffery urged Landcare to take these concepts forward into the next 25 years, during which new pressures and challenges will be placed on the land and Landcarers.

Farmers and landowners are the key carers of our soils and country; they should be recognised not just for their food production but as stewards of our landscape

– The Hon. Michael Jeffery



Landcare in the future."

General Jeffery, who recently became the first Patron of Landcare Australia, grew up near the remote

examples of Landcare in the area, General Jeffery reiterated his view that Landcare should be a catalyst for uniting landholders behind the goal

Getting food origin understanding back in the curriculum

A FEW years ago the Primary Industries Education Foundation (PIEF) produced a report that got the attention of the nation – it found almost one in two Year 6 students did not know everyday lunch items such as bananas and cheese originated from farms, and 3 in 4 thought cotton came from animals.

What was less reported was that 82 per cent of primary schools had their own or participated in activities related to school vegetable gardens, meaning the activities in the veggie patch were not translating into an understanding in the classroom.

To help bridge that gap, PIEF has partnered with Landcare Australia, which has for 16 years been running a successful Junior Landcare program including more than 11,000 Junior Landcare schools or community groups registered on the National Landcare Directory, thousands more subscribers to the monthly e-newsletter the Junior Landcarer and with hundreds of grants each year distributed to help raise

awareness of Landcare in the younger generation.

The resources developed by Landcare Australia in partnership with PIEF – initially for primary schools from 2015 – will be launched on November, 28 2014 by former governor general, the national Advocate for Soil Health, the Hon. Major General Michael Jeffery.

Ahead of developing the complete teaching sequences, Landcare Australia and PIEF recently released a set of five double-page "How To Guides" on topics such as creating a food garden or frog pond, growing plants with natural pesticides and enhancing and restoring habitats.

The teaching and learning sequences will build on these topics in straightforward teaching scenarios covering a range of issues related to Landcare.

Landcare Australia chief executive Tessa Jakszewicz said Landcare was not only concerned with the environment and growing food, but also involved

mathematics (how much soil for the garden), science, and community engagement.

"Young people are the carers of our land in the future so we need to encourage these people to get an understanding of the land – whether they live in the city or the country – and to understand where their food comes from," Ms Jakszewicz said.

PIEF chief executive Ben Stockwin said the Foundation worked closely with farming organisations and State and Federal education departments to ensure there was an appropriate coverage of food and fibre included in the curriculum.

The next step, Mr Stockwin said, was now being realised, with in-depth tools being launched this month enabling teachers to bring the challenges and wonder of sustaining Australia's natural environment and its productivity into practical lessons in land-care.

The resources are aimed at primary school teachers and students wherever they live, but a particular focus was to

provide an insight into the work of farmers in providing materials the nation relies on and linking this into lifestyles of city residents.

"There're the ones that have a very large disconnect with immediate farming and food production", Mr Stockwin said.

"Research shows that close to 70pc of adults in the Sydney basin, for example, have never seen a working farm, so their actual appreciation of how food and fibre grows is very limited.

"The large portion of teachers and students we've surveyed see farming as damaging to the environment, but many farmers and primary producers work with organisations like Landcare Australia to produce our food in a very sustainable and manageable way."

■ Landcare in the Australian Curriculum, teaching and learning sequences for primary schools, will be available from November, 28 via scoutle.com.au and juniorlandcare.com.au/curriculumresources

In Brief

Local, regional funding: Funding for natural resource management (NRM) organisations opened this month as the Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, and Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, confirmed changes to the regional stream of the National Landcare Programme will ensure Landcare funds are invested locally.

Mr Hunt and Mr Joyce reconfirmed their commitment to ensuring 20 per cent of Australian government investment made through the regional NRM organisations under the National Landcare Programme's regional stream will be directed toward local projects and activities undertaken by community groups, including Landcare.

An investment of \$454 million for sustainable agriculture and environmental rehabilitation in regional stream funding will be distributed through Australia's 56 regional natural resource management organisations over the next four years.

The 20pc investment through regional NRM organisations will ensure a minimum of about \$90 million across four years is directed towards local projects under the National Landcare Programme.

■ NRM organisation applications for regional funding will close at 2.00pm (AEDT) Thursday, 4 December 2014.

■ For more information about the National Landcare Programme, visit www.nrm.gov.au

Soil science in the spotlight: The National Soil Science Conference will be held in Melbourne this month.

The conference will bring together researchers, farm advisers, policy makers and students to discuss the latest in soil science under the theme Securing Australia's soil for profitable industries and healthy landscapes.

This theme reflects the vision of the recently released National Soil Research, Development and Extension Strategy, our first nationally coordinated approach to soil research and management.

■ Visit agriculture.gov.au/soil-strategy and soilscience2014.com

Millions of trees: The Australian government has launched its 20 Million Trees program which will aim to plant 20 million trees across the country by 2020.

The program will invest \$50 million in the next four years to help communities re-establish native vegetation, both in urban and regional areas, plant native trees and associated understory species, and re-establish green corridors and urban forests.

■ Visit www.nrm.gov.au/20-million-trees

Ag Green Paper: The Australian government released the Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper on October 20 and is asking everybody in agriculture to have a say on a range of new proposals and policy suggestions.

The Green Paper outlines fresh ideas on a range of vitally important issues for the nation's future including infrastructure, drought support, trade and finance.

Submissions are open until December 12. ■ Visit <https://agriculturalcompetitiveness.dpmc.gov.au>

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Yates helping grow Junior Landcare

DOES it matter most Australian children don't really know where their food comes from? Yes, in the view of gardening expert Judy Horton, who in addition to media presenting, has headed Yates's communications for many years.

"I think we almost lost a generation as far as growing our own food – and with that a lot of the joy and the skills of gardening," Ms Horton said.

With that loss comes other

Food has become a factory commodity, leading to the obesity crisis and the rise in diabetes... getting kids back to where food comes from is a step in addressing those issues

– Judy Horton

problems less self-evidently related to getting hands dirty, said Ms Horton in an exclusive interview with Landcare in Focus reflecting on her work as she prepares to retire from Yates and spend more time in her own garden as well as head off on overseas adventures.

Referring to a recent visit to the United States, Ms Horton lamented the disconnect between food produc-

tion and what we eat.

"Food has become a factory commodity, leading to the obesity crisis, the rise in diabetes," she said.

"I think getting kids back to where food comes from is a step in addressing those issues.

"It all sounds a bit airy-fairy, but nevertheless I think it's vital – that's where the Landcare program involvement can play such a valuable part."

Yates has in partnerships with Landcare Australia for many years, supplying funding and seeds to the Junior Landcare program, and produces books like the *Yates Junior Gardener* (and the *Yates Garden Guide*, still being updated after 120 years and still Australia's best-selling garden book).

This year, in addition to the popular annual Yates Junior Landcare Challenge, which attracts thousands of registrations, Yates also provided grants via Landcare Australia for Junior Landcare creative garden projects.

"Kids take something that appears lifeless and turn it into a plant and food," Ms Horton said.

That in turn can become a contribution towards a healthy meal for the family – a reversal of a child's usual dependency, and a step toward self-determination in healthy eating.

Landcare Australia is "a great bonding organisation" in the community matrix, Ms Horton believes, provid-



Judy Horton with children from a previous Yates Junior Landcare Challenge.

ing a link between the corporate world and the community in ways that also encourages healthy self-determination.

And the Landcare name continues to be held in high regard through-

out the community, regardless of whether the movement touches people's lives directly.

"Whenever we've had a Junior Landcare program, we've always had fantastic support from the gardening

media," Ms Horton said.

■ For details about the Yates grant recipients as well as winners of this year's Challenge – the Winter Veggie Growing Journey – visit juniorlandcare.com.au

Reconnecting youth with the land and food production

MORE than three quarters of Australia's young people know "little or nothing" about food production, a Rabobank survey found earlier this year, yet 90 per cent think farming and food are very important to Australia.

Almost 20pc of teenagers in the survey said they "don't really know anything" about "how food gets from the farm to my plate", while 49pc knew only "a little".

How do you join these divergent dots?

Megan Rowlett has for several years been developing and refining a strategy that introduces young people to the land via Landcare.

The winner of the Young Landcarer category at the National Landcare Awards in 2012 and presenter at the 2014 National Landcare Conference, Ms Rowlett started her own Landcare group half a decade ago with the goal of connecting young people with the aging forces of Landcare around the country.

The group, which has evolved into Illawarra Intrepid Landcare, bridges the gap between the transient world of youth and the necessarily settled patterns of most Landcare groups.

Young people are often interested in hands-on conservation work, Ms Rowlett realised, but found it difficult to connect with the usually older

members of Landcare and Bushcare groups.

For their part, Landcare groups didn't know how to fit in young people who couldn't commit to a site in the long term.

"They are busy, studying, considering their career," Ms Rowlett said. "They come and go and move for work... So it's unlikely they are going to put 10 years of their life into a site – it's unrealistic."

So she devised a low-pressure approach to introducing young people to Landcare, based on the loose principle of "come when you can, when you're interested", she said.

"The aim is to provide a really

positive experience.

"It doesn't matter whether they come back or not: hopefully later in life they will recall they really enjoyed working with Landcare, and they are ready to work on their local patch.

"You talk to most people in Landcare and realise most of them grew up in the bush.

"They've all had that really great connection with the bush in their childhood, and later on they realised something was wrong and decided to do something about it.

"I really want to tap into that feeling: a positive experience with nature early on will lead people into conservation work later on."

Ms Rowlett's group has a few long-term members in addition to a large mailing list. It has a hybrid approach to introducing young people to conservation.

Recently, the people who responded to an email travelled to Ulladulla, on the NSW south coast, and worked with a Bushcare group there for a morning.

Later the group's members went for a bushwalk, and the next day they hiked up Pigeon House Mountain.

In addition to linking up with groups such as those focused on Landcare Adventure Conservation (Willow Warriors), purely social activities are also a focus, with get-togethers such as a free Thai dinner for new members included in a weekend-long celebration of Landcare's 25th anniversary, funded by a Landcare Australia Grow Grant to entice more volunteers to the movement.

To the group's ever-shifting participants, experiences like this provided mixed interaction with people who have invested years in Bushcare, learning about what motivates them, with their own first-hand experiences of the bush.

"It's all about connecting young

people back to their environment, particularly in urban areas where people are incredibly disconnected," Ms Rowlett said.

"We've worked out west with a farming family who run a sheep farm – many young people don't have exposure to that sort of thing; they don't realise what rural communities are going through."

(The Rabobank survey found that 17pc of city teenagers had never been on a farm; two-thirds had less than three visits to a farm.)

Ms Rowlett believes the low-pressure approach to connecting youth with Landcare and Bushcare, and by extension to food production, could be an important step in healing this gap.

"At the start, people thought they had to have an environmental background.

"That's not the case – one of our most dedicated volunteers has a mining engineering degree.

"I've got people in hospitality, teachers – I've got such a diversity of volunteers, not just people studying environmental science."

Megan Rowlett will use her formidable experience in a new role as ambassador to encourage the next generation of leaders into Landcare – through tertiary education institutions and social media outreach across Australia – heading the Younger Landcare program she launched at the 2014 National Landcare Conference.

■ The Younger Landcare program is funded by the Australian government Department of the Environment, with matched funding from Landcare Australia.

■ For updates subscribe to Landlink e-News via landcareaustralia.com.au or visit illawarrantrepidlandcare.org.au/ or their social media channels.



Illawarra Intrepid Landcare founder and former Young Landcare Leader Award winner Megan Rowlett (right) with a member of her group.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Panboola base camp at night; children identifying species; an Autumn moth, and a Panboola shell search.



Biodiversity blitz at Panboola

TAKE a wetland, add 70 schoolchildren and 170 community members intent on recording every living thing in the area, and you have the Panboola Bioblitz.

In two days, volunteers working with scientists identified 686 species in the 82-hectare Panboola Wetlands on the NSW South Coast, a rich haul of knowledge that will be fed into the Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness (ALCW).

ALCW is one of a number of atlases that use crowdsourced

knowledge to further our understanding of the living world.

At Panboola, records were made with diverse tools and techniques, including motion-triggered cameras, call recordings, mist nets and harp traps, and shell assemblages.

Bioblitz days bring together scientists, naturalists, "citizen scientists" and other members of the public with the aim of discovering, identifying and recording the biodiversity within a chosen area.

The mixture of wildlife experts and community members, young and old, is central to the Bioblitz concept.

ALCW worked with the Panboola Wetland Conservation and Heritage Project and Landcare Australia to conduct the Panboola Wetlands bioblitz.

The organisers believe in future, such collaborative efforts to collect information on biodiversity will become increasingly important as research funding comes under more pressure.

Parkland project restoring wonder

ABBIE Kimber's first memory of Landcare at her small school of only 20 or 30 students is exhilaration mixed with a solid dose of reality.

"I was so excited we would be growing trees; I forgot it would take ages," she said.

She was in Year Two at the time (she's now in Year Six) and her small

rural school, Curramulka Primary, 200 kilometres from Adelaide, was just getting started on its Parklands Restoration Project.

Nearly a decade later, Abbie and her friend Isla Hickman are bursting with pride as they recount their experiences in the six-hectare area of rehabilitated woodland and grassland.

They describe the Youth Environment Leaders Day when they, and the Natural Resources Centre for their region, invited other schools to their Parklands and showed off their work, which is leading schools in the region.

"Now the other schools know what they can do as well," Abbie said.

"It would be so cool if all the schools had their own parklands."

The school has been working on the bushland restoration project with the assistance of Envirofund, Landcare Australia, local council and NRM board grants – using the site to add a hands-on dimension to a range of environmental learnings over the years, for example setting up a roadside watch for *Acacia enterocarpa* (Jumping Jack Wattle) that grows nearby, assisted by the Threatened Plants Action Group.

Much of the school's work has been actively supported by the Northern and Yorke Natural Resources Management Board.

The once run-down area of land, made available to the school by the

Yorke Peninsula Council, is now a natural asset for the town.

It's won a few awards as well: recognised by Keep Australia Beautiful in 2007 as Best Environmental School in South Australia, and runner-up in South Australia's Landcare Awards in the Westpac Landcare Education Category in 2007-08.

The students have learnt a lot from their experiences along the way.

"We learnt how to put rust on the bridal creeper," said Isla.

The rust is a biological control the students manually sprayed over the insidious weed.

The girls explain how it only kills the target weed, bridal creeper, and leaves the native plants being smothered to grow.

Isla described the Aboriginal food plants they planted and how they invited Aboriginal elders in to talk about their culture.

"I really liked how we got to learn about the way the Aboriginal people see the land – it's very different," Isla said.

Abbie recalled how they planted native fruit trees in the Aboriginal loop and how they had to plant the Quandong trees with a host plant because they are parasitic.

Teacher Jenny Hansen described how, throughout the years, the project has grown.

A highlight has been hands-on learning about endangered and vulnerable species.

With assistance from Trees for Life and another volunteer, the students planted Jumping Jack Wattle and Silver Daisy Bush in the parklands.

"Some of them – more than I thought would – have survived," Ms Hansen said.

She likes to think the Parklands has changed her students for the better.

"I can see year in, year out, the kids look forward to it. They look at the photos and see the difference they have made."

Abbie and Isla have moved on to high school, but they'll take with them all they've learnt and apply it to their world.



LEFT: Curramulka Primary School students Clara and Abbie checking bridal creeper for rust in the school's Parklands Restoration Project.

Jemena brings energy to customers and communities across eastern Australia

Jemena has an electricity network that supplies over 320,000 customers in north west Melbourne. Jemena's Eastern Gas Pipeline brings gas from Bass Strait to the major distribution network supplying gas to 1.2 million customers in Sydney and regional NSW. Further north, Jemena's Queensland Gas Pipeline transports gas from Roma to major industrial customers in Rockhampton and Gladstone.

Over the past seven years, Jemena has partnered with Landcare Australia to help local communities care for the environment.

Together, we support Landcare groups safely undertaking on-ground environmental projects, without impacting underground infrastructure, by calling **Dial Before You Dig** on 0011 or visiting **0011.com.au** before work starts.

<< Jemena volunteers at Woodlands Historic Park, Greenvale, Vic



Bushland offers more than just tasty treats

THERE is no more profound way to experience the bush than to taste it, which was the strategy used by Longbeach Landcare in its "Bush Heritage – Then and Now" event in September.

With the support of a Landcare Week Grow Grant, Longbeach volunteers introduced about 60 visitors to the delights of bush tucker, with the support of local Indigenous people.

Visitors were also introduced to the extraordinary diversity of bushland species and the niches they occupy in the landscape.

The tasting was tied to a deeper Landcare message: to preserve the unique attributes of the Australian bush, we need to work together to eradicate weeds.

Anybody who came to the event with a bag of weeds could swap

them for native plants.

More than 100 native plants made their way into the community this way.

The event widened the community's appreciation of the pleasures, visual and sensual, of the local bushland, fitting in with the wider aims of Landcare Australia's 25th anniversary grants round for events to help grow the nationwide movement.

Bushcare's most major day out yet

BUSHCARE'S Major Day Out (BMDO) was already a "major day" in 2013, when volunteers worked on 134 sites, but this year it jumped by another 103 sites – a major expansion of community involvement in conserving our natural environment in rural areas while also growing an appreciation of the bush in major cities.

Landcare Australia has been a sponsor of BMDO since its inception, and this year awarded Landcare Week Grow Grants to a number of its events where organisers demonstrated how their take on the annual bushbash would help grow the movement further, bringing more volunteers to Landcare.

BMDO is the brainchild of Don Wilson, a resident of Sydney's

Willoughby and a dedicated bushcare volunteer, who was keen to regenerate precious city bush and provide a vehicle for Australians everywhere to get together in a national day of action and appreciation.

Mr Wilson first discovered Bushcare through an invitation to a trip to Lord Howe Island tackling asparagus fern and, finding it enjoyable, social and of great educational value, he began organising annual get-togethers for his local council area.

The 2014 BMDO was officially held on September 7, timed to coincide with Landcare Week – but allowing for other days as well because of a clash this year with Father's Day.

The event proved to be a ringing endorsement of the Landcare ethos of hands-on volunteer work, bringing together people from all walks of life in a united force for good for bushland and beyond.

Participants in the event weren't confined to pulling weeds.

The event is designed as fun day where anybody, young and old, can learn from experts and experienced volunteers in a diverse range of activities.

A grassroots-supported event, BMDO activities depended on the location and inclination of the volunteer site organiser and included walks, weed removal, revegetation, photography workshops as well as



Ella and Chloe Friedlos getting their hands dirty at Bushcare's Major Day Out.

native plant identification and the BMDO well-celebrated morning teas.

Just as Clean Up Australia Day has made Australia a litter-conscious nation, Bushcare's Major Day Out aims to make Australians conscious

of the need to protect the natural environment while learning about the role everybody can play in its continued care.

■ With 2014 the biggest year yet for BMDO, next year's events are already being planned in some

areas – keep an eye out for details at bushcaresmajordayout.org, contact info@bushcaresmajordayout.org or look for Bushcare's Major Day Out on Facebook or @BushcaresMDO on twitter.



Founder of Bushcare's Major Day Out Don Wilson with Bob Hawke.



Workplace Giving Partners...Thank you!

Landcare Australia's corporate supporters and their employees understand that together we can make a positive difference to our natural environment.

Landcare Australia would like to say thank you to our 2014 Workplace Giving Partners and their employees who are supporting a celebratory 25th Anniversary Junior Landcare Grants Program to encourage the next generation of Landcarers to get involved in a range of projects just for them!

To find out more about Landcare Australia's Workplace Giving Program visit www.landcareonline.com.au/workplacegiving

Grants help milk more efficiency

REDUCING energy use is an environmental act – and a profitable one – which is why dairy farmers are exploring energy efficiency as part of the annual Lion Landcare Grants allocation.

This year grants totaling \$132,000 were distributed to 13 dairy farms in five States for projects that delivered better sustainability in areas as diverse as recycling effluent nutrients to reduce fertiliser use, preventing dairy farm run-off from entering waterways, and recycling composted organic nutrients on pastures.

Several dairies chose to upgrade milking systems, like Dwayne Neill of Laureldene Dairy at Boyanup,

– and a fan forced cooling tower in the hope of achieving more efficient cooling than the gravity-based cooling tower they had.

Based upon energy costs of 29.41 cents per kilowatt hour, the two upgrades were calculated to save \$10.89 per day or \$3,975.60 per annum.

That falls short of the forecast savings of \$86.14 per week, equating to \$4479 per year or a 31 per cent return on capital.

However, the biggest savings won't be seen until the hottest months of the year, when Mr Neill is confident that actual savings will be much closer to those forecast.

water is now delivered “free” via the heat exchanger, and power costs have been cut by half by the VSD.

It showed the couple “how a little funding can go a long way”, Valda Tout reported.

Lion's head of Agricultural procurement Murray Jeffrey said Lion was pleased to be supporting dairy farmers to help improve the sustainability of their operations.

“When it comes to environmental sustainability, Lion takes a partnership approach with our suppliers,” Mr Jeffrey said.

“Our grants program with Landcare Australia enables us to provide funding that will help give farmers the tools and resources to address some of the ongoing environmental challenges in dairy industry.

“It's fantastic to see the initial reports coming in from these projects.

“To see the grants helping our dairy farmers achieve both sustainability outcomes and cost savings is a great result.”

Landcare Australia chief executive Tessa Jakszewicz was looking forward to seeing further results of the projects funded through the program.

“It's great to see such a variety of projects that can help land managers



Reducing energy consumption at Laureldene Dairy at Boyanup, Western Australia.

To see the grants helping our dairy farmers achieve both sustainability outcomes and cost savings is a great result

– Lion head of agricultural procurement
Murray Jeffrey

Western Australia.

Aided by a Lion grant, Mr Neill opted to install a variable speed drive (VSD) on the primary milking machine – to ensure the machine was only working as hard as it needed to

At Tamworth, NSW, dairy farmers Terry and Valda Tout used a Lion Landcare grant to help them install a heat recovery unit and a variable speed drive.

The result: about half their hot

improve the sustainability of their operations,” Ms Jakszewicz said.

“We're delighted to work with Lion and their dairy farmers to help showcase these projects as fine examples of what can be done in the area of sustainable land management, which

not only achieves success for the health of our land but also farmers' bottom lines.

“Importantly, these farmers are measuring the tangible improvements achieved by their projects, which can be shared with others.”

Monaro farmers improving soil fertility with planning

THE high country of the Monaro, in southern NSW, is a notoriously tough farming environment, with variable, often light soils and fickle rainfall patterns.

In striving to squeeze every drop of productivity and profitability from their enterprises, a group of

Monaro landholders formed the Monaro Farming Systems Soil Club, which allows them to make fine-grained assessments of their soil fertility.

Supported by a Woolworths Landcare Sustainable Agriculture grant and Meat and Livestock

Australia, the impact of the Soil Club since its formation in 2010 has been profound.

Among 49 farming businesses, adopting a more targeted approach to whole farm soil fertility management resulted in an average 20 per cent reduction in fertiliser use per farm in the next 3 to 5 years.

Led by CSIRO senior principal research scientist in pasture systems agronomy, Richard Simpson, the club's members learn how to make accurate assessments of their soil fertility, and apply that knowledge across the variable Monaro landscape in targeted fertiliser use.

“Globally increasing fertiliser prices coupled with declining nutrient resources make it imperative farmers adopt a more efficient and targeted approach to fertility management,” said MFS's Nancy Spoljaric.

“This project addressed the issue of whole-farm nutrient planning by

implementing an annual, bulk soil testing program in four years backed up with an annual interpretation and analysis session.

“It also provided paddock trials to link theory with the practice of correcting nutrient deficiencies and the impact on pasture legume composition.”

The result: some producers apply less fertiliser, but some apply more than they did before joining the club – except their applications are now more attuned to cost versus return.

“I would estimate we have made a \$15,000 benefit per year based on \$1000 investment,” one club member said in the report on its outcomes.

Another reported: “Very broadly, there have been two impacts to my farm which both are favourable.

“The first is when sowing pasture, I have been able to target any soil deficiencies aggressively, which have

improved germination and establishment rates for perennials.

“So far, this has not been favorable to the bottom line as input costs increased but it will have enormous impact throughout the life of the pasture.

“The second is the rate in which we come out of times of slow to no growth has increased.”

And a third reported: “I now have a better understanding of what a ‘maintenance’ application of fertiliser is for a whole range of different paddocks on my farm.”

“This means I have confidently reduced the kilograms of superphosphate I apply per hectare on my paddocks on my farm,” he said.

The Soil Club now plans to make refinements to its database to better facilitate data export and sharing, so the body of knowledge about fertiliser management on the Monaro can continue to grow.



LEFT: The Monaro Farming Systems Soil Club



coles SUPPORTING SCHOOL GARDENS

Coles has supported schools and community youth groups around Australia by providing almost **2,000 Coles Junior Landcare Garden Grants** since 2008.

The 2015 grants open in February. To find out more about how you can be part of the program, visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au

North Shore care in the South West

EACH year for 15 years, a group of volunteers has driven 329 km from North Sydney to Boorowa, in NSW's South West Slopes, to plant trees on properties in the district.

In doing so, they have helped shaped the ecological and social fabric of Boorowa.

The urban volunteers have planted about 40,000 trees and shrubs around Boorowa's rural landscapes, thereby creating more secure habitat for the superb parrot, a threatened species.

North Sydney Council's Building Bridges to Boorowa program began in 2000 as a tree planting partnership between North Sydney Council, Boorowa Council and Boorowa Community Landcare Group.

At the beginning, the key focus of the program was preserving the habitat of the parrot.

Now, in addition to protecting the parrot's habitat, the trees are creating wildlife corridors for other native fauna, reducing soil salinity and erosion and providing windbreaks as well as shelter for livestock.

More than 40,000 trees and 15 years later, this remarkable program, run on a shoestring budget but engaging about 375 volunteers, is making a noticeable difference to Boorowa farmers and the superb parrot.

Across properties in Boorowa, small

forests are popping up, helping to repair and preserve the land they are planted on and protecting local fauna.

"The Building Bridges to Boorowa program is setting the benchmark for

More than 40,000 trees and 15 years later, this remarkable program, run on a shoestring budget but engaging about 375 volunteers, is making a noticeable difference to Boorowa farmers and the superb parrot

urban/rural partnerships to help the environment," said North Sydney mayor Jilly Gibson.

"We have been working closely with Boorowa Council and Boorowa Community Landcare for many years and we are proud of the difference our Bushcare volunteers and staff are making.

"These trees are protecting the habitat of the superb parrot and also helping to address environmental problems such as salinity and soil erosion on Boorowa properties.

"The Bushcare volunteers give their time, their enthusiasm and their labour to the program – many of



Jenny Taylor installing tree guards at "Hawk Hill", Boorowa. **BELOW:** Connecting two nature corridors, creating a shelter belt at "Hawk Hill".

them returning year after year."

Volunteers Ken and Sissi Stewart have attended the Boorowa planting trips since 2001.

"It's the relationship with the people there that is the most outstanding thing," Mr Stewart said.

"They give the feeling we are wanted there. It may be a selfish reason, but I get a great kick out of it.

"We are so spoilt with food when we go to Boorowa. I also enjoy the other Bushcarers – we all enjoy each other's company and get into the work very smoothly."

However, it's not necessarily comfortable work.

"We've had several really wet, cold years. One year it was sleeting and we were knee deep in mud. I had mud inside my boots. After planting we were still in the sleet."

A farmer lent them dry clothes and a Driza-Bone, and the Stewarts took the precaution of taking a flask of medicinal brandy to ward off cold the next time they visited Boorowa.

North Sydney Council's Bushland co-ordinator, Gareth Debney, agreed that it was people that made the



occasion especially rewarding.

"There are so many benefits of this program that go far beyond the impressive statistics," he said.

"While we are immensely proud of the 40,000-plus locally native trees, shrubs and ground covers planted by literally hundreds of city volunteers around Boorowa, it is the friendships that have grown alongside these plantings that truly symbolises the value of this program and the model it provides for others to embrace.

"I've had the privilege of co-ordinating North Sydney's part of the project since 2007 and it's one of the most rewarding experiences of my working life.

"A substantial element of this is due to my fantastic colleagues in the bushland management team (past and present) who are unfailing in their efforts to make every trip run smoothly, safely and enjoyably for all our volunteers and Landcare partners.



Connecting two nature corridors, creating a shelter belt at "Hawk Hill".

Moving proving grounds ahead

LAND locked up in the 1950s to test motor vehicles has become one of Victoria's largest privately-owned patches of native vegetation, and is the focus of a partnership between Holden and Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN).

The 14.5-kilometre perimeter of Holden's Lang Lang Proving Ground was fenced, ensuring the preservation of much of the 880-hectare Proving Ground's native vegetation within its network of roads.

That high-value vegetation has now been incorporated into wider conservation efforts by the partners, who began their collaboration around Bass River.

Since its formation in 2003, Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) – which supports 10 local Landcare groups representing about 800 families – has worked to improve water quality in the river and make it the hub of revegetation corridors.

In 2004, BCLN partnered with Holden in the "Holden the Bass" program – an ongoing funding of revegetation works intended to improve

the quality of water in the Bass River and establish vegetation corridors between the river, the proving ground, and other vegetation remnants.

More than 130,000 indigenous plants have been established across 50 properties, with seed gathered from the proving ground being used in direct seeding programs and to propagate tube stock.

Landcare Australia recognised the importance of the work being done by BCLN, and stepped in with support to develop a five-year management action plan and training days for the Holden Proving Ground staff, as well as funding a series of flora and fauna surveys.

During the surveys about 160 plant species (88 terrestrial and 72 aquatic) were recorded over eight ecological vegetation classes.

Fauna species recordings were also high. Forty-six bird species were recorded, in addition to five frog and 10 mammal species. Several are endangered.

Landcare Network's (BCLN) execu-

tive officer Kellie Nichols said Holden staff "get their hands dirty" to drive forward the projects undertaken over the past year.

These include a number of tree planting and weed removal projects and regular working bees at the Bass arboretum – an ongoing project that will ultimately provide samples of the different forest and woodland communities that once grew in the area as references for revegetation projects.

Recently the Western Port Biosphere, through the Growing Connections project, funded remnant enhancement and protection work at the Holden proving ground. The funding has been critical in stopping the advance and establishment of a number of woody weeds across the Proving Grounds.

Initial weed control actions were implemented in line with the management plan. Herbaceous and woody weeds were controlled across 166ha, including dense infestations.

During the Biosphere work, another endangered animal was seen: the powerful owl.



Placing plants with Bass Coast Landcare in a project in partnership with Holden and Landcare Australia

Holden will contribute a total of \$68,000 to Landcare Australia projects in Victoria and South Australia in 2015.

This includes for iconic Melbourne works through the Corporate

Environmental Volunteering program at Melbourne's Westgate Park and Whitehaven Wildlife Shelter, as well as for the Para River and Edinburgh Corridor through Adelaide's northern suburbs.



Central West Lachlan Landcare chair Margot Jolly and project officer Christie Elemam with Geraldine the Landcare cow by Aboriginal artist Glenn Sloane.

Reconciling land and people

CAN the environment be a conduit for better engagement between Aboriginal people and other Australians? Central West Lachlan Landcare (CWLL) is betting it can.

The Landcare group covers 940,000 square kilometres in the Parkes and Forbes council areas of Central West NSW – the traditional land of the Wiradjuri nation – and has developed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to build connections through the community.

The RAP aims to create a community “where differences are recognised and supported,

where there is respect for the knowledge of all, and that the healthy relationships of all members of our community are reflected in the healthy landscapes”.

The plan sets out 37 firm goals to be achieved during the two year project, some of them easier to implement than others. Most work toward unity and co-operation between Aboriginal people and Landcare.

RAP has already completed seven of its goals.

Successes include the development of a Community Caring for Country case study

program which celebrates the role Aboriginal community groups and members are playing; installation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in CWLL's Kelly Reserve premises; NAIDOC and Aboriginal community events, and the development of a Welcome to Country and Aboriginal Culture protocol for the organisation.

Future ambitions involve community days to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and to integrate understanding of those cultures into the community.

Rice straw bales aid bushfire recovery

LANDCARE is about much more than planting trees – and this year provided a somber opportunity to demonstrate the diverse approach to natural resource management when bushfire-affected farmers in Victoria received rice straw bales to prevent soil erosion and ash damaging their properties.

After fires destroyed about 70 per cent of the area in the Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group in March, Landcare members of South West Goulburn and Upper Deep Creek Landcare Networks immediately put into practice the rice straw bale technique to mitigate damage by post-bushfire thunderstorms to the already ravaged properties.

With the support of the Coca Cola Foundation, Landcare Australia funded the purchase of 26 rice straw bales to be used as sediment barriers on properties north of Melbourne from both the Port Phillip and Western Port and Goulburn Broken regions, where thunderstorms had washed ash and soil into waterways and dams.

South West Goulburn Landcare requested support from Landcare Australia to organise and host two workshops to demonstrate the use of rice straw to control erosion.

The information sessions were held shortly after the fires ravaged the area, sharing information about animal health, pasture management, soils and farm water. Landholders were provided with an on-site demonstration to show how rice straw could assist in protecting water quality as a result of heavy rain immediately after fire.

Nineteen landholders from Darraweit Guim up through Forbes and Willommavin then turned up on the Saturday after the information session to collect 250 kilograms bales

of straw, and two have since caught up to collect their bales.

According to South West Goulburn Landcare Facilitator Sonia, one of the highlights was seeing landholders make personal connections while waiting for the front end loader to arrive.

“Many of these people had never met each other before and yet started forging social links at a stack site,” she said.

“People began to offer each other assistance of labour and/or burnt fencing materials that could be used to hold the straw.

“One lady has called back very excited to let me know ‘her goats won’t even eat the rice straw and they eat everything.’”

Landcare Australia has used this technique before – after bushfires in 2009 devastated communities and land across Victoria, Landcare Australia funded two truckloads of rice straw bales to help landholders in the Mickleham-Kilmore fires control post-bushfire damage and erosion. Another load was provided to the Baynton Sidonia

Landcare Group for use in the Redesdale area.

Rice straw doesn’t harbour pasture weeds and holds together as a mat so it doesn’t blow away in the wind. The straw takes about a year to decompose and generally animals do not find it palatable.

Bales are broken up into biscuits about 10 centimetres to 20cm thick and are packed close together across slopes and drainage lines to create low barriers.

These barriers take the velocity out of the water flow and restrict the movement of soil and gravel. Ring lock fencing and posts salvaged from the fire are placed down-slope from the straw, with the netting folded back under to help hold the straw in place.

On slopes, the contours are followed to avoid channeling the

water. Fallen branches and small burnt trees can also be placed across slopes to slow water.

The lowest point in the barrier must be in the middle of the drainage line so water spills over the barrier rather than going around the side and creating a new line of erosion.

Several barriers can be placed in series down a drainage line. Solid structures like stumps and old machinery are not recommended in drainage lines – water will bypass them, creating more erosion and they may cause water pollution.

The ash and soil that builds up behind the straw can be used later as a planting bed.

The bales can also be broken up and spread across an area to introduce much needed cover from

heavy rain and build up biomass.

The rice straw program, trial site and demonstration days have created a greater awareness of what Landcare is all about.

Community pulled together with one local landholder in Kilmore taking delivery of the rice straw on their property, due to the space required and machinery required to carry out the project. They then provided machinery and manpower for a couple of hours on the day of collection.

Another upshot of the event was its positive effect on the Landcare movement.

Some of the landholders attending these workshops and information sessions were not Landcare members, but after seeing Landcare’s involvement in disaster recovery, three new families joined Willommavin Landcare Group.

Another two have asked for memberships forms to be forwarded.

South West Goulburn Landcare Network’s quick response to what the requirements of landholders came out of works carried out after the Black Saturday fires in 2009. It allowed for priorities to be acted upon as soon as possible to aid not only landholder but also the environment, which is of high Landcare importance across the region.

“Although a small part of the recovery process, the rice straw makes a significant contribution towards protecting valuable stock water in dams, water quality in creeks and people’s overall wellbeing in knowing they are starting to rebuild their dreams,” a local Landcare volunteer said.

“We are thrilled by the generosity of the Coca Cola Company and Landcare Australia with immediate support that allowed us to get out on ground and get the ball rolling in a positive manner.”



Rice straw was distributed to landholders from both the Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group and Willommavin Landcare Groups’ areas. The rice straw came from the Deniliquin in NSW’s Riverina.

 KONICA MINOLTA

Giving Shape to Ideas



Working towards
a sustainable future
Proudly supporting Landcare



Nominate a leading Landcarer for the Honour Roll

WHAT does it take to be a Landcarer, what motivates people to get involved and what can be achieved in 25 years or more of focused volunteering?

The Landcare Is For Everyone (L.I.F.E.) website has this year been featuring veterans involved in Landcare for 25 years or more and will be taking nominations for the Landcare Hero Honour Roll all year, to celebrate a quarter century since Landcare's national launch in 1989.

A grassroots movement, Landcare and related groups were operating before the national initiative was launched by the federal government in 1989 announcing a Decade of Landcare and \$320m to support the growth and activities of these volunteers.

One such group was Men of the Trees, and contact with the Queensland branch of the international dedicated organisation for increasing green cover was Paul Marshall's

first experience of landcaring, when he joined other volunteers helping to revegetate the surrounds of the North Pine Dam I 1988.

Men of the Trees itself was founded in Kenya by Dr Richard St Barbe Baker (pictured).

A government forestry officer concerned about the rapidly decreasing fertility of the land, Dr Barker believed it was necessary to plant more trees to combat the shifting methods of agriculture and initiated the idea of voluntary tree planting by the native tribesmen of the highlands.

That concept spread to England in 1924 and since then branches have developed in many parts of the world, bringing together tree conscious men, women and children.



In 1972, the board of directors of Friends of Nature in the United States awarded Dr Baker their conservation award for "being the foremost world citizen to stress the importance of maintaining tree cover for the continued existence of life".

The importance of trees was not lost on Paul Marshall – recently recognised on the Landcare Australia-managed Honour Roll – who, after a move to Gympie in 1990, started 17 years active involvement with Gympie and District Landcare Group. I

Initially as a committee member and volunteer, he then moved into a part-time role as project officer in 1996 which became full-time in 1999.

In the next eight years as the group's manager, Mr Marshall played a key role in building the group into one of the largest and most active in Queensland.

He has served as treasurer, vice-chair

and chair of the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee between 2003-09. He served on the board of Queensland Water and Landcarers, on Landcare Australia's board and advisory committee (2005-09) and currently supports and facilitates Bushcare groups in the Southern Highlands of NSW.

Also on the Honour Roll is Graeme Stevenson, from the beautiful and rugged less-populated area of north-western Tasmania.

Mr Stevenson has been flying the flag for sustainable agriculture and the Landcare movement in Tasmania for more than a quarter century.

Mr Stevenson has supported the establishment and maintenance of a wide range of community initiatives including the Burnie Farmers' Market and Animal Auction, Wynyard Landcare Group, Organic Gardening and Farming Society of

Tasmania, the Organic Coalition of Tasmania, and the Penguin Organic and Sustainable Living Festival.

He has provided support to groups and individuals in implementing more than \$2 million worth of Landcare initiatives involving river restoration, weed control, soil monitoring, managing soil erosion and education.

These projects have involved planting in excess of 75,000 trees, restoring more than 300 hectares of riparian land, including erecting about 150km of fencing, 126 off-stream watering-points and 35 river crossings.

• Nominate somebody or read more about Landcare pioneers on the Honour Roll, funded by the Australian government Department of the Environment, by visiting landcarelife.com/25years.

■ The Honour Roll closes for nominations December 31.

Young leader's success a local effort

A NATIONAL leadership program has burst the doors open on a world of possibilities for Rokewood's Karen O'Keefe.

When Karen O'Keefe was growing up on a farm near Cressy, Tasmania, taking part in a prestigious leadership program involving field trips across Australia and overseas was the last thing she saw in her future.

"I didn't really have the upbringing of, 'you can be whatever you want to be, dream and do,'" she said.

Instead, her parents gifted her with an ethic of hard work and a respect for nature that has served her well.

The 32-year-old is just weeks away from heading to Darwin to graduate from the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) and she has two local women in her community to thank for the unique experience.

Since graduating from Camperdown College, Ms O'Keefe has worked as a Landcare co-ordinator at Lismore; then with the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group and now as Regional Landcare Facilitator at the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

She travels to work in Colac, Victoria, from her base in Rokewood. "Val Lang was a farmer I met at Lismore," Ms O'Keefe said.

"She'd seen me grow in my role there since I started in 2005. She's a lovely lady and a graduate of the ARLP back in 2000."

At her friend's urging, Ms O'Keefe applied for the program in 2011, without success.

When Bev Steele in Derrinallum, who completed the ARLP herself in 2011, rang urging Ms O'Keefe to apply again in 2012, she took notice.

"Then I had a fair-dinkum go at it –

I was determined to get in," she said of the competitive, national selection process.

A whirlwind 17 months later and Ms O'Keefe is almost at the end of an extraordinary experience shared with 28 diverse leaders, which has taken her from the Kimberley to Canberra and overseas.

"In the every-day of work, you can get swamped," she said.

"That's what's great about the ARLP – it takes you away, sticks you right in the middle of real issues and real techniques for dealing with them.

"It gives you time to reflect on what you are doing, now and into the future.

"There is a difference between process and outcome that is so important in my line of work – both have to work well.

"We often don't make the time to value real reflection, and I'm much more receptive to that."

When Ms O'Keefe first left school, she did a natural resources diploma that further cemented her interest in the environment.

However, years of false starts and unsatisfying work followed before she finally enrolled in Federation University to do a Degree in Environmental Science.

"I was too scared to go to uni, – I didn't think I was smart enough."

As study unlocked more knowledge and experience, Ms O'Keefe was supported by a range of mentors throughout the district, as well as the many farmers whose kitchen tables she sat down at in the course of a working day.

When at last ready to commence the ARLP, Ms O'Keefe says some of the most affirming experiences she

had occurred during two weeks with the program in India.

"When I saw India's community projects having successful results in rural areas, I wasn't surprised, but others in my group were," she said.

"To me, it looked like a replication of Landcare in India – farm facilitators would study and live and work in these little villages, so those people get to know each other and establish trust.

"They become a part of the community, and then are able to assist and influence farmers.

"I loved that we went to the other side of the world, and people are trying to do the same things we are. People are trying to improve farming practices and be productive, yet better on the environment."

When Ms O'Keefe graduates from the ARLP, the culmination of her cohort's final session in Darwin, she will be adding a Graduate Certificate of Australian Rural Leadership from James Cook University to her list of achievements.

She will also join a network of almost 600 ARLP alumni and, like Val Lang and Bev Steele, she will be keeping an eye on the talented and committed members of her community who might be ready to follow in their steps.

"I've already recommended the ARLP to others," she said.

"It's for people who are good at what they do but aware it's not just about them – they actually do what they do because they care about the environment; the landscape and the people who are a part of it and trying to make things better."

And she is energised for her own leadership future.

"Supporting and encouraging peo-



Karen O'Keefe, from Cressy in Tasmania, says through the Australian Rural Leadership Program she has achieved much more than she ever imagined.

ple to be involved and connect and do things better is what I'm passionate about," Ms O'Keefe said.

"Those scones at the kitchen table are all part of it too.

"It's about helping people do what they want to do that will have benefits beyond them.

"Landcare is really people-care; it's helping the person who owns the land, but it's also helping the neighbour down the road, and the next

generation"

Ms O'Keefe received a Rural Women's Scholarship through the Australian government Department of Agriculture to participate in the Australian Rural Leadership Program.

■ Applications for Course 22 of the ARLP are now open. Visit <http://rural-leadersn.com.au/programs/australian-rural-leadership-program-for-established-leaders>

HAPPY BIRTHDAY LANDCARE

It's 25 years since Landcare was launched as a national movement, and time for some celebrations! Help inspire others to get involved by sharing your Landcare story, nominate your local hero for the Landcare Hero Honour Roll, or send us your before and after Landcare photos to show what a difference it can make.



INSPIRE OTHERS TO GET INVOLVED TODAY!

www.landcarelife.com/25years
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Image submitted by Illawarra Youth Landcare for A Day in the Life of Landcare