



GOULBURN BROKEN INDIGENOUS SEEDBANK – REGION'S BIODIVERSITY IN GOOD HANDS

Liz Evans, Coordinator of the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank, spends each day tending a special collection of native plant seed important to the future security of biodiversity in the region.

Liz took up the coordinator role in 2005. Having come from a background in horticulture and running an indigenous nursery for ten years, Liz is well qualified to oversee the sourcing of Indigenous grass, shrub and tree seeds and to manage the day-to-day operations of the Seedbank.

Lining the shelves of the Seedbank's large coolroom at the University of Melbourne's Dookie Campus are press-seal bags in plastic storage boxes containing over 750 kg of almost 180 different native plant seed types. The seed, ready for the 2015 revegetation season (autumn to spring), has been collected from over 100 sites across the region, including 16 seed

production areas, such as the Dookie Bushland Reserve located on campus - a nationally significant area of 270 ha, comprised of mainly white box and grey box grassy woodland.

Native vegetation is widely recognised as playing a major role in landscape rehabilitation. The region's 16 seed production areas contain selected plants that are a diverse genetic collection of the last remaining populations of native plant species in the Goulburn and Broken catchments. The purpose of these sites is to ensure the future of genetically healthy seed for direct seeding and tubestock revegetation projects. Not only does local indigenous seed used for revegetation ensure the genetic integrity of the local vegetation, but the plants are adapted to the local conditions which results in higher growth and survival rates.

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Established in 2000 to serve the revegetation needs of Landcare groups, government organisations, commercial nurseries, landowners and local conservation interest groups, the Seedbank has comprised a number of different partnerships over its fifteen year life. Today the Seedbank is a joint project between Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA), the University of Melbourne and GV Community Energy.

In 2013 GV Community Energy - a not-for-profit enterprise providing services to the community to transition to a low-carbon economy - took over management of the Seedbank providing it with important governance and strengthening its linkages to the regional community. According to the organisation's CEO, Geoff Lodge, re-instating vegetation at the landscape level complements its solar energy system program and other sustainable living initiatives.

Revegetation

"Because of both demand and the quality of the Seedbank product, seed sales generate in excess of \$100,000 each year. Ninety per cent of the direct seeding jobs for which we supply seed are related to government grant incentives. Our customers include the Goulburn Broken CMA, Conservation Management Networks, Parks Victoria, local governments and some commercial nurseries. Whilst we sometimes sell large quantities of a single seed type (e.g. we contributed a large amount of eucalypt seed to the Winton wetlands project) the majority of seed is usually sold as a revegetation mix.

"We are very grateful to the University of Melbourne for providing us with our large cool room and office space and we are currently meeting the demand for seed. I am confident we could scale up if demand increased."

Education

As Seedbank coordinator, Liz enjoys the education role that comes with the job and regularly presents to primary and secondary school students and naturalists. In 2014 Liz spoke on seed collection techniques at the successful Euroa Arboretum's inaugural Grass Woodlands Field Days. Liz also taught a unit at TAFE for a class of Indigenous Australians that became the catalyst for how Rad.com evolved. Rad.com is a program providing opportunity for Aboriginals subject to long-term unemployment to engage actively in the workforce.

Currently Liz is working with the Goulburn Broken CMA and University of Melbourne students who are

surveying a number of direct seeding project sites and recording species performance.

A strong partnership

Steve Wilson, Goulburn Broken CMA Land and Biodiversity Manager, says the CMA continues to work in partnership with GV Community Energy and the University of Melbourne in supporting the ongoing operations of the Seedbank.

"The Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank is supported by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

"The seedbank and seed production sites are not only critical to protecting the catchment's genetic biodiversity, it's now widely recognised that replanting native vegetation can reduce salinity and improve soils for crops and pastures, livestock, remnant vegetation, and native fauna.

"We continue to work closely with the Seedbank to source seeds for many of our projects, such as the Biodiversity Fund Carbon Landscapes and Sandridge Woodlands projects as well as broader Landcare and Conservation Management Network projects across the catchment," Mr Wilson said.

To contact the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank, phone 0428 770 030 or email seedbank@gvce.com.au



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