

The background image is a landscape photograph taken during the golden hour, likely at sunrise or sunset. The scene is dominated by rolling hills and a valley. A thick layer of mist or fog hangs in the valley, partially obscuring the lower slopes and creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. The hills are covered in dense vegetation, and several large, dark trees are scattered across the valley floor. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of orange, yellow, and brown, giving it a nostalgic and serene feel.

Milestones  
Memories &  
Messages

*A History of Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment*

MILESTONES, MEMORIES & MESSAGES:  
A History of Landcare  
In The  
Goulburn Broken Catchment

Prepared for the  
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority



**GOULBURN BROKEN**  
CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

by  
Carole Hamilton Barwick

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project began with a proposal by Katie Brown, Regional Landcare Coordinator for the Goulburn Broken Catchment, to capture the history of the distinct energies and diverse geographies of the 90 Landcare Groups, Local Area Plan and other environmental groups involved in important projects in land protection and natural resource management, as a fitting way to mark twenty years of Landcare.

### **I wish to acknowledge the following people who contributed to the formulation and completion of the project:**

The many Landcare Groups and members who contributed their enthusiasm, time and personal recollections, and their invaluable records, which included photographs, newspaper clippings, maps, plans, strategies, reports, publications, files and audio tapes.

The more than fifty people, listed in an appendix, who told the stories of their personal and professional lives across more than four decades of land, water and agricultural management, have provided a unique window on the interface between government policy, land management practice and economic and social changes to regional environments across the Goulburn Broken catchment.

Landcare support staff, one of the keys to the growth of Landcare from its beginnings more than twenty years ago, contributed their knowledge and experience.

The project was managed across almost two years by Lilian Parker Executive Officer, Upper Goulburn. I am grateful for her support and that of other CMA staff, who have contributed significantly to documenting the evolution of Landcare in the catchment and its broader context as a program in Victoria and Australia.

Poppe Davis, Dryland Community Liaison Officer, worked creatively and energetically on the final shaping of the history for publication.

Carole Hamilton Barwick  
October 2008

### **Images supplied by:**

Ancona Landcare Group, Delatite Landcare Group, Merton Landcare Group, Molesworth Landcare Group, Waranga Landcare Group, Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group, Strathbogie Tablelands Landcare Group, Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare Group, Sheep Pen Creek Land Protection Group, Goulburn Murray Landcare Network, Poppe Davis, Tallarook Landcare Group, Dabyminga Landcare Group, Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative, Goulburn Broken CMA library, History of Tooborac Group: Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group.



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## FOREWORD

The Goulburn Broken Catchment and Landcare have been an effective regional partnership since the 1980's.

To celebrate and record the milestone of twenty years of Landcare in 2006, the GBCMA commissioned a project to review the history of their association with Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. To ensure the historical development and political shape of Landcare's arrival were recorded with integrity, frankness and openness, the CMA needed to choose well their historian for this important project. Histories often illustrate and furnish the successes, but the CMA wanted their writer to keep to the facts and importantly keep to the relationship of actual events.

Dr. Carole Hamilton Barwick's review has brought together a diversity of voices, provided expert examination of well kept documents by community groups, individuals, government departments and non government organisations and has gone beyond what is often the case when looking at the past – that of only acknowledging important figures, important group ideas and movements along with important events – thus showing very clearly how interlinked events were, and why and how they evolved. Importantly she has provided an insight into the wonderful juxtapose of empowerment and constructive coercion.

Landcare had its origins in the Goulburn Broken Catchment with early projects in the Benalla area. However, no new program comes into being without many forerunners and this is particularly true with natural resource management and community development. This has been rightly recognised and appropriately reflected upon in this review. We live in a time of rapid change, a time of progress. Historical reflection helps show the reasons we are where we are.

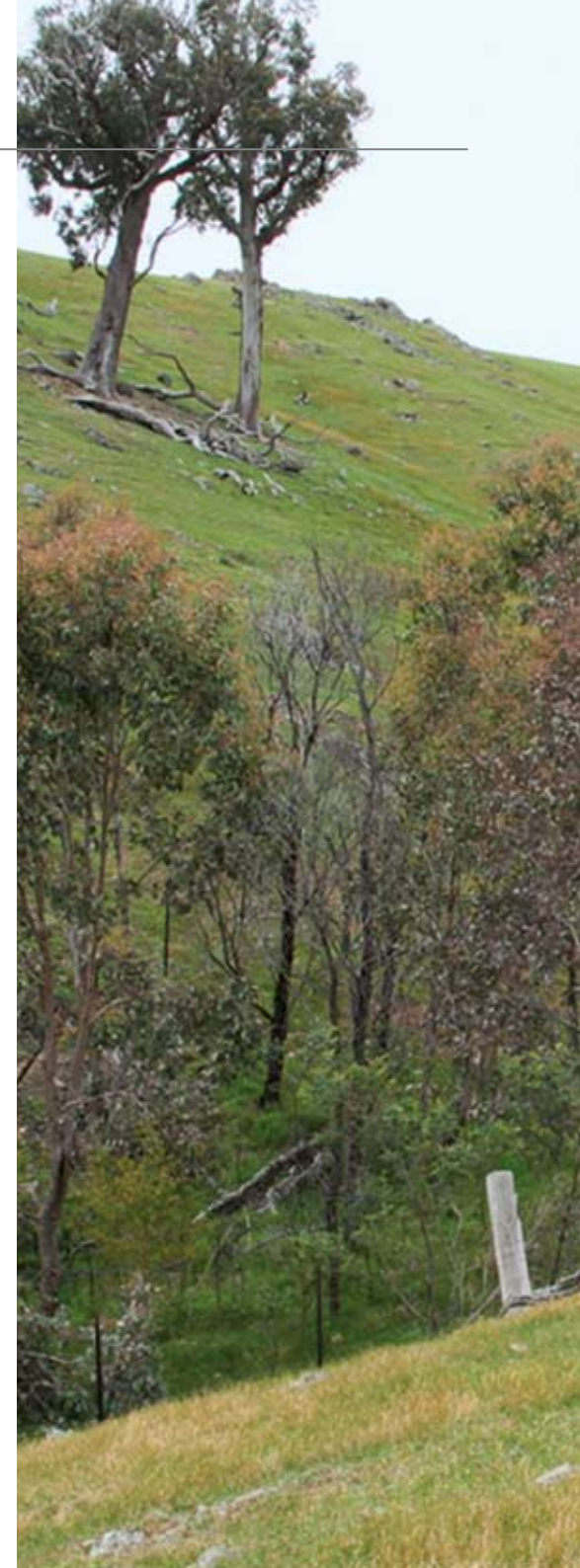
From the 1980's to 2006 there was considerable change in the complexity and range of agricultural products and markets. The demography of the communities within the Goulburn Broken Catchment changed significantly, with many properties being managed alongside 'off farm income' imperatives and/or with increasing numbers of property subdivisions and ownership. Fortunately for the community a heightened recognition of on-going change and a commitment to

address the requirements needed for environmental management and community development adaptation has been the hallmark of Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

The relationship of Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment continues to recognise the critical role of community participation. As anthropologist Margaret Mead astutely said, 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; Indeed it's the only thing that ever has'.

This fact has been very effectively demonstrated through the historical lens of this review. Importantly it also provides the experience and confidence to go forward.

Pam Robinson OAM  
Life Member, Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group





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## CHAPTER 1

# Eroded hills and scoured land: the origins of 'land protection' in Victoria

These hills my father's father stripped;  
And, beggars to the wind,  
They crouch like shoulders naked and whipped  
– Humble, abandoned, out of mind.

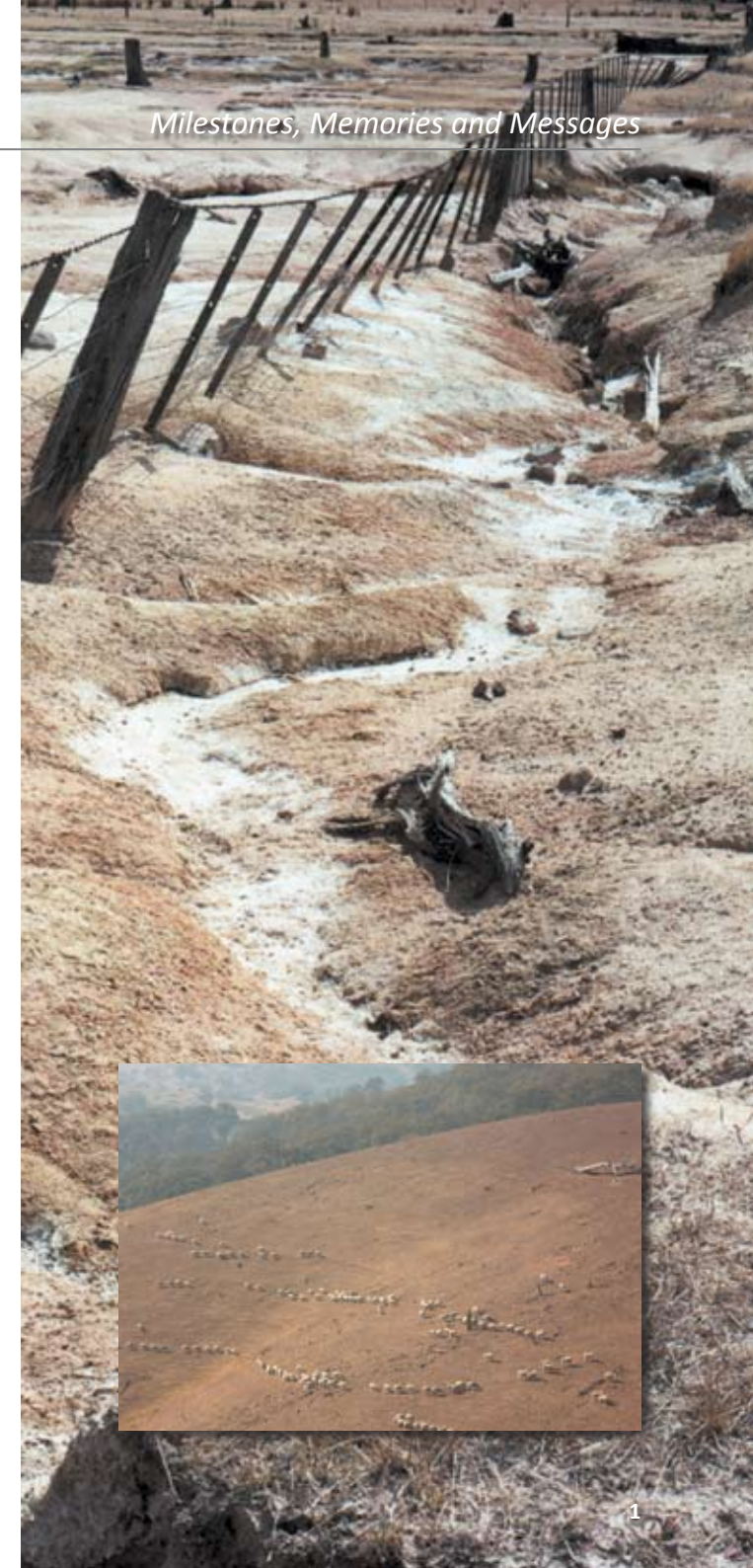
*Eroded Hills, in Five Senses,  
Judith Wright, 1963*

It is somewhat ironic that while tree clearing over many years has been instrumental in accelerating salinity, tree planting has now become an important element of government strategies to alleviate the problem. It is equally ironic that while taxation incentives existed up to 1983 to actually encourage tree clearing, and thus contribute to salinity, in less than 10 years the reverse is the case with taxation incentives offered from 1990 for tree planting.

*Special Report to Parliament No. 19, Salinity,  
Auditor-General of Victoria, March 1993*

### Settlement policies and land degradation

Awareness of the problems of land degradation in Australia existed as early as the nineteenth century. Notable pioneer accounts described the rapid damage often consequent on grazing and clearing.<sup>1</sup> A few individuals criticised the popular approach of importing exotic species to fill 'an empty land'; but the founding government of Victoria supported the initiatives. In 1854 a special committee of the parliament published a Report on the Best Means of Promoting Agriculture, and of the Settling the Waste Lands of the Colony, concerned 'that half of Victoria still laid waste, idle, and unoccupied' and therefore yielding nothing to the revenue of the colony.<sup>2</sup> The Acclimatisation Society of Victoria (ASV)<sup>3</sup> was formed in 1861, its motto *Omnis Feret Omnia Tellus* [All the earth will bear everything]; it aimed to introduce exotic plants and animals primarily for dispersion to suitable parts of the colony.<sup>4</sup> The society's First Annual Report, outlined its main objective ... introduction, acclimatisation and domestication of all innocuous



## Milestones, Memories and Messages

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animals, birds, fish, insects, and vegetables, whether useful or ornamental; perfection, propagation and hybridisation of races newly introduced ... (by) the procuring of animals from Great Britain and foreign countries<sup>5</sup>.

The society aimed 'to enrich the colony by stocking its broad territory'; an early initiative was the introduction of sparrows to eliminate a caterpillar plague in the 1860s. Baron Von Mueller, the architect of many notable botanical gardens in Victoria, recommended blackberry in the 1860s and spread the seed from his saddlebag during his trips across the state. Biological invasion in Australia, has been noticeably devastating; witness our extraordinary extinction record and spread of pest species, which has all occurred within such a relatively short time.

By the middle of the twentieth century however, many of the outcomes of widespread settlement and agricultural development were beginning to be regarded as serious problems, principally in the form of soil erosion. In September 1940, the Victorian Institute of Surveyors published the proceedings of an influential conference which stressed 'the importance of the necessity for concerted efforts being made both by landholders and public authorities to ... combat an insidious evil which is gradually threatening the productivity and prosperity of the State'.<sup>6</sup> The Mallee dust storms in the 1930s became iconic harbingers of soil erosion and the Depression, and in 1940 Harold Hanslow, who had been appointed a Commissioner with the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission [SRWSC] and given special responsibility for soil erosion, instigated a competition for Mallee farmers showing the best application of soil conservation principles. Similar competitions were established in most

districts of Victoria over the next decade.<sup>7</sup> He donated the 'Hanslow Cup' which is still used as a Landcare award. Unfortunately its long history and connection with early soil conservation initiatives is little known.

Much of this effort was on hold throughout the war years, but after the Second World War, serious action by governments and legislation on land protection began, with

the development of significant projects by the newly established Victorian Soil Conservation Authority. Most notably the Eppalock Catchment Project. [See Section 2.0 Biography of a Program: From Soil Conservation to LandCare and the Decade of Landcare, for an extended outline of the legislative and program forerunners of LandCare] By the 1960s, a more general

awareness of the nature of environmental problems was on the rise worldwide, informed by a developing understanding of the complex interdependencies of ecosystems. In Australia Judith Wright, the prominent poet and committed environmentalist became one of the earliest campaigners to raise the awareness of a degraded landscape which demanded the nation's attention. Poems



in her 1963 collection portray graphically, the quintessential Australian experience of drought, flood, and fire, which have shaped rural living:

*The embered air,  
Burned to the roots of timber  
and grass ...  
... .. The scoured and ruined land,  
The herds gone down the current,*

*the farms drowned ...  
... the silted river, Under its dark banks  
the river flows on, And the great  
broken tree ...*

*... The bone whisper in the hide  
Of the big red horse that lay  
where he died.<sup>8</sup>*

During the 1960s and 1970s several key events contributed to dramatic changes in community perceptions. In 1962 Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a book widely credited with challenging the prevailing mindset in the postwar years, of the unlimited potential of technologically assisted agricultural development. The book was widely read and inspired world-wide public concern about the

impact of pesticides and other pollution in ecosystems and food chains. It is indicative of the rapid dissemination of these ideas that by 1971 the book was prescribed reading for the Victorian Higher School Certificate.<sup>9</sup> In just over a decade what had been first articulated by pioneering scientists and environmentalists became the focus of broad community debate and was taken up at the highest levels of government, nationally and internationally. Within the decade, the pesticide DDT was banned in the United States.

In 1972 the first satellite images of the earth were published, and the first United Nations Conference on the Environment was held in Stockholm; attended by 114 nations. World Environment Day, to be hosted by different cities round the world on June 5th each year, was initiated at this assembly. The UN Environment Program [UNEP] to coordinate UN environment activities was also established. In December 1983 the UN established the World Commission on Environment and Development. Its Chairman Gro Harlem Brundtland, described his remit as 'an urgent call by the General Assembly, to formulate a global agenda for change... ... a clear demonstration of the widespread feeling of frustration and inadequacy ... ... to address vital global issues'.<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that during the time the Commission was operating the devastating leak at the pesticide factory at Bhopal India, and the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl occurred. The Commission released its report in March 1987 under the title *Our Common Future*.



### Conservation awareness in Australia

Awareness of the scope of environmental degradation in Australia paralleled important international policy developments of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>11</sup> The Australian Conservation Foundation was formed in October 1965 with Sir Garfield Barwick as the foundation president, and from 1968 it received funding from the commonwealth government.<sup>12</sup> The first National Soil Conservation Conference was held in 1971. It mandated a Commonwealth/State Collaborative Soil Study which reported on its comprehensive research in 1978. By 1983 the National Soil Conservation Program and the Federal Water Resources Assistance Program were established and in 1985 the

Commonwealth Soil Conservation (Financial Assistance Act) was passed to facilitate funding for land remediation programs. The Murray Darling Basin Commission was established in 1985<sup>13</sup> and in 1986 the Australian Soil Conservation Council was formed, releasing the National Soil Conservation Strategy in 1989.<sup>14</sup> The quarter century post World War II, was a period of unprecedented economic growth which provided the context for the growing support for 'the conservation project' in Australia. In Victoria, the Land Conservation Council was established in 1972, the last year of the Bolte Government. Significantly this was an attempt to defuse a controversy over the government's scheme [finally abandoned

because of strong community opposition] to extend agricultural settlement in the Little Desert'.<sup>15</sup> The Victorian Conservation Trust Act was proclaimed in December 1972, under Premier Rupert Hamer, and was followed by the establishment of the first Victorian Ministry of Conservation in 1973. A number of conservation initiatives followed, including the enactment of the National Parks Act 1975, the establishment of the Standing Consultative Committee on River Improvement<sup>16</sup> and the formation of the Garden State Committee in 1977.

A Victorian conference, Focus on Farm Trees in 1980, led to the establishment of the Farm Tree Group program auspiced and managed by the Victorian Farmers Federation. A number of these groups were started in the Goulburn region and later became Land Management/Protection Groups under the new LandCare program.<sup>17</sup> Long time Landcare member Colin Paterson recalled: 'Before I joined Landcare I was a member of the Kyneton Tree Planting



Group, in the Baynton area. There were subsidies for trees and guards'.<sup>18</sup>

The 1980s brought what has been called 'the second wave of conservation awareness'.<sup>19</sup> It too, was a relatively affluent period that supported 'an explosion of farmer groups dedicated to conservation issues: weed control, rabbit control, erosion control, tree planting and whole farm planning'.<sup>20</sup> In 1982 a Labor government was elected in Victoria on the basis of a progressive social democratic agenda which included a number of environment and conservation policies. In 1983, as part of the Cain Government program to integrate land management and land protection programs, a major organisational review amalgamated the policy, planning and operational responsibilities of a number of agencies - the Soil Conservation Authority, the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, the Forests Commission, the National Parks Service, and the Department of Crown Lands into a single large agency the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands [CF&L].





### Jock Wallis...

... is a fourth generation farmer in the Seymour area. Jock's great grandfather first came to the area in 1857 and worked as a boundary rider on the large grazing run Worrough. When this was broken up for selection under the 1860 Land Act he acquired 1200 acres which he named

Fairholme and a house was built on the property in 1874. Jock's grandfather was born on this property and he married the daughter of neighbouring farmers. Jock's father and Jock himself were also born there. Jock has been at his present property Eastwood since 1950 where he and his wife Margaret raised their family. For a period in the 1950s he ran both Eastwood and Fairholme.

Jock was born in 1926 and attended Scotch College; in 1942, due to the shortage of labour in the war years, he was needed back on the farm. Jock remembered the redevelopment of the property that was needed after the war: 'In the 1950s we refenced this whole place, it had been neglected and what we did was cut down trees for fencing. My father had removed trees, cut them down, made fence posts and done all his land in the hills beyond here. So it was just a natural progression that would be the way you did fencing. It took us probably five years'. He commented that it took a while before people realised that you also needed trees to hold the land together.

After the war the economy improved, wool prices increased. The marked increase in knowledge and farming practice coupled with higher prices and farm cash flow revolutionised agriculture. 'We started sowing lucerne on the flats in 1958 – that was the start of improving with phalaris – we got into spraying weeds. A lot of the country here was covered with round tussock; we direct drilled seed into pastures after spraying'. During this boom period in Australian agriculture there were a number of important developments. Pasture improvement techniques were coupled with mechanisation of farming where till then there had been dependence on literal 'horse power'. Tractors and then a direct drill and things like the invention of the yeoman chisel plough along with

availability of fertiliser, made a huge difference. Jock and Margaret had an airstrip for the tiger moths on the property and Margaret recalled: 'People would come for miles to see the planes go off with huge loads of super – how quickly they'd be back, and only two years earlier people were taking a week or a fortnight to put on that amount of super, by truck or by horse'.

From the 1960s Jock was a member of the Seymour River Improvement Trust and later the Mid-Goulburn River Management Board which was responsible for an area from Yea to Nagambie. 'We were initially restricted to, "bed and banks", but that enlarged over time'. Jock felt that the Trust had been a good foundation with very experienced people as members, who had a strong commitment to water quality and water conservation. In addition to voluntary contribution to river management, in 1964 Jock completed some short courses at Marcus Oldham Agricultural College and subsequently had pre and post entry jackeroos placed on their property for work experience; a practice which he continued right through to the 1990s. 'They were very much into land management as well as stock management – the 1960s were a very formative time when you were very involved in education about the land'.

Jock recalled how he had gradually realised that it was time to stop cutting down trees and had become a committed campaigner against tree clearing. When native vegetation clearing controls were enacted by the Victorian government in 1989, Jock was interviewed on ABC Radio and spoke positively about the new regulations, a position which was very much against the popular pressure. At the time there was a prevailing view that these laws represented unwarranted interference with what landholders saw as their "farming rights".

Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group had its origins four decades ago, with the flooding of Seymour in 1973. Following a tour of the flooded areas, by the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, Whiteheads Creek landholder group, received funds for flood mitigation, through the Commonwealth Department of Urban & Regional Development (DURD). The grant was based on the recognition of the need to rehabilitate the wider catchment

of Whiteheads Creek, to stop excessive run-off, by revegetating the cleared steep hills of the region.

In 1977 the group became a formal Group Conservation Area under the Soil Conservation Authority. The SCA conducted many field days on issues like tunnel erosion and the agency was a source of respected and welcomed advice and help to farmers. Jock recalled the progress of a typical gully on his own property: 'There was one in our house paddock, created in the 30s and 40s. We gathered up stumps and battered the sides of this enormous washout, 8ft high and 5-6 metres across – now, all that dirt, had gone across the road into the next paddock'.

In 1986 the group was designated Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group and registered with the LandCare Program in 1987 which was very exciting for members. Recalling the enthusiasm and sense of local identity this created, Margaret Wallis said: 'We felt we were a very special spot here – there was such a lot of encouragement'. Jock described some of the early activities: 'As a Landcare Group we had a program of aerial sowing on the hills – the experts in CF&L said you'll never get away with that. We split the sowing and it did work, the grass slowed the runoff'. It was a measure of the local commitment, Jock said, that 'all the landcare members were up there marking for pilots'. Salinity was also a key focus in the early years of the LandCare Group. Jock explained: 'There was a lot of emphasis placed on salinity at that time – so everyone was very aware of that – we were encouraged to plant lucerne to take up the salt. It was on everybody's lips. It was really targeted'.

With his quiet espousal of new ideas, Jock has long been a respected leader of Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group and its predecessors, and the local community. It is indicative of his farsightedness and inclusive attitude, that at a meeting celebrating the history of the district and the Landcare group in recent years, he would thank in a commemorative speech, 'all you newcomers – we'd lost our school, and other community things, and we thought we had to cut down trees, but you newcomers have brought vitality and new ideas'.

## Conservation and water sector reform in Victoria

In addition to developments in land protection programs in Victoria, the 1980s saw a major focus, on river management and drainage, water sector reform and salinity control. Awareness of the problem of salinity developed in the 1970s. Between 1972 and 1984 approximately \$60m was expended by government through capital works, undertaken mainly by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission [SRWSC later became the Rural Water Commission – See Appendix B for machinery of government and agency title changes].<sup>21</sup> In 1983, the Standing Consultative Committee on River Management, which had operated under the auspice of SRWSC since 1975, published a landmark report. *The State of the Rivers* was aimed at focussing public awareness on catchment decline and highlighting the degradation of many of Victoria's rivers. The report's recommendations were endorsed by government and the State of the Rivers Task Force was established. In the same year the Public Bodies Review Committee reported to Parliament on a three year review of the Victorian water sector. It recommended the disbanding of all River Improvement Trusts, which, due to their limited scope and resources had fallen into disrepute. The report proposed nine catchment boards to improve the knowledge base of, and provide management for, entire river catchments.

After several decades of increasing concern in Victoria about saline discharge in irrigated areas and saline soils in dryland agricultural regions, an inquiry was undertaken by an all-party Joint Select Committee of the



Victorian Parliament, to develop cooperative efforts in managing and meeting the costs of salinity. Based on a series of Technical Reports and Discussion Papers,<sup>22</sup> the government developed a salinity control program and established a Cabinet Task Force. A community based Salinity Pilot Program was established in October 1985. The Goulburn and Broken river catchments were selected for the Pilot Program, both because of the complexity of irrigation and dryland in the region, and because of the magnitude of the threat that salinity posed to high value agriculture/horticulture in the this

area. John Dainton, Chairman of the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council commented: 'Shepparton got it ... because the economics in Shepparton are far greater than anywhere else in this state'.<sup>23</sup> The program evolved as 'one of the most sophisticated and sustained efforts in Australia by government, community organisations and landholders to address salinity'.<sup>24</sup>

Ministers Kirner and McCutcheon formally launched the Salinity Pilot Program in Benalla in September 1985; all government agencies involved were required to develop a coordinated budget submission for

1985/86. This was one of the first examples of inter-agency cooperation and integration of programs. A total of \$9.0m was allocated for the first year, projected to \$18.0m per year for the next four years. A strong recommendation throughout had been for effective involvement of the community. SPPAC was well resourced by technical staff, but they were not voting members of the Advisory Council. Community leaders filled sixteen positions to ensure both a high level of capability, and the widest representation of regional dryland and irrigation interests. The opportunity to build on the noteworthy

level of pre-existing community based land protection and waterway management initiatives in the Goulburn Broken catchment was seen as critical to the success of the venture.<sup>25</sup>

In the same period during which the Salinity Pilot Project was being established, the LandCare program [the title changed to Landcare over the next few years], was launched in the Bendigo region by Joan Kirner, Minister for CF&L [November 1986]. Several of the earliest groups in the Goulburn

region were registered over the next two years. Most had prior existence as Soil Conservation Committees, Farm Tree Groups or Land Management Groups – they included Warrenbayne Boho, Whiteheads Creek, Burnt Creek, Molyullah Tatong, Sheep Pen Creek, Swanpool and District, Glenaroua, Upper Hughes Creek, Ford Creek, Ancona Valley, Girgarre Stanhope, North West Mooroopna.

### From symptoms to systems: Regional Landcare Plans

By 1992 the Goulburn Regional Landcare Plan listed thirty-two LandCare/Land Management Groups in the dryland area of the Goulburn region and fifteen in the irrigation areas.<sup>26</sup> In addition to a total of forty-seven Landcare groups engaged in soil erosion, weed and rabbit eradication, water quality, revegetation and salinity management projects, there were fourteen SoilCare groups and twenty-one Drainage groups.

The exponential rate of growth over effectively a five-year period is compelling evidence that the program, aimed at supporting groups of landholders in tackling land degradation problems more broadly, was successful from the outset and gained rapid acceptance.<sup>27</sup>

By the early 1990s significant developments had been achieved in addressing the major areas of land and waterway degradation: certainly a thorough comprehension now existed that “the earth would not bear everything”. At a Seminar auspiced by the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group in November 1993, A Basis for Integrated Catchment Management of the Goulburn River System, one speaker commented on the progress which had been made over several decades:

... .. a growing understanding of ecological and agronomic realities has encouraged a change from a symptoms to a systems focus. Institutional innovations such as the Salinity Program Advisory Council, the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group, Landcare and Municipal Conservation Strategy Groups have formed in recognition that:

- Complex issues such as salinity require collaborative responses
- Waterways can't be properly managed without a whole catchment focus
- Individual on-farm effort can be maximised in a sub-catchment setting

Community environmental goal setting protects environmental health. These insights represent a growing maturity in the relationship between people and land ... ..<sup>28</sup>





### **Ancona Valley Landcare...**

*... was formed in 1989 after a Mansfield Shire report on waterways in the shire, indicated that the Brankeet Creek, which runs through the valley and enters*

*Eildon at the Brankeet Arm, was one of the most severely degraded waterways in the area. The Shire and officers from Department of Conservation Forest and Lands [CF&L], sought to gauge the level of interest by landholders in the valley, in forming a LandCare Group. A public meeting voted to go ahead and some months later the Minister for CF&L Kay Setches, local member Pat McNamara and a number of Councillors attended the packed Ancona Valley Hall to witness the formal registration of the new LandCare Group. Ian Wood was elected as the first President, Morag Huggins Secretary, and Tony Browne Treasurer. All the landholders except one joined – the membership in the very discrete geography created by the valley, has remained stable at between 26 – 30 families since the start. The current President, Heather Wood, explained: 'It's such a separate valley, it encloses us. It has made for easy differentiation'.*

*The Group received a grant to commission a report on the creek and its rehabilitation which was prepared by Ian Drummond & Assoc P/L in July 1989. The severe erosion and siltation problems in the valley had developed over many decades as almost all of the abutting landholdings had used the unfenced creek for watering sheep and cattle, and the steep hillsides had been cleared of timber for firewood and mine construction years earlier. The degradation of the stream had been aggravated by a drain, [a Depression unemployment program], cut through an existing wetland at the southern end of the valley, where the Brankeet Creek flowed into Eildon Weir. Over time, this had rendered the Creek ever faster flowing and deeper – a sandy drain some 5-6 metres wide – with eroding gullies back up the drainage lines delivering volumes of sand to the reservoir.*

*Aware of the degradation of the stream, people had tried*

*a number of solutions [rubber tyres etc] on an individual basis; the formation of Ancona Valley LandCare created the opportunity for joint and planned action. Heather recalled: 'We walked the 8 km of valley, paced it out, calculated fencing. In those days there was no regulation about widths and so on. Some landholders gave up more land; in other parts the fencing goes pretty close to the creek!' Water from the creek was used widely in the valley, 'Several families used the water for domestic use as well as farm use, even though stock were in the water. Once the creek was fenced and planted of course their water quality improved enormously which delighted them. However all the creeks in the valley have dried up in 2002 and 2007 – which has never happened before – we seem to be facing another set of massive changes'.*

*Significant funding was made available and a number of rock weirs were planned; the original report had recommended solutions that proved to be very expensive as a large number of groynes were involved. In the end four weirs were constructed, one of which failed in the 1993 flood and has since been repaired. The Group was encouraged then, to plant hybrid New Zealand willows [which are now being replaced]! Over the period 1989 – 1991 the Creek was fenced and over the three years to 1994 with a great deal of assistance from volunteers [Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Kew Rotary/Jaycees, schools etc] an enormous amount of tree planting was completed. Once the rehabilitation of the creek was completed, attention turned to the drainage lines and the bare rocky hills of the catchment. Early submissions by the Group for funding resulted in the purchase of a seed bucket for helicopter aerial seeding to establish pasture on the steep bare hills. This could only be done in spring and needed a wet winter and spring to establish. A direct tree seeder to be used on the back of a tractor was also obtained with grant funds. 'Planting of tube stock in plantations on the bare rocky hillsides was surprisingly effective and around 95% of seedlings thrived – very severe frosts down in the valley meant a lower success rate along the creek itself'.*

*The anniversary celebration held in 1997 featured both 'before and after' photos of the rehabilitation work of ten years; with*

*many photos illustrating the longer history of the valley. It was clear that after the last ten years work the valley landscape had been transformed. The historical images revealed some of the origins of land and waterway degradation in early gold mining, clearing and serious bushfires. 'An enormous amount had been achieved – you could see it – this had really changed the valley. There was an enormous amount of enthusiasm. It has been very important to have the record'.*

*The group has always been made up of generational farmers, 'new locals' and weekenders, a combination that members judge to have been very successful. Many old locals 'loved the fact that something was being done', new locals were keen to improve the land and build community connections, and weekenders had 'lots of Melbourne contacts' bringing valuable information and resources to the valley. Towards the end of two decades of operation the group is now experiencing significant contextual change – both generational and in terms of landholding. Early group members are somewhat 'burnt out' after the first ten years of intense community action. The population of the valley is 'swinging quickly to lifestyle farming' and 'new locals' now approach 50% of the group; weekenders are around 25% and older families 25%. 'Over twenty years the land has changed hands – older owners are selling off in 100 acre lots and thus the number of weekenders is increasing', [a picture paralleled in a number of Landcare groups in the catchment]. The character of the landcare program has also changed over time and paid Facilitators now carry a lot of the responsibility which was undertaken on a voluntary basis in the earlier years.*

*The future objectives for the group include preservation of biodiversity and special roadside vegetation, projects on individual properties and a continued attention to planting the steep, bare hillsides, though this requires wetter seasons to be successful. It will require a new set of strategies to involve 'weekenders' and maintain the level of involvement in ongoing landcare work in the valley – a task more difficult than in earlier times when objectives were clearer and adequate resources were made available.*

**Policy and structural changes in rural Victoria**

A major shift in thinking about the role of the public sector in the 1980s saw government retrieve strategic and policy leadership, to develop an integrated approach to program and budget management. Structures changed, but more importantly, the idea of the role of government was transformed. The new theoretical framework, shifted responsibilities from the public sector

to the private – landholders, communities and markets [for example the first proposals to establish tradeable water rights were examined in the mid 1980s]. This constituted the end of an era in Australian history which had seen governments mandate all infrastructure and economic development. The following diagram schematises these fundamental shifts in the roles and relationships between the four basic sectors of society.

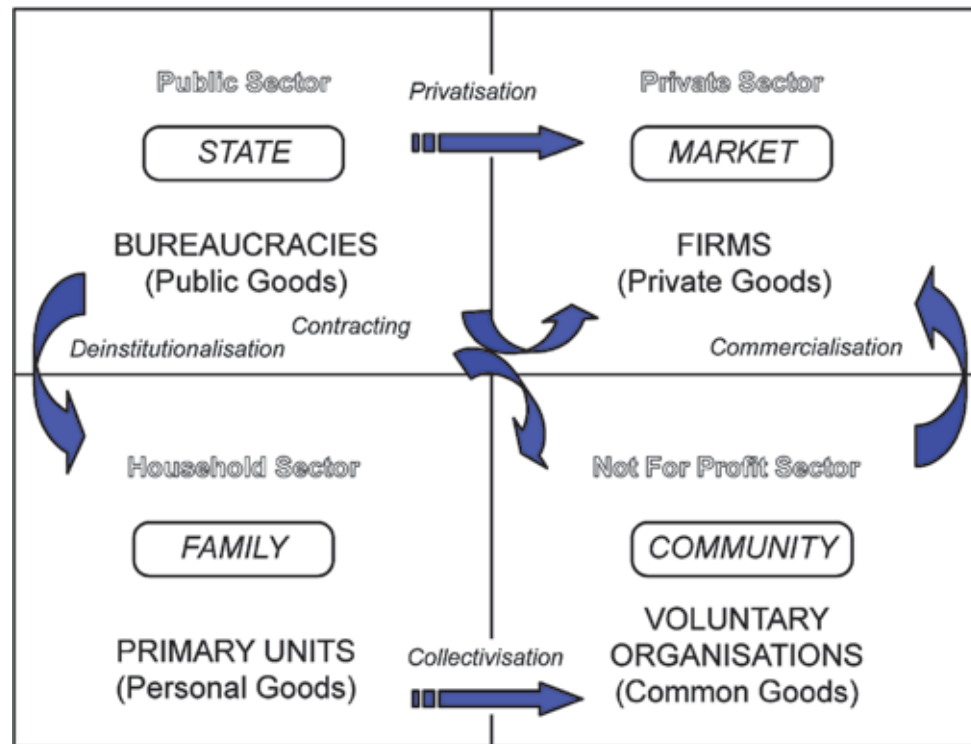


Fig. 1 Changing Roles and Relationships of Social Sectors 1980s & 1990s

The public sector has over the last two decades, devolved functions and responsibilities to either the Private/For Profit sector through privatised enterprises [initially called State Owned Enterprises SOEs], or to the Not For Profit/Community Sector through funding contracts, and more recently to the Household Sector.

Contractual relationships between the state and other social sectors have always existed either formally, or through implicit assumptions. In recent decades the state has increasingly contracted with the private sector to undertake public works and this has evolved ultimately to include financing. Public Private Partnerships now undertake almost all components of major public infrastructure development; a strong contrast with an era when the state invested in all forms of public infrastructure from roads, rail, and bridges to irrigation networks. Long-established agencies in Victoria, like the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the State Electricity Commission, the Victorian Railways, which had operated with wide economic and infrastructure development briefs, were dismantled. In a similar way relationships between the Household and Not for Profit sectors have progressively changed, particularly in the areas of health, education, childcare and welfare.

These changes had particular impacts in the natural resource management field. With the recognition, that the scale of land degradation would require the household and community sectors to be involved in ongoing works for both the public and private good, the two came to be seen as interdependent. To facilitate the distribution and accountability levels necessary for

government, self-managed groups [collectives – see schema] were created in the community sector, to enable the state to ‘pay’ for what had hitherto been undertaken pro bono by individuals. The shared [2:1, 1:1] basis of most ‘landcare’ grants is a direct result of these developments.

At the same time, driven by the need to reconceptualise the role of the state in view of the broad scale of problems, and the projected resource needs [in every field], state sponsored services were progressively withdrawn. The withdrawal of state agencies from areas such as weed and vermin control and much field extension work are classic examples of these changing roles and have been subject of wide-ranging comment by people interviewed for this project.

It is important to recognise both the technical developments and innovations in ‘extension work’ of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and the policy changes out of which the idea of Landcare emerged. The innovative emphasis on the responsibility of landholders and the role of collective action through community groupings in partnership with government was a fundamental swing away from the decades of state sponsored resource management and economic development. These complex changes produced the context in which Landcare originated and within which it has expanded and matured. The Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare 2002, acknowledged the reality of these trends, and the significant extent to which land and waterway remediation is now dependent on community landcare, the nonprofit sector that has grown out of the original CF&L government program.<sup>29</sup>



### **Bunbartha Kaarimba Landcare Group...**

...Godfrey Medland was born at Tatura, but has lived along the Goulburn River for about 75 years. He was a foundation member of the Landcare Group established in 1992, which grew out of concerns about drainage and gully erosion of low lying areas that would follow heavy rains. Godfrey said: 'We actually started a Landcare Group quite a few years ago, and since then we've been very, very active. We had a lot of problems in the area, but I'm very glad to say we planted thousands of trees and I can't believe the difference. We've been through a lot of drought years, but the trees we have planted were the right trees, the right place and they've done remarkably well. I've seen a big difference in the area, if I flew over it again, I would hardly recognise it'.

The district lies in Shepparton Irrigation Region [SIR], just 10k north of Shepparton and extending 30k along the main Barmah-Shepparton road. It covers approximately 32,306 ha of valuable and productive agricultural land; much of which adjoins the Goulburn River. The large Loch Garry wetlands, a site which contains a number of lagoons that are filled and drained [in 'normal seasons'] by the river, are part of the area. There are varied agricultural enterprises in the area but horticulture and dairying are the main features of the area. Horticulture on a larger scale began in 1957, growing mainly

peaches using sprinkler irrigation. Peach growing is very specialized and there are suitable soils in the Bunbartha area. Kiwi fruit and Nashi pears along with deer farming and yabby farming are more recent developments.

Over the last fifteen years the landcare group has been involved in extensive roadside and depression planting. Before the local Bunbartha Primary School closed in 1998, the landcare group was actively involved in aspects of the school environmental awareness curriculum. Like many groups in the SIR, Bunbartha has been a committed participant in the Waterwatch program – monitoring watertable wells and nutrient levels. Natural Heritage Trust funds supported a project to protect and assist regeneration of remnant vegetation and create corridors between remnant stands. Godfrey observed: 'Planting trees keeps the water table down, every tree that grows, not only does it keep the water table down, it takes up a bit of salt as well. The big thing with trees, you get a far better bird life, I can't believe the birds that have come back into the area since our Landcare Group have planted all these trees'.

Bunbartha Kaarimba initiated a Local Area Planning process in 2001; public meetings were held in October and November to consider the primary question: 'What do we want Bunbartha Kaarimba Zeerust area to look like in 20 years time, environmentally, socially and economically?' Over a period of two years, 28 follow up meetings were facilitated by DPI staff. The LAP Group and Landcare Group, now have overlapping membership. The completed LAP was launched in 2003. While the area is now generally healthy and free from pressing land degradation problems, the LAP details a number of priorities such as: promoting the environmental aspects of public land, including regular clean-ups and development of recreation aspects; prudent management of waterways and development of a strategy for Loch Garry; active involvement in the flood plain rehabilitation scheme; promotion of best management practice for irrigated farming; implementation of an accreditation for 'weed free' properties.

An important attribute of the group has been its interest in, and developing knowledge of local history. Combined history and community environment days have become an annual part of the program. In 2005 a tour of the now closed Tallygaroopna West Methodist church and a Zeerust settlement house [an example of the tin clad houses built for early settlers – many from the UK] was a highlight of the day.

The Landcare Group currently has approximately 25 members, with only about 12 regular attenders at the monthly meetings. Current environmental work is mainly weed control and a two year project is in place, although this has been heavily affected by the recent severe drought. Local sub-division and housing estate development in the area proximal to Shepparton has created particular challenges for the future of the group. 'People don't mix in the area; they keep their connections in Shepparton. It has only been local issues such as a planned tip site that have given us a common focus'.

John Pettigrew who has been President of the group remarked: 'Early on there was big tree planting – and a lot to show for the work – those days have gone. Numbers are starting to dwindle; there's a bit of burnout. The irrigation community has seen so many changes over the last ten years. Some people are getting fed up'. There is recognition, paralleled in a number of landcare groups, that this is a mature group which has to develop new roles. The current emphasis is on keeping information flowing through a quarterly newsletter. The history project is seen as a way of getting the community involved and continuing the valuable connections created by earlier projects. 'We need to keep the social capital built up in those years'. In 2008 a 'back to day' is planned for the local primary school which closed a decade ago.

## A history of 'landcare' in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

This project commissioned by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority reviews the history and evolution of Landcare in the region, including the early forerunner initiatives and programs and its growth over the twenty years since its launch by the Victorian Department of CF&L in 1986, to its current regional management by the Catchment Management Authority.

History is an interesting discipline – it brings a dimension not generally present in natural resource management, which, with its technical basis, can be more present status and action/output oriented. 'Movements' like Landcare, particularly in the foundation stages, can have a tendency to be exhortatory and promotional; to focus on sponsoring achievements rather than analysing progress. These practices can be at the cost of a comprehensive understanding of how things have evolved and the best lessons may have to be relearnt.

In an essay that reflected on land and water resource management in the era from the 1930s to 1986, Rob Chaffe, an experienced soil conservationist based at Alexandra for more than twenty years noted that Landcare had developed during a period of great change. 'It's good to remember this, for times have changed and we can see the past repeating itself. After twenty years of Landcare we should revisit history and learn from it'.<sup>30</sup> Chaffe highlighted the significance of developments in the technical knowledge base and practice in environmental management, and in approaches to public administration. The 1980s marked the end of a period where



## Milestones, Memories and Messages

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relatively independent statutory agencies such as the SCA, SRWSC, SEC, MMBW and others enjoyed autonomy to manage their own budgets and to develop and implement their own strategic policy and programs. The 'Commissions' had been established to independently manage major projects on the basis of technical competence in the great era of 'state development'. The period for which this history is commissioned 1986 – 2006 coincides with significant change in agricultural development, environmental management and, with social, demographic and political adjustments.

A complex mix of which created the shaping context for the development of Landcare and will be examined in more detail in Section Two - Biography of a Program: From Soil Conservation to LandCare to a Decade of Landcare.

In 2002 the Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare Evaluation made a strong recommendation that innovative social research be undertaken to improve understanding of regional and local natural resource management, by profiling communities of interest and devising new methods for assessing community capacity.<sup>31</sup>

The compilation of a history of Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment can make a useful contribution by putting on the record the evolution LandCare/Landcare over two decades at all levels - government policy, agency programs and community initiatives. There is currently only limited long term organisational memory for Landcare at a regional level and various anniversary celebrations in 2006, both revealed the gaps, and saw some significant efforts to recover and document the story.<sup>32</sup>

The foundation narrative of Landcare in the Goulburn Broken catchment is complex;

assembling it a challenge. Records are not complete or accessible; the emphasis on year on year funding and changes in management and accountability regimes has meant that most forms of time series data are discontinuous. Inevitably the community based nature of Landcare has meant great variability in the capacity to manage and maintain records. Karen Brisbane, Coordinator of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network commented on efforts to mark two decades of Landcare in 2006: 'Putting together a history was difficult; information hasn't been kept, it's hard to track people, groups are not



interested, records are lost as office bearers change. It was particularly difficult to find out when groups were actually formed'.<sup>33</sup>

For this project a coherent chronological narrative has, of necessity, been built from the ground up and there remain a number of tasks to complete the picture of Goulburn Broken regional Landcare. Other writers who have sought 'to synthesize a picture of the beginnings of Landcare' have made the same observation, notwithstanding that the initiative is so relatively recent. In a paper given at the International Landcare Conference 2006, Chris Burnup made the



point that little exists by way of detailed accounts or records outlining the origins of the program, and that primary documents have been very hard to source and often in poor condition [and only located in private collections].<sup>34</sup> The lack of a continuous data base was highlighted by the most recent evaluation of the Second Generation Landcare Grants Program [Goodbourn & Associates 2007], ‘... issues of both definition and access make accurate assessment of numbers of Landcare groups, membership, networks and coordinators imprecise. This, in turn, renders the analysis of trends particularly haphazard and unreliable’.<sup>35</sup>

The life stories of Landcare participants and the work career stories of agency staff have proved a useful way to convey a dense history. The personal accounts of individuals are important components of this chronicle. A series of ‘profiles’ are presented throughout the text, to capture examples of distinctive periods, programs and places. In addition to these ‘synopses’, several extended case studies are explored in Chapter 3. These more detailed readings demonstrate that no single explanatory account [or accepted myth] of the landcare program in the catchment is adequate.

The following sections have been based on extensive interviews with landholders, landcare members and government agency staff [See Appendix F for a listing], who have played a significant role in the development of the program in the catchment. Extensive research and evaluation reports, conference papers and journal articles relating to Landcare at both state and national level across the two decades 1986 to 2006 provided the historical context for individual accounts.



## CHAPTER 2

# Biography of a Program: From Soil Conservation to LandCare and the Decade of Landcare

From the start, partnerships have been crucial to Landcare's success and broad support: alliances between farming and environmentalism to begin with, plus science, local knowledge, government, business, and the wider community. Landcare teaches that sustainability is about people – their relationships to each other and shared landscapes. ... ..In Australia as in many countries our landscapes are paying the price for misguided policies, practices and attitudes. Landcare has proven itself a powerful catalyst for social change.

*Don Henry*

*Australian Conservation Foundation*

*Address to the International Landcare Conference October 2006*

When Joan Kirner launched our Landcare Group in 1986, I remember that she said "environmentalists and mountain cattlemen can stand together – that's the beauty of Landcare". Landcare brought old established landholders and 'blockies' together and created a wonderful community.

*Lesley Dalziel*

*Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group March 2007*

### Australia – a unique ecosystem

The Australian environment has been distinctively shaped by its long weathered, poor soils and extremely variable climate. As early as 1835, Charles Darwin visiting Sydney noted:

Pasture everywhere is so thin that settlers have already pushed far into the interior: moreover the country further inland becomes extremely poor. Agriculture, on account of the droughts, can never succeed on an extended scale.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking about the first closer land settlement in Victoria in the 1860s and the agricultural assumptions which informed the early legislators, Don Paterson of Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare commented:

320 acres was believed to be a viable stock unit. That's when the problems started; they couldn't really survive, it proved other wise. They brought a lot of farming practices out of England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland wherever they came from. But it was so different here, we didn't get the summer rain and the ground was very different. They tried milking cows at first but didn't make enough to survive on.<sup>2</sup>





It is a widely recognised characteristic of the Australian continent, that it has greater variability of precipitation, for the same mean annual precipitation, than anywhere else in the world.<sup>3</sup> More recently it has been better understood that this iconic feature of Australian climate, the famous droughts and flooding rains of a sunburnt country<sup>4</sup>, is a result of the El Nino Southern Oscillation, ENSO. The combination of these climatic and geological factors has determined the productivity and ecology of the Australian continent. The extraordinary tectonic stability has meant an absence of significant volcanic

activity, absence of, or limited glaciation and little mountain building and erosion. In conjunction with low topography and long inundation by shallow seas [source of saline groundwater tables] this has produced a unique low fertility environment of skeletal soils with low fibre content, notoriously deficient in nutrients. Recent science has confirmed the distinctive impact of these fundamental features on the development of the Australian fauna and flora. With its limited range of warm blooded species at the top of food chains, the continent is one of the eight 'megadiverse' regions on earth. Plant life has adapted with the trait of scleromorphy [small, hard leafed] with the characteristic limitations to plant growth. The flora of A. D. Hope's well known poem Australia, written in 1939.

Nation of trees, drab green and  
desolate grey

In the field uniform of modern wars  
Darkens her hills, those endless,  
outstretched paws

Of sphinx demolished or stone lion  
worn away<sup>5</sup>

Commentators now agree that agriculture and urban development over the last two centuries – tree clearing, waterway exploitation, cropping and grazing – has pushed beyond the boundaries of soil productivity and climate variability and threatened the stability of Australian landscapes and ecosystems on an extensive scale.<sup>6</sup> The last few decades, have seen an attempt to develop modern agricultural and conservation policies that reverse and remediate what the Chief Scientist has described as 'serious land degradation, loss of water quality and declining biodiversity ... the price of the considerable productivity of Australian agriculture over two centuries'.<sup>7</sup>





### A response to 'serious land degradation'

Landcare became one of the highly successful, compelling initiatives, produced by the threats and opportunities faced in the 1980s. From the launch of the Department of Conservation Forest and Lands [CF&L] guidelines for LandCare projects in November 1986, the program expanded rapidly in Victoria on the back of the well developed infrastructure of soil conservation farming, revegetation and waterway management. Its growth in the Goulburn Broken catchment was particularly swift as some of the most significant voluntary landholder efforts had been first instigated in the Goulburn region dryland and irrigated agriculture districts.

The CF&L journal of March 1988, *Common Ground*, announced, 'LandCare registers its

17th project'. In a little over a year, seventeen LandCare projects had been registered across Victoria. A major feature outlined the story of one of the earliest - Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group, that had formed after the severe flooding of the township of Seymour in February 1973. Almost a third of the average annual rainfall fell on the Whiteheads Creek catchment in an eight hour period. Subsequent landholder action was aimed at reducing runoff from the steep rocky hillsides by increasing tree cover, improving perennial pasture and tackling the massive erosion problems.<sup>8</sup>

Like a number of early Goulburn region groups, Whiteheads Creek which became a LandCare group in June 1987, had many pre-existing projects and an active membership working on flood mitigation, salinity, gully erosion and pasture improvement. In the ten years between its





early beginnings and becoming a LandCare Group, the area of land sown to improved perennial pasture had increased from 17% to over 30%.<sup>9</sup> Registration as a landcare group brought eligibility for both technical and financial assistance from government, for costly erosion control works and fencing for tree planting, on a collective, rather than individual farm basis. Groups accessed the Land Protection Incentive Scheme [LPIS] funding, as well as National Soil Conservation Program [NSCP 1983-1992] funds and salinity grants. The availability of grants was an important motivator for these early groups. A widespread perception was current that Government agencies would prefer to give their attention to 'self-help' groups in the context of growing pressure to cut back on public sector expenditure and manpower in the rural sector.<sup>10</sup> Financial assistance in the range of 10% to 50% of total project costs was available to groups once they met the LandCare project criteria and were registered with CF&L.<sup>11</sup>

### The forebears of Landcare in Victoria

The organisational and legislative background to Landcare is complex. While there are a number of valuable anecdotal accounts of the individual land related agencies and professions to which Landcare owed its character and its ready adoption in many areas of Victoria,<sup>12</sup> there is little policy analysis or comprehensive historical narrative. Foremost among the predecessor organisations, of the landcare program in Victoria was the Victorian Soil Conservation Authority [SCA], whose programs and extension staff achieved world best practice projects, such as the

Eppalock Catchment Project commenced in 1960. This was a trail blazer for Australia in the promotion of soil conservation, landholder cooperation and catchment scale management. The involvement of a large section of the farming community in land remediation over a number of years has been recognized internationally, as a remarkable example of successful rural extension.<sup>13</sup> 'The Eppalock Project generated the Group Conservation Area [GCA] Scheme. A lot of original work in establishing groups was done on an individual basis ... it was where we knew there were people who would be keen'.<sup>14</sup>

Victoria has been a pioneer in the response to land degradation. In 1979, Alex Mitchell, Chairman of the SCA, wrote in an early history of the Authority:

... in these nineteen seventies, many citizens still regard natural resources conservation, in all its forms, as a relatively new development ... they fail to give credence to the real fact that Victoria, with its original 1940 soil conservation legislation, took a huge forward step in practical conservation ... It is too little recognised, in our present day enthusiasms, that Victoria, in fact, is much further ahead in its programs of land management than are most other national and international soil and land conservation programs.<sup>15</sup>

With the work of the Rural Reconstruction Commission in the 1950s,<sup>16</sup> concerns about soil conservation began to receive public attention. The community awareness of the 1930s flowing from the 'dustbowl' phenomenon in the United States had been submerged for most, by the general

emergency of the world at war. Only a few voices kept the issue alive. A corporal serving in the A.I.F wrote a small volume, *Australia's Dying Heart: Soil Erosion in the Inland*, published by Melbourne University in 1942 in which he outlined the causes and effects

of massive problems in the northern areas of South Australia:

War has come to Australia. The danger is real indeed, but I say it deliberately, not more real than the insidious threat by the enemy we have had with us for years ... (an enemy)



we are actually encouraging and assisting, the community's greatest menace, soil erosion. Reflecting a relatively uninformed and conservative community, he was labeled a 'Jeremiah', for his determined crusade about the unpalatable truths concerning soil erosion.<sup>17</sup> After being 'on hold' for the duration of the war, Victoria translated its 1940 Soil Conservation legislation into more effective programs with appropriate levels of resources.<sup>18</sup> The Royal Commission held immediately after the war, into the grazing of forests, led to significant amendments to the legislation to create the Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act 1947 [it is noteworthy that this remained the core legislation until the passage of the Catchment and Land Protection Act in 1994, almost fifty years later].

The Soil Conservation Authority [SCA] was constituted in 1950 succeeding the Soil Conservation Board, which had been established after the 1938 Government soil erosion inquiry that led to the passing of the Soil Conservation Act 1940.<sup>19</sup> The Board had formed regional advisory committees and started a number of demonstration and experimental projects which the SCA quickly extended. The new authority, for the first time, had powers to direct landowners to deal with erosion, to impose conditions on land use and to regulate the uses of land in catchments which were defined for the first time by a Land Utilisation Advisory Council [reorganized as the Land Conservation Council in 1971].<sup>20</sup>

The Group Conservation Area concept, developed by the SCA, to work with groups of landholders on sub-catchment land protection and stabilization projects, was very successful and along with the later Group Conservation Projects contributed to the volunteer, community basis of the Landcare

program design.<sup>21</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s the SCA was beginning to change its approach, reskill its staff to respond to new and expanded community aspirations for conservation initiatives.<sup>22</sup> In his conclusion to a short history of the authority linking the past with present approaches to conservation, G. T. Thompson wrote:

Probably the most vital outcome has been a dramatic widening of perspectives in the

overall approach to land management. In 1940, the problems primarily appeared to be centered on the alarming deterioration of Victoria's farmlands since settlement in the 1830s, and on the threat to our water catchments, to our critical water resources. That erosion was the common factor was obvious. ... the tackling of erosion proved to be an activity which led into the development of several

other equally critical conservation activities. ***In dealing with erosion it was quickly discovered that it was merely symptomatic of much more deeply entrenched problems, all requiring a detailed understanding of the soil, of the land as an entity, and of the improved management of land at total operating levels ... and an appreciation of the need to develop community outlooks.***<sup>23</sup>





**Bruce Radford ...**

*... commenced work with the Soil Conservation Authority [SCA] on the 6th of January 1969, after graduating from Longerenong Agricultural College. Bruce became enthusiastic about soil conservation after a tour to Charlton where a big project had been undertaken and staff were being recruited. He later worked on projects at Broadford, Tallangatta, Mildura, Ouyen, and Alexandra, returning to Broadford in 1979 where he worked with landholders and Group Conservation Areas in the district.*

*Bruce commented that his first contact with Landcare was through the 'old GCAs, which were the forerunners of Landcare, like Whitehead's Creek. Many GCA Groups in the Upper Goulburn like Spring Creek, Maindample, Bonnie Doon became Landcare Groups later. The old Group Conservation Areas gave us a real "in" to communities'.*

*The idea of starting up Glenaroua Land Management Group in 1988 was initiated by Bruce in discussions with local interested farmers such as Ross Thomson and David Bidstrup, as salinity was an emerging issue for the Broadford area. Fred Grimwade MLA, chaired the first public meeting and a group was formed. David Laurie became the first Coordinator for the Group. Noting the changes that have shaped Landcare over time, Bruce commented: 'Most of these early people were from generational farming families; now we have a different community mix'.*

*Funding available through the Salinity Pilot Program [SPPAC], gave the group early momentum and significant tree planting was undertaken. 'We had truck loads of trees with events like the Girl Guides Tree Planting Day which Joan Kirner and Heather Mitchell attended'. 'Much of the original work was on an individual farm basis – that's how contact was made'. The earliest group in the area, formed as a Group Conservation Area, was Whiteheads Creek, which was created after a flash flood in the Whiteheads Creek catchment that inundated*

*many parts of Seymour in 1973. These groups organised by the community worked on erosion control and pasture improvement. It was a case as Bruce said where: 'The Groups took control'.*

*In the 1990s Bruce worked as the National Landcare Program [NLP] Coordinator for the Goulburn Broken assessing project applications for grant funds and preparing monitoring reports. 'One of the things I've noticed is that Landcare brought communities together, the school was gone long ago, a lot of rural areas were losing their sense of community, apart from the CFA, but Landcare gave a broader "community" concept'.*

*Important demographic changes occurred in these same years. The district has a railway line and is close to the Hume Highway making it easily accessible to Melbourne and farming in the area was transformed. 'The first of the "Collins Street farmers" were coming in followed by the lifestyle farmers, one thing Landcare did was put the "newies" and the "oldies" together.*

*Bruce has continued 'land protection' work at Broadford for twenty seven years; he is currently working for the Department of Primary Industries and has seen increasing devolution of responsibilities for land management to the community. 'It's a time issue, the community is "time poor" we need to look more, at how we can overcome this and still maintain the high rates of landcare works.*



**A strong cohort of young well-trained foresters**

Another resource management discipline which contributed to the growth of practical conservation in Victoria was forestry, and the State Forests Department; Forests Commission Victoria – the governing body [FCV].

In an article written for the 2006 collection of essays, *Landcare in Victoria*, John Jack portrayed ‘a strong cohort of young well-trained foresters ... .. working in rural and regional communities’ from the 1960s, as

instrumental in promoting environmental awareness, providing guidance on revegetation and tree growing, along with later initiatives such as Project Branchout, the Garden State Committee, and the Potter Farmland Plan.<sup>24</sup> Project Branchout became a recognized program in the 1970s, assisting with the revegetation in strategic locations of cleared rural landscapes on public and private land. An important conference *A Focus on Farm Trees* in 1980 led to the establishment of the Victorian Farmers Federation [VFF] auspiced Farm Tree Groups in 1981 and by the

end of the decade there were 50 active groups across Victoria.

The Crown Lands and Survey Department was another land management function and staff grouping which had been important and was known well in rural areas. Among their responsibilities had been inspection and works on behalf of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Board created in 1959<sup>25</sup>. The Rabbit Suppression Act was first enacted in 1880 when the Commissioner of Crown Lands together with Local Government Authorities became responsible for the extermination

of rabbits and not long after, for the control and destruction of proclaimed vermin and weeds. The function was decentralized from 1977 to operate more locally and it was hoped more effectively, with subsidies paid to municipalities and research undertaken. Under the public sector reorganisation in 1983, which saw the creation of the Department of Conservation of Forests and Lands, the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Board was abolished and its policy and planning responsibilities were continued by the Land Protection Service of the new department.



**The state of the rivers**

Management of catchment hydrology has also played an important role in the evolution of land and waterway protection. Of particular relevance has been community involvement in river and later catchment management. The first River Improvement Trusts [RIT] in Victoria were established in the Goulburn Broken catchment. The Broken River RIT in 1960 covered 180k of the river from its catchment to Shepparton. Two years later a group of landholders requested the

Shire of Seymour to make a formal application for the constitution of a River Improvement District. A series of public meetings led to the establishment of the Seymour Shire River Improvement Trust in July 1963. In May 1966 the King Parrot Creek River Improvement Trust was formed and in 1972 the Shire of Yea River Improvement Trust was constituted.<sup>26</sup> Major changes in government policy, often informed by the input from community representatives on river management bodies, moved towards wider catchment management and more sophisticated approaches to rivers than



the early ‘bed and banks’ focus. Volunteer community representatives on these Trusts and later River Management Boards, were centrally involved in developing progressive directions in waterway management for Victoria over several decades.<sup>27</sup>

An early argument for an integrated approach to catchment management appeared in a 1981 SCA publication, ‘Catchment-stream relationships are dynamic ... without an integrated approach to land use and stream management, the correction of stream problems is unlikely to be achieved’.<sup>28</sup> Section 3 of this history explores in more detail the role of landholders and local communities in the development of total catchment based

planning. In 1988 Catchment Coordinating Groups were established in several Victorian catchments and on the 5th of June [World Environment Day] the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Co-ordinating Group’s Draft Catchment Management Strategy for the Goulburn River between Lake Eildon and the Goulburn Weir at Nagambie, was launched by Joan Kirner in her role as a member of the Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet. It was the first group and the first ‘catchment wide strategy’ to be prepared.<sup>29</sup>



### Hubert Miller...

... after graduating in French, Latin and Greek from Melbourne University, was involved in the family farm at Bacchus Marsh from 1953 – 1961. In 1962 he married and moved to Seymour, 'looking for opportunities and challenges'. The opportunities at 'Worrough', an 1100

acres property on the Goulburn River, were the assured water supply from Lake Eildon, after the enlarged 'Big Eildon', was commissioned in 1957. Hubert commented: 'State Rivers were keen to promote irrigation; private diversion licenses were pretty readily available along the river. The cost was five shillings an acre foot annually. That has moved on since then – the value of water has certainly increased – it was \$2000 this year for a mega litre (bit less than an acre foot)'. Only a small proportion of the property was alluvial flats however and Hubert commented: 'The balance was high granite country - wherein lay the challenges – rabbit control and bracken fern'.

While rabbits were a major problem in the 1970s, cattle still did well on the hill country. Hubert noted: 'As the years went by the challenges have changed from rabbits to a major story of controlling weeds – Paterson's Curse and Blackberries mainly. Sheep grazed weeds down pretty efficiently; cattle are a bit kinder to the country, they allow more cover to stay, but they don't eat the weeds out as well. Wildlife, wombats, are becoming as destructive as rabbits in their burrowing – their numbers are burgeoning'. River bank erosion was an obvious problem from the outset, partly due to earlier clearing, but partly as the Goulburn became a major irrigation carrier. 'You had high summer flows which were unnatural to the river, so large sections of bank had large chunks falling into the river every year. Practically every outside bend downriver was being very actively eroded. It was pretty obvious that something needed to be done'.

The Seymour Shire saw the value in forming a River Improvement Trust; these were autonomous local bodies with elected and appointed members and their own appointed engineers. 'There were already a number of Trusts; the

numbers grew and we ended up with about 40 Trusts around Victoria in the Association'. The initial emphasis for Trusts was clearing waterways so that flood flows didn't devastate the surrounding countryside. 'there was a lot of "desnagging", which became less popular ... and willow planting ... willows were recommended as being able to establish quickly and provide a strong root system'. Hubert became an inaugural Commissioner with the Seymour Shire River Improvement Trust in 1964. He recalled: 'There was initially some reluctance on the part of landholders, but most became ardent supporters when works projects were implemented. It was important to lead by example – that was the strong message that came through'.

By the mid 1970s there was growing environmental awareness and some criticism of the predominantly engineering approach of RITs. The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission set up the Standing Consultative Committee on River Improvement to review the works programs of Trusts and develop guidelines for "waterway management" practice. "The Consultative Committee was multidisciplinary and representative of all catchment interests. It wasn't just a window dressing exercise", Hubert recalled, 'total catchment management grew out of the realisation that effective catchment management was the key to what went into the rivers – was the way to cut down silt loads and nutrients'. In 1983 the Standing Consultative Committee produced the State of the Rivers report, a damning assessment of the condition of many of the main waterways in Victoria. Several Catchment Coordinating Groups were formed in this period. Mid Goulburn was the most successful in achieving an acceptance that a wide range of interests could work together and in 1988 it prepared the first coordinated catchment strategy in Victoria. 'Geoff Coleman, the then, Minister told me, that having seen how catchment coordination could work, it had given him encouragement to move towards the formation of Catchment Management Authorities', Hubert recalled.

The need to mount community support for waterway management, not least to improve the funding available, became clear in the 1970s. 'It first cropped up round here with

some extreme problems in tributaries like Whiteheads Creek – soil conservation interests had got the community together, they were disappointed though that the funds were only applied to waterways – not correcting catchment conditions through tree planting and pasture and so forth. They felt there should be some integration and they played quite a leadership role at the time'. The Trust was very supportive as it became evident that landcare had the potential to involve a broader community base than landholders on river frontages. In order to forge greater community linkages and emphasise their own environmental bona fides, the Seymour RIT applied to join the Conservation Council of Victoria. 'We thought rather cheekily, if we can't beat 'em, we'd better join 'em – that set the cat among the pigeons for a while as the CCV didn't like the River Improvement Act. Eventually we were awarded Associate Membership'.

In a gradual process that took almost thirty years, there was an increase in the area of operation to cover a number of neighbouring trusts, finally in 1995 becoming the Upper Goulburn Waterway Authority. Hubert's involvement spanned this entire era and in a voluntary capacity he has held many positions of responsibility: 'It changed from a Trust that just dealt with a ribbon of land along the river ... it was seen that we could deal with all the tributaries – that changed the rating base of course ... so we had a responsibility to show the community what we were doing'. During the same period in the mid 1990s the Catchment and Land Protection legislation was being developed, 'there was a need to put into practice the theory of integrated catchment management – to spread the priorities over the whole catchment. RIT works did tend to be done where there was local interest. CMAs were seen as an attempt to bypass that'. The Association of Victorian River Improvement Trusts took the idea of annual conferences 'out into the field to spread the message' and lobbied vigorously said Hubert, 'to keep environmental management away from the water supply, the retail authorities, we felt that "Water Boards" wouldn't give environmental management the attention it deserved. Hopefully now the CMAs are focussed on catchment management, not water distribution or irrigation'.



### Salt of the earth

The problem of salinity, in irrigation areas and in dryland areas, contributed significantly to the growing environmental awareness in the farming community, particularly in the Goulburn Broken catchment. The Soil Conservation Authority of Victoria had reported in a 1955 survey of salt-affected land in Victoria, 'that the effects of salt on "dry land" are widespread and common in central and western Victoria'. This initial survey became the basis for extended research by the Authority, such as the Rainfall Composition Survey which measured annual accession of salt to soils in different regions.<sup>30</sup> The farming community gradually became aware of soil salinity as it finally became the big issue of the 1980s. As a Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group member commented in 1988:

*"The salt problem has been a difficult one to get going, people didn't want to own it – they thought land would slip in value – but I think it will be better if we work out how to work with salt. A lot won't run with it – you don't really know what's causing the problem. But working in a group you can share the problem, rather than hacking away by yourself on a hill".<sup>31</sup>*

Until the 1960s there had been very little government activity in relation to salinity, the momentum developed gradually with the State Rivers and Water supply Commission [SRWSC] allocating \$60m for capital works and research over the 1970s and early 80s.<sup>32</sup> In 1982 the Government initiated an all-party Joint Select Committee of Parliament - The Salinity Committee - to examine the scale of the problem, options for cooperative effort across government agencies and with the Federal government, ways of meeting the

costs of control and the development of a comprehensive program for control and management of salinity in Victoria.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of the work of the Inquiry, a Cabinet Task Force on Salinity was established in early 1985; membership consisted of the new Ministers for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Evan Walker, Water Resources, Andrew McCutcheon, and the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Joan Kirner. 'They decided at their first meeting ..... to move to an inter-departmental arrangement

and to give community groups a major role in the planning process. ... The "Salinity Management Initiatives" announced by Evan Walker focused on the arrangements and processes whereby the government and community would collaborate in resolving salinity issues instead of leaving the task primarily in the hands of technical and professional experts in the responsible agencies'.<sup>34</sup> In his address to the inaugural meeting of the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council [SPPAC], 14 March 1986, Evan Walker

stressed 'the Government's recognition of the need for effective community involvement in the region'.<sup>35</sup> SPPAC played a very active role not only in salinity control programs, but in significantly increasing the salinity awareness in the general community.

It is important to note that salinity as an environmental issue was different to seasonal problems like drought and flood. It represented a more insidious form of land degradation, a more complex and unrelenting response of the landscape to agricultural policies and

practices. The term 'underground flood' implies the unknown and volatile nature of the phenomenon. Salinity was not a cyclic difficulty in the manner of weather patterns; it constituted a threat which landholders and government gradually realised required a systemic response. Pam Robinson founding member of Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group formed in the early 1980s, commented of the early discussions among neighboring landholders: 'We looked at problems on farms – the white salty stuff – dead trees – patches of sour ground where no amount of spreading hay would get pasture to grow again. We needed to start and do something. We initiated, we approached the SCA, and set up a public meeting. It was an opportunity for us'.<sup>36</sup> Salinity as an environmental issue played a significant role in gradually mobilizing farmer acceptance of the need for sustained collective action on a landscape scale.

By 1987 the Victorian State Conservation Strategy outlined 'the dramatic and in some cases disastrous changes' to the landscape since European settlement.<sup>37</sup> In one of the first policy statements to be based on the idea of sustainability, it emphasised the intrinsic value of the environment referring to 'conservation for nature's sake', and highlighted an intention to ... 'control or manage any activities threatening plants and animals', anticipating a fundamental aim of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. The statement gave urgent priority to the Salinity Control Program alongside six other priority areas for action over the period 1987 – 1990.<sup>38</sup> The strategy appeared in the year after the launch of the LandCare program and was widely discussed in the media, further ensuring a high level of community acceptance.



Year	
1980	Parliamentary Public Bodies Review Committee commences review of Victorian Water Sector
1981	Farm Tree Groups program commenced Land for Wildlife est. Premier of Victoria Rupert James Hamer retired
1982	Cain Labor Government elected Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Salinity est. [reports 1984]
1983	State of the Rivers report
1983	Department of Conservation Forests and Lands created Rod McKenzie first Minister [1983–1985]
1984	State Rivers and Water Supply Commission abolished; Rural Water Commission est. Department of Water Resources est. Salt of the Earth: Final Report on the Causes, Effects and Control of Land and River Salinity published Regional Drainage and Stream Management Taskforce report [recommends establishment of River Management Authorities] State of the Rivers Taskforce est. [reports 1987]
1985	Ministerial Taskforce on Salinity est. Land Protection Council est. Potter Farmland Plan commenced Joan Kirner second Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands [1985–1988] General election – ALP lost control of the Victorian Legislative Council
1986	Murray–Darling Ministerial Council est. [becomes Commission 1987] Victorian LandCare Program launched Community Salinity Grants announced Salt Force News commenced Rural Womens Network est.
1987	Conservation Forests and Lands Act [abolished SCA, FCV & VNWDB] Better Rivers and Catchments Report Land Protection Incentive Scheme [LPIS] est. Planning and Environment Act 1987 State Conservation Strategy released
1988	Salt action – Joint Action Victoria Salinity Strategy Catchment Coordinating Groups est. forerunners to CALP Boards [incl. Mid Goulburn] First State Landcare conference Flora and Fauna Guarantee act 1988; State Environment Protection Policy
1989	Water Act 1989 Clearing controls introduced in Victoria Tree Victoria Action Plan

Table 1: Victorian political, administrative and environmental developments of the 1980s  
[Modified from VCMC Catchment Management Framework Almanac]





### Ken Sampson...

...was born in Numurkah, and commenced work with Department of Agriculture in January 1971. Ken recalls that his first days on the job were spent reading the Gutteridge Haskins, Davey report on salinity in the Murray Darling Basin prepared in 1969. 'In the late 60s water quality issues

for Adelaide were the driver for the MDBC getting interested in water quality, as well as quantity'. 'State Rivers put in the first groundwater pumps in the late 1960s; there were a number of schemes proposed like the pipeline to Sealake and the MDBC commissioned a couple of studies'.

During the 1974 flood Ken was working at Swan Hill and recalls that this flood had a significant impact in the irrigation area causing big rises in water tables. 'A hundred or more pumps went in as part of Phase A in the horticultural areas, later Phase B was proposed to tackle the pasture areas'.

From 1981-1984 Ken worked as an agronomist with an Indian Aid program; he returned to Echuca in 1984 as Senior Irrigation Officer and has been working on salinity and water management in the region since that time. Currently he is the Executive Officer Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee for the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

'Then there was Salt Action: Joint Action in 1986 after two Parliamentary Enquiries into salinity'. Ken was part of the inter-departmental group that worked on the development of this program. In 1987/88 the Salinity Pilot Program was established, the selection of the Goulburn Broken catchment for the pilot was influenced by the level of Landcare activity in the region and because of the extensive program of groundwater pumps. 'A lot of local groups had drainage as a high priority – many Drainage Groups became LandCare groups in the late 1980s and 90s – like Ardmona, Burnside and Dhurringile – surface drainage was the critical issue – effective reveg required drainage'. 'For the first time there was a lot of regional involvement in funding directions – it broke down

the traditional funding scenarios of departments and allowed more integrated input to the development of the Land and Water Salinity Management Plan – it was called that from the start'. Landcare in the irrigation area in the 1980s and early 90s was based around the major interest in water table wells and monitoring groundwater and salinity. 'We put a lot into mapping to resource Landcare Groups'.

In 1999, in order to develop new directions for Landcare in the SIR a survey of groups was undertaken to determine how best to support Landcare and the Local Area Planning process was established. Areas of natural resource management priority were identified and networks of groups combined to develop Local Area Plans. 'The first we worked on was Corop Lakes [Cornella LAP] which was half in the Mid-Goulburn – they've all operated in different ways'. 'Changes in the production industry have impacted on Landcare, initially a lot of trees were planted, but in the last couple of years a major project in Invergordon has been weeds, especially woody weeds, orchard escapees etc'.

In the mid 1990s the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network [GMLN] was set up, 'it aimed at giving better support to groups and has been closely involved in the development of the LAPs – it was hard to coordinate 36+ groups'. There are strong formal arrangements to maintain regional and community input to decision making for the region; a member of GMLN is represented on the IC and a joint meeting is held at least once a year.

Ken has seen a dramatic reshaping of the irrigation landscape over the ten years since the mid 1990s, including a high turnover of landowners and the effects of the long drought. 'At the moment people are struggling, it's hard to know what will evolve. Landcare is people, and I have a worry that volunteering is in decline and at the same time government is still shovelling responsibilities on to the community'... ... 'We'll have to do a fair bit of renewal, but we're not planning for that yet'.

### Landcare the Idea

As the table above shows LandCare as an 'idea,' an 'ethos,' a program, evolved from multiple political, public sector and social developments. Community based action was not unique to Victoria, but had also emerged through Land Conservation Districts in Western Australia and South Australia. By 1989 70% of WA land users were involved in group schemes.<sup>39</sup> The predisposing factors included realization of the complexity of phenomena such as salinity, as well as mounting awareness of the need for high level program integration, the drive for a different role for government, and policies based on research and a sound knowledge base. Older agencies experienced the breakdown of decades-held technical fiefdoms, specialist disciplines and unquestioned hegemony.



Concurrent with this, landholders experienced the loss of the extension servicing and skilled support from specialist field staff developed by these agencies over previous decades.

District groups active in tree planting, erosion remediation/prevention, salinity monitoring were becoming increasingly concerned that a single and separate issue focus was inadequate to the task – an undertaking beyond dependence on government resources or public sector capabilities alone.

A philosophy of 'Regionalism' and 'Community' re-emerged after the Whitlam years in the first regional integration initiatives of the federal Department of Urban and Regional Development [DURD].

It became evident that widespread landholder commitment was critical to the scale of the task and that simple 'engineering' solutions

had to be replaced by integrated action, to achieve compound landscape outcomes. By the early 1990s Landcare came to be extended to cover what used to be 'soil conservation', 'farm planning', 'revegetation', 'land protection', 'vermin and weed control' and 'river management'.

### Public sector redevelopment

The public sector reforms and reorganisations undertaken by the Cain Government, of which Conservation Forests and Lands was the flagship, generated among other initiatives, the program first styled 'LandCare'. One of the largest restructure projects undertaken, the project brought together approximately 2500 staff from the Department of State Forests, the Department of Crown Lands and Survey, the



Soil Conservation Authority, Fisheries and Wildlife Division, National Parks Service and the Ministry for Conservation. A watershed in public administration it consolidated wide ranging programs. The main concerns in reshaping public administration and management were the centralisation of strategic policy, integration of related programs and the introduction of program budgeting to replace earlier agency funding. Rod McKenzie was the first Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands. During the two years of his tenure, the mechanics of implementing such a large redevelopment project preoccupied departmental management. The process required major work in reshaping legislation, organisational design, policy and program proposals and staffing. Entire new staff structures and job

categories were created. It is a testament to the importance assigned by the government to these changes, that based on the widespread perception that the necessary leadership capability did not exist locally, the first departmental head was recruited from overseas. The department faced the task of motivating staff who had enjoyed strong esprit de corps in their previous agency and professional backgrounds. Old loyalties and assumptions about career paths within their discipline created tensions and a sense of dislocation for many. In personnel as well as policy terms this was a difficult transition. However there was an enthusiasm for the potential for integrated land and natural resource management and gradually new careers and new program opportunities evolved.



### **Russell Wealands...**

*... after graduating as a Civil Engineer, Russell joined the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in 1972 and spent his first years working at a number of locations – Melbourne, Tatura, Dartmouth, Pyramid Hill, Frankston, Swan Hill gaining a broad variety of experience in the*

*water industry. One of his early tasks was to compile the first training manual for River Improvement Trust Foremen. His work included conversions of open channel to piped irrigation at Nyah, introducing fluoride to the water on the Mornington Peninsula, irrigation management and river management. 'In the mid 1970s we started thinking about causes not just problems. But it wasn't until the mid 1980s that there was a push to address causes; to involve communities and adopt a more coordinated approach'. After several years working on urban water quality at Frankston, Russell moved in 1981, into the Rivers and Streams Branch of the Commission under Colin Turnbull.*

*The influential State of the Rivers Report was prepared in 1983 as there was growing awareness of the need to address the extensive degradation of Victoria's waterways. About 27 River Improvement Trusts were spread around the State and Russell liaised with these bodies, providing advice on treatment works design, reviewing works programs and managing the Rivers and Streams Grants program that provided funds to landholders and Shires outside Trust areas. The Branch in conjunction with the Department of Water Resources produced 'Technical Guidelines for Waterway Management'; advice on all aspects of stabilising waterways. Planning at this stage, shaped by the recommendations of the Public Bodies Review Committee which investigated all aspects of water management in Victoria [1981-1984], began to focus on 'growing waterway management organisations to whole of catchment' scale. In 1985 Russell acted as secretary to the Mid Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group, which produced the first catchment based strategy in Australia. Russell recalled that Colin Turnbull and Hubert Miller had played a key role*

*in the formation of this group: 'They wanted to have a trial of getting professionals and the community and industry and Shires to work together to develop a strategy for their own area'. Around this same time the Goulburn River was declared a heritage river based on its environmental, cultural and social values.*

*From 1989 – 1991 Russell was seconded to an Australian Aid project in North Sumatra to resolve waterway issues that threatened the integrity of the Bah Bolon Project – a flood control and irrigation development program. He returned to the restructured SRWSC now Rural Water Corporation in 1991 as Executive Officer, Environmental Management, continuing the waterway management role: 'We'd had such a long relationship with RITs, they were good bodies, just needed some management input, the Department of Water Resources wanted to reconstitute them to cover wider areas; at that time there were changing loyalties'.*

*On 1 July 1994 five Rural Water Authorities were created from the former regions of the Rural Water Corporation. The rivers and streams and floodplain management functions were assigned to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. For 12 months Russell worked on the reform and amalgamation of River Management Authorities leading to formation of larger catchment based authorities. In 1995 he became the inaugural Executive Officer for the newly created Upper Goulburn Waterways Authority, responsible to the Board. 'There were a lot of changes in boundaries and serious community involvement'. The Board, with a \$2.4m budget, was responsible for implementing river management programs in the 10,500 sq km Upper Goulburn catchment upstream of Goulburn Weir. Based on provisions of the Water Act, UGWA was the first authority to levy a waterway tariff on all rateable properties. 'I remember going to a packed, hostile meeting, in Kinglake Hall with Ian Wood' [Chairman of UGWA], Russell commented, 'we listened to every reason why people shouldn't pay. It wasn't a popular move at the time, but I still believe it was the best community education campaign ever held'.*

*During this period the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 had been passed and in 1995 CaLP Boards were established for the ten catchments in Victoria. A review of catchment management structures in 1996 recommended the establishment of Catchment Management Authorities which took over total regional governance. 'The reality was 12 months of consultancies to work up the best management structures and there were some pretty strong debates about the models proposed'. The Goulburn Broken CMA initially inherited the capacity to levy a rate from the UGWA initiative. As other CMAs started to impose the waterway rate, public controversy grew and the, 'unfair waterway charge', was subsequently removed by the newly elected state government in 2000 and CMAs were thereafter funded out of Federal and State Government consolidated revenue.*

*With the handover from UGWA to the GBCMA in 1997, Russell became Executive Officer, Upper Goulburn with the CMA, responsible for six natural resource management programs. Through the Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee a strong community representation and involvement in the program was maintained. 'We established very good community liaison processes for engaging the community. This included funding Landcare Coordinators and establishing Collectives. We worked on creating partnerships with the Shires'. The long history and culture of community participation in Upper Goulburn waterway and eventually catchment management has continued. Russell's working life has encompassed a period of seminal changes in community mind-set, public policy and institutional arrangements for land and water resource management. In a Landcare award nomination of 2005, Russell's long involvement and leadership was acknowledged; he was particularly commended for his leading role in the development of the Yea Wetlands in the floodplain of the Yea River, an iconic project he has continued to be involved with after his 'official' retirement in December 2005. 'I'm now spending 80% of my time on community projects – and loving it!'*

### **“Natural” Disasters of the 1980s**

Several major events shaped the community mindset over the 1980s and reinforced the concept of the community as stakeholders in the creation of their own future. In 1982-83, El Niño brought exceptionally dry conditions to almost all

of eastern Australia, and in the Mallee and northern Wimmera, 1982 was the driest or second driest year on record and it led to two events now iconic in Victorian memory – the dramatic dust storm over Melbourne and the Ash Wednesday bushfires. On the 8th of February 1983 strong, gusty northerly winds picked up loose topsoil in the Mallee

and Wimmera. In Melbourne, by 2:35pm the temperature had reached 43.2°C, a record February maximum. A short time later, a spectacular reddish-brown cloud reached Melbourne just before 3pm.<sup>40</sup> Just over a week later on the 16th February one of Australia’s most well-known bushfire events swept across Victoria and South Australia, killing 75 people

and causing widespread damage. Hot and dry weather towards the end of 1982 had given an early warning of the coming summer season. The earliest Total Fire Ban day ever declared, occurred on November 24, 1982.<sup>41</sup>

Alongside the Victorian government’s policy focus on salinity, now extended catchment wide, the State Rivers and Water Supply



Commission and the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council initiatives of the 1970s, and the release of the State of the Rivers report, these ‘natural disasters’ meant a significant level of attention to environmental issues was not only acceptable to the electorate, but demanded. After a long period of conservative government, the Cain Government was

positioned to take innovative approaches and enjoyed unprecedented community consensus.

### Developments at National Level in the 1980s

The National Soil Conservation Program, provided commonwealth soil conservation and Landcare funding

from 1983 to 1992. In the words of the government’s policy statement, the program aimed to ‘demonstrate that effective soil conservation required the integration of biophysical, economic and social aspects of problems with group learning and public participation’.<sup>42</sup> Funding was available for projects involving soil, water, trees groups

support and community education and many self-managed groups which became LandCare Groups received grants. The National Decade of Landcare Plan, released by the Australian Soil Conservation Council, acknowledged the groundwork done throughout the 1980s to assist landholders and communities improve their land management performance.

Year	
1975 –1977	Commonwealth State Collaborative Soil Conservation Study [reports 1978]
1978	A Basis for Soil Conservation Policy in Australia Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development
1982	International Year of the Tree; Australian Year of the Tree National Tree Program announced
1983	5 March, Hawke Labor Government elected [record four terms 1984,1987 and 1990] Greening Australia est.
1983	National Soil Conservation program [NSCP] est. provided funds to State soil conservation projects [Community sub-programs est. 1989]
1983	Federal Water Resources Assistance Program est.
1983	High Court ruled in favour of the Commonwealth against a challenge by the Tasmanian government to dam the Franklin River
1985	Soil Conservation (Financial Assistance) Act
1985	Murray–Darling Basin Commission est.
1986	Australian Soil Conservation Council est. separate from Agriculture
1989	National Soil Conservation Strategy published  National Environment Statement released, Our Country, Our Future funds committed to Year of Landcare 1989 and Decade of Landcare [to 2000]

Table 2: National political and environmental measures of the 1980s



### The launch of LandCare in Victoria

Following the general election in Victoria, March 2nd 1985 there was a ministerial reshuffle and Joan Kirner became Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands, her first ministerial portfolio.<sup>43</sup> While McKenzie's task had been largely structural, the new Minister, who brought, as she confessed, 'little background knowledge' to the post, more importantly brought a wealth of experience in community processes and 'a firm personal commitment to decentralised and collaborative decision making'.<sup>44</sup> In addition to 'a commitment to conservation principles', she outlined in a recent address that her "qualifications" for the task were, 'a long, varied and valued experience in community activism for public education and social justice advocacy on the state and national scene'.<sup>45</sup> She had been a key contributor in the 1970s to the advancement of 'Mothers Clubs' to 'Parents Clubs', the regionalisation of State Education, and the devolution of power to newly formed School Councils and Priorities Review Committees. Alongside all this community education flourished. In country Victoria, many of the volunteers on local bodies such as School Councils, the Country Fire Authority and conservation groups constituted a cadre of community leaders who would shape the prevailing mindset.<sup>46</sup>

Joan Kirner visited and consulted widely across Victoria being exposed to, and learning from, local conservation projects and innovative programs. Among these were several meetings with members of Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group who she invited in 1985 to attend the meeting of Commonwealth State Ministers – Resource Management in the Murray River Basin - in

Adelaide. They made a presentation to the National Soil Conservation Program [NSCP] for community support funding. At this joint ministerial meeting Joan Kirner first outlined Victoria's intention to develop a community based conservation program.<sup>47</sup> Though she found considerable expertise within her

department, she has expressed the view that there was 'a very top down, "discipline based" and compartmentalised view of the challenges and solutions to land and water protection'.<sup>48</sup> Joan Kirner has described as a critical point in her ministry when the Ministerial Task Force on Salinity, were taken on a bus tour along the

Murray from Shepparton to Swan Hill, to look at problems and current programs. It was a 'real awakening to the disaster of land degradation, particularly salinity and loss of productivity'. Unimpressed by existing projects and departmental briefings she determined to look for 'a new path forward'.<sup>49</sup> In a speech



to the Legislative Assembly, as premier she commented:

The government agreed with the farming community. It believed it was possible to tackle the issue of land degradation on a community basis. It brought together people expert on this subject, the farmers -- because farmers are experts on these matters, too -- and the government; these three groups worked together to tackle the problem of land degradation.<sup>50</sup>

Early in 1986 the Minister requested that the Director General of CF&L, Dr. Tony Eddison, arrange for the design of a new Land Protection and Conservation Program, incorporating the principles of community ownership, whole of catchment, and integration on public and private land, of all

aspects of soil conservation, pest plants and animals, revegetation, salinity control and water quality management. In June 1986, Cabinet made available \$1.0m in funding for three years.<sup>51</sup> The launch of Landcare was held on 28th November 1986, at "Stricta Hill", Winjallock, a small farming community near St Arnaud in Central Victoria. Heather Mitchell and the VFF involved their St Arnaud branch because they were active in conservation farming and the only VFF Branch in the State at the time with a conservation farming sub-committee.<sup>52</sup>

A critical component of the program's development and promotion from its beginning was the very active and productive partnership with the Victorian Farmers' Federation.<sup>53</sup>



First LandCare brochure produced by Department of CF&L, 12th November 1986

Source: Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group



### Fred King...

... was born on the family farm near Lancefield in 1956. After finishing school at Kyneton, because of his farming background, he was very keen to enrol at Glen Ormiston Agricultural College. As two years of practical experience was a prerequisite to starting classes and, as he observed, 'it

wasn't recommended that you did it on the family farm', Fred set off in 1974 for Western Australia. 'As a kid at school I'd made money – there was a local ethic for young lads to gang together in the school holidays to make a bit of money. You could do that then; small square bales were still very popular so you didn't need a lot of equipment, just yourself and an old truck. So a friend and I set off'. Fred got a job driving tractors on a property in an extensive cropping and grazing area of the West. 'It was very different to the small, village type agriculture where I'd lived. The farm was about 10,000 acres and the scale of the machinery was very different! It was all sand, a lot of scrub clearing; that was still in progress'. Fred was exposed to a different life and met 'some really good people', though it was a bit lonely at times for an eighteen year old. 'I was in the shearing quarters and it was on generator – lights off at 10.00pm – the nights could be a bit long'.

On return to Victoria, work as a stud groom near home and more hay carting made Fred enough money to put himself through college, where he started a Farm Business Management course in 1977 with a focus on figures and budgeting. 'One bloke in the class said to me when he left, he was glad he'd done all this – he'd worked out not to do farming!' After finishing college Fred found himself attracted to dairy farming in the Goulburn Valley: 'I was mightily impressed with all the beautiful green grass, the cash flow, the money they seemed to be making'. With family assistance a property was purchased at Katandra, between Dookie and Shepparton. Initially Fred was milking around 100 cows and found it a different way of life. 'It was a seven day a week commitment. The technology then was only fair and it took about 3 hours to milk morning and night'.

Married with small children by the mid 1980s, with his wife earning vital off-farm income, Fred joined a local group which

was to become Dookie Land Management Group [DLMG]. 'It wasn't called so much landcare - it had a broader focus – then, you'd get some funny looks if you said you were 'landcare'. It was very much a productivity focus for the group'. Dookie Agriculture College was in the vicinity and as the area was a priority for salinity management, by 1991 the group had a Coordinator – Justin Sheed. 'He did galvanise the group; it was a very vibrant group of young, interested farmers'. Fred found the group stimulating and enjoyed the social interaction. Bus trips to other areas were funded through salinity grants, to look at demonstration projects and trial plantings and there was a great deal of involvement with other groups in the cropping areas from Yarrowonga, to Devenish, Swanpool, and Tungamah. 'It was all a bit of an eye-opener – I got to know a lot of people around the district'.

From the early 1990s Fred became President of the group and later secretary for many years, contributing a lot of time to developing projects and trying to get resources for the groups of the area. DLMG often worked with the Agricultural College students to run field days – with the aim to move people away from traditional fallow farming, direct drilling with a soil care focus, rotation of crops and use of lucerne to lower watertables 'it was all pretty actively promoted; the area was very positive by comparison with other areas'. Fred commented on the development of landcare as expectations of its capacity to contribute grew: 'There was a movement to get some support into the groups. Landcare by that time had mushroomed, but support arrangements hadn't mushroomed with it'. In these years Fred had joined the Salinity Project Advisory Council [SPAC], as the representative from Dookie and was involved in setting up the Broken Catchment Network. Fred described that this aimed to, 'improve the lateral integration of groups; there were dog fights over vertical funding buckets versus integration on the ground'.

The reduction of government services in rural areas, and certainly one-on-one services to farms and farmer, was beginning to be felt. 'Roadsides and weeds had been the Lands Department's responsibility; but the public resource was being withdrawn hand over fist, and at the same time, there was this push from government, that it was a private responsibility. It

was your job – the group's responsibility'. Weeds remained a perennial issue and in some areas particularly after the 1982/83 drought some species like Paterson's Curse had got out of control. Fred commented that he saw at first hand the tensions this created. 'It could be quite divisive'. He also noted that as the demands of voluntary 'landcare' grew, people were feeling the pressure. 'Wool collapsed and beef prices weren't flash – you could see people ageing before your eyes'. As a representative on various community advisory groups there was a strong feeling of doing something positive; 'I still had a positive cash flow personally and I felt it was justified'. Though he had to admit, 'I was wearing out myself, cars and family relations pretty quickly at this stage'.

In the mid 1990s catchment management was being established with the passage of the Catchment and Land Protection Act in 1994 and the formation of CaLP Boards in 1995. The establishment of coordinated regional natural resource management was often a source of local and district debate and sometimes controversy. 'I saw catchment management as a genuine vehicle to wind your way through the minefield of bureaucracy and politics'. The flood in Benalla in 1993 and again in 1994 had a big impact on catchment wide politics. Fred recalled that, 'after that, a lot of energy was burnt up at meetings trying to resolve issues that had developed over more than a decade'. While salinity was a major focus for the Goulburn region and there was also funds for weeds and rabbits, Fred felt that for many group members, tree planting became more rewarding as did waterway management: 'the take home message is - feral animals and noxious weeds is just hard work and the support wasn't commensurate with the task – it can be very depressing'.

In 1998 on the basis of his acquired knowledge Fred worked as a coordinator with other groups and later supervised crews on the Work for the Dole program in Shepparton and Green Corps crews in Wodonga. Later he worked 'on the social side of things' with people burnt out in the Alpine Fires. Reflecting on his experience as a community volunteer in landcare and later catchment management programs Fred remarked: 'I got a \$15million education over that fifteen years – I've had great experience'.

### LandCare in Victoria 1986 - 1990

In mid 1989, after two years of operation, a formal survey of LandCare Group participation levels was undertaken by CF&L's Land Protection Division [LPD].<sup>54</sup> Reflecting the high level of uptake of the program in this region, four of the groups, Devenish-Goorambat [Benalla], Whiteheads Creek [Seymour], Seven Creeks Catchment Group [Euroa] and Dookie Land Management, were from the Goulburn Broken Catchment. Other groups in the catchment formed during these years included: Girgarre Stanhope LandCare, Goulburn Valley Tree Group, Harston Community LandCare, Nathalia Tree Group, North West Mooroopna Land Management, Merrigum Tree Group, Undera LandCare, Creightons Creek-Ruffy Terip [now Upper Hughes Creek], Ford Creek LandCare, Ancona LandCare, Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection, Boweya Lake Rowan LandCare, Chesney Vale LandCare, Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection, Sheep Pen Creek Land Management Group, Burnt Creek Landcare, Glenaroua Land Management.

The program was considered to be working well – numbers of groups registered had increased exponentially, but no formal assessment had been undertaken and the LPD needed to understand the dynamics of group formation and local projects to improve specific aspects of the program. The research was to focus on:

- ~ The implicit contract between registered groups and CF&L – perceptions of respective roles
- ~ Processes used to determine group/geographic boundaries
- ~ Effectiveness of groups measured by on-ground works

~ The role of women, non-participants, 'hobby farmers'

~ Training, publicity, communications<sup>55</sup>

The report found that agency staff had been instrumental in the formation of all groups. Members commented:

We've got a local CF&L fellow that's always taken a very keen interest in the area. I think he has been the prime motivator in the area as far as all of us are concerned.

The new CF&L bloke was young and enthusiastic. He said – get together and talk about your rabbits - and that was the

first meeting.

He's been very quick to point out that it's got to be run by us and the decisions made by us. We were lucky enough to have such a good CF&L liaison officer. He helped with things like maps and boundaries. Originally the area was decided through members of the group.

In all fairness to the CF&L officer, I think he's doing a lot of this on his own time.

For all groups there was a single issue which catalysed their formation. 'No group indicated that it was a general concern for the soil which brought them together. It was far more the

case that the group members all shared a common problem'.<sup>56</sup> Examples cited were the flood in Seymour in 1973 and the formation of Whiteheads Creek; the infestation by ragwort that was the driver for Devenish Goorambat; the salinity problem for Dookie Land Management Group:

I think it's all grown out of erosion. It has gone from flooding to a whole range of issues.

It grew out of a concerted group effort to control rabbits

The problem has to be affecting them. It has got to hit the hip-pocket nerve. If we



didn't have a rabbit problem then none of us would be here.

It all started off as the Ragwort Action Group

The thing started from the local angling club. We had two aims. One, to improve the fishing and the other, to stop the deterioration of the creek.

A key finding was that committed individuals were vital to the establishment of self-sustaining groups. In the typical process for most groups a CF&L officer had identified an enthusiastic local person and assisted them with the organisation of neighbouring

farmers/residents; a loose interest group then formed, elected office bearers and ratification and/or incorporation followed.

Our President was a member of the Salinity Program Advisory Committee ... and he was nudged along by CF&L ... there was a lot of work being done on his place before the group was ever thought of.

LandCare members confirmed that government grants played a significant role at local level in the establishment of a formal group and that there was acute local appreciation of changes in agency policies.

If you are going to remain independent

you're not going to get any grants from the government for purchasing trees and also you're not going to get any coordination.

It was obvious that people who got together were in a better position to get any grants that were available. And the LandCare label was a means to money.

They're keen to work with groups and not nearly as keen to work with individuals as they were 5 years ago. I think that's a big reason why this group was formed.

The report found that most groups enjoyed a high level of cohesion; membership was drawn from within catchments, with concern about

non-participants and absentee landholders. It was noted that 'negligible planning occurs within LandCare projects ... groups address one or two problems and those become the focus of effort indefinitely'. Groups were reported to be critically dependent on the resourcing and liaison role of CF&L officers. While it was recommended that staff be aware of the balance between support and defacto decision making, an important conclusion drawn by the researchers was that group coordination would be critical as the LandCare scheme developed and was already a matter for discussion. The limitation of the voluntary nature of groups and honorary office bearer roles was highlighted in focus group discussions. The thinking among group members at this early stage of the program's development is apparent:

As a Committee it appears to me that we do not have 'objectives'- we are controlled by the incoming mail.

I'm more a practical person - This committee through being practical people, may have been a little ad hoc. We do not have a project defined list.

LPD should provide x dollars to keep it going. They should also supply secretarial assistance, such as mailing and a liaison person so that everybody knows what's going on in the area.

What we'd be aiming at is sharing a part-time co-ordinator with some of the neighbouring groups.

It is interesting that the issues critical to the effective development of LandCare in the late 1980s are remarkably similar to those still being debated.





### Goomalibee Landcare...

... has evolved from the Broken River Action Group, listed in the Goulburn Regional Landcare Plan as early as 1993. The group became incorporated in 1996 as Broken River Environment Group, when a long standing focus on the general condition of the Broken River became a serious concern (amongst landholders downstream of Benalla), about proposed wastewater treatment options and the potential impact on the floodplain. In late 1997 the aim of the group broadened in the words of its constitution: 'to improve and maintain environmental quality and productive capacity in a sustainable manner by improving the soil productivity, water quality and health of the local ecosystem, by liaising with other groups within the catchment and by undertaking onground works in our own area', ... .. and became Goomalibee Landcare. The group has a relatively small number of active members and covers an area bounded by the Midland Highway to the north, the Baddaginnie - Goomalibee Road to the west and the old Hume Highway from Benalla to Baddaginnie. The two main watercourses in the area are the Broken River and the 4-Mile Creek.

One of the major objectives of the group is to continue the engagement of the community in restoration of the local

environment and encouraging the development of productive, sustainable farm businesses and a positive community. It has undertaken a number of projects including the fencing and revegetation of stream banks along the Broken River and Four Mile Creek, establishment of vegetation corridors, assistance with weed identification and control, and tours and field days to learn more about the river, local flora and fauna and local environmental issues. Some projects copied by other groups have included the Champion Tree Competition and identification signs on trees along prominent roadsides. David Dore, Chairman of the Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee of the CMA, and a member of the group said: 'We expanded our focus, took on community tree planting – creating corridors and links across the district and in particular creating greater awareness in the community. Simple things had an impact – we put species and common names of trees on roadsides – it was surprising, that created quite a reaction. Someone put up other signs "firewood" – you can be constantly surprised by all of the undiscussed things in your community!'

Innovative partnerships with other groups have included the FarmTABLE Discussion Group that brings local farmers together on a regular basis to discuss topics of current interest, the Balanced Soils Project and the Landcare on the Loose Field days. Goomalibee Landcare is also assisting and advising Parks Victoria on the management of the Goomalibee Grasslands Reserve, established in 2005. 'The Landcare group played a role in drawing the site to the attention of the State and Federal governments, who purchased the property to add to the National Reserve System. The reserve is 178ha in size, about 6 km from Benalla and is a good example of an open, grassy woodland'. The land has river red gum, grey box and buloke, and significant wildlife includes the endangered grey crowned babbler, bush stone-curlew and the tree goanna. This project has also been the source of community debate with some landholders concerned about the ongoing management of the property. David Dore reflected: 'There are always tensions between the public good and private interest and

traditional perceptions versus a conservation approach to be worked through. Landcare Groups often don't have the skills and could use additional resources to broker these issues'.

The FarmTABLE Discussion project is a good example of the employment of expert resources and specific skills and working in partnership with neighbouring groups. In 2004, Goomalibee and Sheep Pen Creek Landcare Groups received funding to run a series of facilitated discussion days focusing on a broad range of topics relevant to mixed enterprise, dryland farmers. Jacci Campbell of Sheep Pen Creek LCG commented: 'The facilitator Janette Outram has been critical to the success of our project. The casual format is terrific because people feel comfortable, they're able to have questions answered by an expert and they can learn from one another and talk about their own experiences'. Interest was sparked by CSIRO research into sustainable land use and health issues in the Goulburn Broken catchment. Topics have included: the development of perennial pasture, feeding cattle through a drought, drought management strategies, water issues for dryland farming, pasture weeds and succession planning. David Dore of Goomalibee, observed as the project nears completion: 'The venture has been a success with good discussion – though predictably, there has been better patronage for topical issues – many of the best farmers in the area are contractors and too busy to attend all of the time. But they are the long term future of the industry in this area and we need to work at ways to engage them in the on-going conversation about sustainability and keeping diversity in the landscape'.

### The national embrace of landcare

A total of 47 Groups were registered in Victoria in the three years 1986 to 1989. After the program was translated to the national level following the historic joint submission by Phillip Toyne [ACF] and Rick Farley [NFF], this substantial growth was to be further increased following the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke's release of the statement, "Our Country, Our Future", and the declaration of a Year of Landcare and the Decade of Landcare 1990 - 2000. The Prime Minister declared that the most serious environmental problem facing Australia was soil degradation and announced funding of \$320 million to tackle the issue. The government also planned to plant one billion trees over the following ten years to restore "some of the 50 per cent of tree cover removed in 200 years of Europeans' settlement". The total \$520 million package also included:

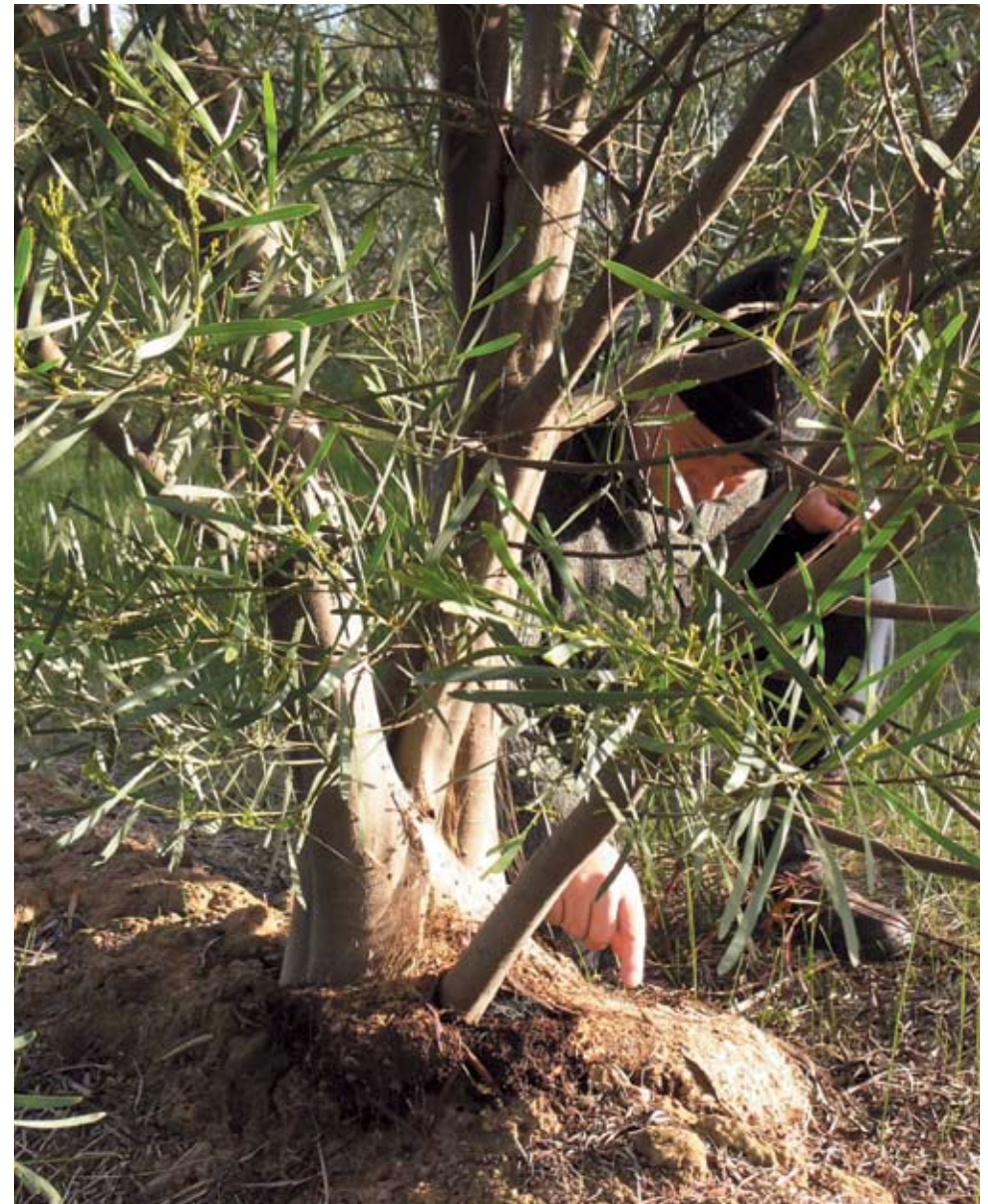
- ~ \$100 million towards development of the Murray-Darling Basin
- ~ \$50 million towards sustainable development
- ~ \$20 million towards saving endangered species
- ~ \$8 million for research on the greenhouse effect

Mr Hawke was pictured in the press with the first sapling of the billion-tree program!<sup>57</sup> In his speech at the launch of the National Environment Statement, he paid tribute to the unusual coalition between the Australian Conservation Foundation [ACF] and the National Farmers Federation [NFF] which had developed the ambitious proposal for a National Land Management Program in February 1989.<sup>58</sup>

They're two organisations one would probably not immediately imagine forming an alliance – but it is an indication of the importance of the issue, and an inspiring demonstration of the way forward that they used their imagination and commitment to develop proposals and put them constructively to Government. Their work has been an invaluable contribution to the creation of this new program.<sup>59</sup>

The National Landcare Program developed very rapidly during 1988 and early 1989, it represented a radical shift of policy and unprecedented funding. As in Victoria, a combination of broad background factors and the role of key individuals created the critical momentum. The 1987 election had demonstrated the crucial role of the 'Green' vote. The 'environment' had become an important issue for the electorate enabling the issue of land degradation on the 90% of Australia that was rangeland and farmland to reach national priority status along with forests and wilderness.<sup>60</sup>

The main aim of the campaign 'Year of' and 'Decade of' Landcare, in addition to tackling land degradation on an unprecedented scale, was to gain the widest support of the general community, particularly the urban community. The mission became, to foster a 'landcare ethic' in the Australian consciousness, to take the problem of land degradation beyond the soil conservation agencies and their traditional constituencies, and to create an entirely new epoch for soil conservation in Australia. A speaker at the Fifth Australian Soil Conservation Conference in 1992 commented: 'The Decade of Landcare provides the best opportunity yet for focussing the resources of Australian society on a major problem at the core of its economy



and environment, solving land degradation with a sustained campaign in which all sectors can play a part'.<sup>61</sup> The budding 'group' approach to land management reached beyond earlier extension programs with the inclusion and involvement of wider interest groups at district and regional level. The ultimate aim was the growth of coalitions of conservationists and agriculture at state and national level. Hence in Victoria, the folding into Landcare Groups of earlier Tree Groups, Environment Groups, Soilcare Groups, Drainage Groups, Land Protection Groups.

The process had started with a major community awareness program, to be targeted at urban Australia.<sup>62</sup> In 1988 and in 1989 market research undertaken by Roy Morgan Research and Rearth Research found that control of soil damage was an important priority [4th of 8 items] for landholders and government. Significantly in the Morgan survey of 1988, only 1% of respondents considered voluntary community groups had a responsibility. The 1989 research found a heightened awareness of 'land degradation' among two-thirds of urban Australians and, that 'a strong and common attitudinal bonding exists between urban and farmer groups'. These results are not surprising, in that media monitoring showed that 'press coverage of land degradation and landcare increased fourfold from 1988 – 1989'.<sup>63</sup> State and Territory governments planned media programs on the basis of these trends. Victoria designed a campaign with a theme for each month in 1990 eg salinity, wildlife, coastal management, water quality etc and associated events to shape the Year of Landcare program. The timing of the national campaign was fortuitous, maximising the impact of growing community awareness and the potential of a

10 year government commitment. The mission statement agreed at the Commonwealth/State meeting aimed:

To develop a landcare ethic among all Australians through participation and to raise consciousness of the fact that only careful management of the land and all its resources will maintain our present way of life and that of future generations.<sup>64</sup>

Landcare Australia Ltd, formed in 1989, adopted a twofold strategy of achieving real change in land management. In addition to land conservation groups supported by government, it developed an awareness raising campaign to enrol those not directly involved in agricultural production especially the political, financial and public interest support of the urban community. The extensive publicity that followed heightened awareness in the general community and saw an almost exponential growth in the formation of Landcare Groups. The Commonwealth component of the Decade of Landcare Plan established eight program areas:

- ~ Improve planning and coordination
- ~ Develop active Landcare groups
- ~ Improve farm practices
- ~ Improve the management of public land
- ~ Update policies on sustainable land use
- ~ Upgrade community awareness and education
- ~ Improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of data
- ~ Undertake research and development

The commonwealth government integrated its land, water and community based revegetation activities into the National Landcare Program [NLP] in late 1992.

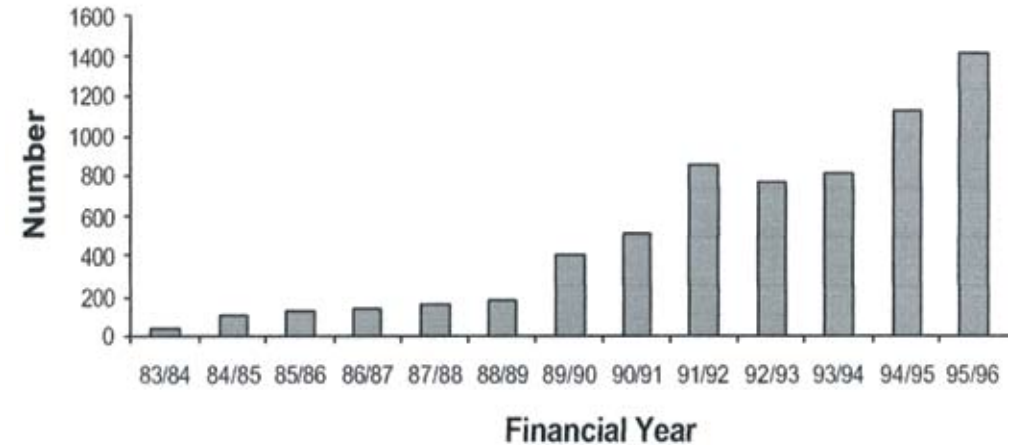


Fig 2 Annual numbers of projects funded from the National Landcare Program, National Soil Conservation Program, Federal Water Resources Assistance Program and Murray Darling Basin Commission  
Source: DAFFA project management database





### **The Decade of Landcare in Victoria – 1990 – 2000**

State and Commonwealth ministers at the July 1990 meeting of the Australian Soil Conservation Council, agreed to the preparation of a National Decade of Landcare Plan. Each State was to prepare its own plan as part of this process under common guidelines. These in conjunction with the Commonwealth component would constitute an unprecedented national response to the threat to the environment. The ethos at the centre of this ‘national project’ was the partnership between levels of government, the community and individual landholders. It was unquestioned by this stage that success in controlling land degradation and changing agricultural practice across Australia, could only be achieved by cooperation and coalition building. All documents of the time repeatedly endorse these principles. The ambitious aim was to see the 1990s become a decade of transition to sustainable land use. The Discussion Paper, *Towards Sustainable Land Use ...*, prepared for public comment in the development of the Victorian Decade of Landcare Plan in May 1991, noted that 300 land management groups had now been formed across Victoria.<sup>65</sup> A key component of Victoria’s contribution was that Regional Landcare Plans would be prepared for

nine catchment based Landcare regions concurrently, to reflect the views of the community, and of ‘communities of interest’.

The government response to regional landcare plans [RLPs] when they were finalised, noted that ‘the nine RLPs are providing the community and government with a means to more effectively target programs ... for integrated actions in each respective landcare region. It is now recognised that further improvement in the management of the State’s lands and water resources will require a better relationship between various aspects of natural resource management’. The formal policy statement recognised the RLPs as ‘a major step in the development of a strategic basis for future integration through proposed regional and land protection boards’.<sup>66</sup> The adoption of the Landcare planning process at national, state and importantly regional level would be a milestone in the creation of effective integrated catchment management and in Victoria led directly to the ‘preparation of catchment and land protection legislation that would provide the governance and policy framework to guide the implementation of RLPs’.<sup>67</sup>



### **Delatite Landcare Group...**

... on October 8th 1993, Ed Adamson and Kerrie Purcell organised a public meeting at the Merrijig Primary School to gauge local interest in Landcare, fifteen people attended the meeting addressed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Landcare Coordinator, Alan

Dobson. A community barbecue followed several weeks later with speakers, including Heather Wood from Ancona Valley Landcare offering their experience on group formation and project development. Riverside vegetation and flood problems were the initial priorities. Kerrie had come from the Western District in 1988, where she knew something of landcare and saline affected land. She and her husband took over a family farm in the Merrijig area. 'I was shocked at the bare hills in the area, erosion was a real problem. In the first few years I planted trees by myself. It always seemed to be cold and wet and the cockatoos destroyed a big percentage'.

The Group area, the Delatite Valley, is 20 kilometres south east of Mansfield and covers the Delatite River from Mirimbah, at the base of Mt. Buller to Gough's Bay, where the Delatite runs into Eildon Weir. Projects for 1994 included, mapping lengths of the Delatite River to identify problem areas in the catchment and the establishment of a seed bank of local species and growing on trees. Fencing and hillside planting and direct seeding projects were planned along with the development of funding applications and formal incorporation of the group. An article in the Mansfield Courier for November 1994, described a day spent sharing knowledge and ongoing plantation and erosion control projects between Ancona, Merton and Delatite, Landcare Groups.

Delatite was established at a time of rapid growth of landcare groups in Victoria, which meant strong competition for grant funds. A letter in Delatite files from the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan, in mid 1996 notes, that an estimated 700 Landcare Groups had now formed in Victoria, and that despite the severe drought of 1994-95 the level of onground works matched previous years. After initial

difficulty, the Group was first successful in obtaining funding from Tree Victoria for Delatite Valley – Ribbons of Green Project and Hearn's Crossing erosion and revegetation project in 1995 and the Natural Heritage Trust in 1996. In early 1995 twenty-three senior students from Deakin Environmental Science were hosted by the group to prepare a catchment land management report. Lack of indigenous understorey and tree growth on Delatite River and its tributaries were identified as causes of erosion and stream turbidity.

Land along the Delatite River has been progressively cleared over many decades, and Delatite Landcare spent the first four years of government funding replacing riparian vegetation on member's properties as their first priority. By 2002 the Group had utilised \$48,000 of funding in the Delatite Valley for the Ribbons of Green project, Stages I – IV. Fenced corridors of trees across farmland and river frontages replaced eroded banks and willow levy walls, with native trees and understorey which will eventually restore much of the original biodiversity of the catchment. In addition to revegetation work on private land, the Group has developed a number of projects on public land. Hearn's Crossing a point on the Delatite prone to flooding and erosion and a popular picnic and swimming spot was redeveloped, refenced, and planted with native trees in 1994. Corn Hill is a recharge site overlooking the valley adjacent to a cattle trail. This area has been fenced out and two thousand trees planted to reduce salinity. Merrijig Common is a site where a thousand trees were planted to screen 'an ugly power sub-station'.

Other redevelopments have included the 'rodeo site' and the group has at various times looked at alternative projects and tree propagation. In 2002, under the presidency of Poppe Davis, Delatite Landcare Group developed a website outlining the history of the area, the group's formation and the rehabilitation projects it had undertaken. In this period a great deal of effort was put into community awareness raising with regular press releases for local newspapers. Display stands were mounted at local festivals and agricultural shows to inform the local community about environmental issues important to the Delatite Valley such as salinity and biodiversity, creek and

gully erosion, and restoration of native vegetation. In 2004 Poppe was made a life member for her contribution to communications and promotion of environmental issues and to the continuing life of the group.

Delatite Landcare Group currently has fifty members; the Management Committee meets monthly, though few ordinary members attend meetings. 'The Coordinator is crucial', emphasised Jenny O'Brien, the current President. 'He has the "big picture"; there is a feeling now with climate change, that landcare is not really adequate to the local task. We've seen things wax and wane'. Projects being maintained or planned at the moment include developing a hothouse for seed germination, monitoring and preservation of earlier public site projects, partnerships with local recreational groups for revegetation projects, and EOIs for further grant funds to continue riparian rehabilitation on private land. The recent drought and extensive fires in the area have been serious setbacks and, as has been the experience of many landcare groups, led to reduced levels of volunteer participation. 'There is a sad lack of interest in landcare at the moment', commented Jenny O'Brien.

In 2004 Kerrie Purcell was awarded a life membership of the Group in recognition of her founding role and ten years of continuous service as an Office Bearer or on sub-committees, and notably, contributing to almost every working bee and planting day the group had undertaken. Noting that the group had been established at a time of significant demographic transformation in the Mansfield area, Kerrie commented that 'the group has changed over time and has to some extent changed attitudes in the area; many people on small holdings wanted an "English look" for their property. It has been important that Landcare is not exclusive and that the concept "care" is very subjective and inclusive of a wide range of ideas and people'. Though much has been accomplished, including major erosion control planting. Summarising the group's record, Jennifer O'Brien considered that, 'probably the most lasting achievement that the group would claim, has been the raising of awareness and getting people to change their thinking and do something extra, outside their own fence'.



### Goulburn-Broken Regional Landcare Plan

Michael Ryan a Dookie Land Management Group member, expressed sentiments no doubt born of experience similar to that of numerous volunteers who contributed to the regional planning process:

They spend cold nights at meetings when they could be warm at home,

For they realise that our future will never make it on its own.<sup>68</sup>

The Plan was developed under the guidance of a Community Reference Group, comprised of landholders across the catchment. Eight public and interagency meetings were held at Benalla, Euroa, Mansfield, Seymour, Shepparton and Tatura. The reference Group received 49 submissions from organisations and individuals. The Plan provided a comprehensive outline of the geography and history of land use in the region; and an assessment of the topography and soils; vegetation; fauna; fisheries and aquatic ecosystems; water resources [including groundwater]. It documented public land use and agriculture – dryland and irrigated. Land type and land use in the Goulburn and Broken catchments was described and classified the region into 11 Land Management Units [LMU] based on land groupings but recognising distinct social communities in meaningful areas. The numbers of Landcare Groups formed in the catchment continued at an exceptional pace. By 1993, 50 Landcare/Landholder/Land Management Groups were listed as active, in the Goulburn Broken Regional Landcare Plan. [See Appendix E for listing]. The plan also listed 14 SoilCare Groups and 21 Environmental Groups – indicative of the level of community action generated.

The Plan represented not only a contribution to Victoria's Decade Plan but also an effort to provide a regional framework for Landcare. Priorities which were emphasised in submissions reflected similar concerns that had emerged in the CF&L research on Landcare a few years earlier. They included improved communication between government agencies and private landholders and community groups, coordinated extension services, education and training support, resources to complete and implement farm and catchment plans for specific Land Management Units, integrating land, river, stream and groundwater management. The Plan recommended a coordinated landcare budget for the region, coordination through networks of groups and provision of technical, marketing and administrative support to community groups.

The Plan was ultimately produced centrally by key contributors and community leaders working with agency staff. Where these leaders returned to landcare groups or other community conservation groups, taking knowledge and the process with them, the commitment to regional scale landholder activity in integrated catchment management remained high. For local groups without this connection to evolving policy – the focus remained essentially local. It is also important to note that within a year, CaLP Boards had been formed and while the management of landcare became regional, the control of policy and funding remained central, a source of much discussion and some tensions.

This was an important change for the program after a decade in which Landcare had been State Government sponsored. In its second decade the program became the responsibility of Catchment Management Authorities with

a regional model of service delivery. Section 4, outlines the developments at the end of the Decade in Victoria and the Victorian

Government's endorsement of an Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare, in its second decade.





### Government Program, Local Action, or a Social Movement?

The term Landcare has been used interchangeably in a wide range of documents often implying a homogeneity that masks important and separate aspects of the evolution of the 'model'. There can be a variety of meanings, used interchangeably, often by the same speaker or writer including:

- ~ an ethic
- ~ a concept
- ~ a marketing icon/logo
- ~ a state program
- ~ a national program
- ~ a policy framework
- ~ a social movement

As many commentators have noted the key to the rapid uptake of the idea at all levels was its broad inclusive character, the timeliness and subtly positive philosophy of land management by contrast with an emphasis on land degradation. Landcare also importantly provides for, or promises social cohesion in communities where other forms have become moribund [local schools, bush nursing

hospitals, sporting teams, etc]

It remains to highlight that there are separate but, complementary and interdependent sets of objectives operating in "Landcare", and, that they have been apparent from the earliest days of the program in Victoria viz:

**Centrally** instigated community engagement for:-

- landscape/larger scale/comprehensive policy formulation [and political presentation] and program implementation
- facilitation of participation levels [capability building later]

**Locally** motivated:-

- single issue
- social cohesion and 'feel good' productive outcome/environmental good
- landholder based participation gradually evolving

By 2006 the Goulburn Broken Landcare Program reported that the region had 90 Landcare groups which contributed to Regional Catchment Strategy targets. The Goulburn Broken Catchment's, Community Landcare Support Strategy developed in 2004, was extending landcare projects through local government partnerships and working with CMA and Waterwatch programs. Support to the network of landcare groups had been provided by regular newsletters, forums, and annual achievement awards. A regional landcare coordinator and increased provision of coordinator/facilitators has augmented access to administrative support and coordination.<sup>69</sup>



## CHAPTER 3

# Water Table Wells, Weeds, Rabbits...Landscape Change: Landcare in the Goulburn Broken catchment

The work that has been done in our catchment since the mid eighties has clearly identified the degradation processes that are in train. ... The Landcare movement is critical for the implementation of our Catchment Strategy but it can be improved.

Off-farm income is becoming increasingly more important in terms of family farm finances, with a result that we have either got cash poor or time poor landholders. Both put significant pressure on the family unit. ... The viability of farmers, and hence their capacity to invest in natural resource management, is often severely limited. ... Landcare Groups like all community groups need support ... we knew we could not implement the Catchment Strategy without a healthy Landcare movement, which had a good understanding of the role of the Catchment Management Authority ... as the grass roots movement (it) has a key role in developing new approaches.

*John Dainton, Chairman  
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority  
Goulburn Broken Catchment Landcare Forum, April 1999*

What excited the Ministers right back at the beginning was this concept of community empowerment. ... The issue was the problem of salinity, erosion etc. The Government couldn't fix it. It needed a long term program which allowed people to take responsibility, building interest and support for Natural Resource Management.

*Danny O'Neill, Director  
Sustainable Regional Development, DNRE  
Goulburn Broken Catchment Landcare Forum, April 1999*

### **'Dirt Cockies and Cabbage Patchers' The Goulburn Broken – from the headwaters to the Murray**

This chapter provides an outline of the historical and geographic patterns which have shaped the catchment in Victoria's north east and an outline of the different land management areas across a very diverse geography. The region



is unified by the heritage listed Goulburn River as it flows from the forested highlands, to the junction with the Broken River near Shepparton to the confluence with the Murray River at Echuca. Landcare has developed in widely divergent historical and geographic contexts, however representative examples and detailed 'case histories' reveal both common patterns, and the unique features of individual communities.

Victoria is the most closely settled and intensively farmed state as a result of the development policies of successive governments. Land settlement and the development of the resources of the Goulburn River has made for complex relationships and interdependencies. The catchment covers over two million hectares, and provides 11% of the Murray Darling Basin stream flow.<sup>1</sup> Around 1.4 million hectares is dryland agriculture and the intensive irrigated area of 317,000 hectares uses 1.5 million megalitres of water a year. A 2006 socio-economic study of the catchment reported that the Shepparton Irrigation Area [SIR] had an estimated Farm Gate Value of Agricultural Production [FGVAP] of about \$1.24billion.<sup>2</sup> The catchment is unique in its sub-division by the Catchment Management Authority [CMA] for the purposes of planning and management of the natural resources, into three entities, and considerable differences exist in its subregional contexts.<sup>3</sup> Over many decades the development of the land and water resources of the largest river in Victoria, has created distinctive regions with quite diverse production and landscape characteristics.

The river system is now dramatically altered from the time when early explorers Hume and Hovell, looking for the origins of the Murray in 1824, and Major Mitchell, crossed

the Goulburn in 1836. Then, it sustained extensive red gum forests, significant native fish populations and the native ecology of the floodplains. By the 1840s there was widespread squatting and the Alexandra,

Mansfield districts through to Seymour were occupied by a number of very large sheep runs. Unregulated establishment of large stock stations on vacant Crown Land occurred during the 1830s with the Henty's

and others coming from Van Diemen's Land and overlanders from NSW. During 1836 the movement was strengthened by demand and high prices in the English wool market and drought in NSW. Occupation became subject



to an annual license fee in 1837, consolidated in 1846, as the colonial government in England faced its inability to prevent or control land appropriation.

Examples include Avenel, which like a number of pastoral runs in other areas of the catchment, [Mollisons and Hunter Paterson runs in the Heathcote/Tooborac area] was a large 60,000 acres, Tallarook was 83,000 acres, Worrrough, 28,000 acres and various holdings in the Trawool Valley covered 60 square miles.<sup>4</sup> Many of the major towns in the catchment were surveyed in this early period – Seymour in 1843, Broadford in 1854, Shepparton in 1855 [as Sheppardtown]. The 1850s were dominated by the first discoveries of gold and

the huge increases of population this created in very few years.

Towards the end of the 1850s with gold diminishing, there was sustained popular agitation against the squatters' monopoly, and increasing demands for land reform. The 1860s Land Acts and government land settlement programs were designed to open crown lands to agricultural settlement and town reserves. The original squatting runs were opened for public sale in minimum 320 acre blocks, priced at one pound per acre. The legacy of the conditions of closer settlement and the associated incentives to improve land by 'clearing' and 'draining', combined with mining remained. By the 1880s

there was significant public concern about the effects of mining, and the widespread erosion being caused by the rapid spread of rabbits. The first Rabbit Suppression Act was passed in 1880.<sup>5</sup>

### 'The indispensable element'- development of irrigation

The Goulburn Valley was first settled by pastoralists during the 1870s, and following the establishment of the first Irrigation Trusts in the 1880s, dairying became a major enterprise in the northern areas. A major pressure on governments was created by the dry years of the late 1870s when large numbers of the new 'selectors' faced stock

losses; water trains were sent to some areas. A Water Conservancy Board was established in 1880, but its modest recommendations in relation to irrigation schemes were ignored in the general optimism for the great prospects popularly held for 'Victoria's abundant natural resources'. A Royal Commission on Water Supply was appointed in 1881, chaired by Alfred Deakin, a young Victorian politician. Private Irrigation Trusts were established like the early Ardmona Settlement in 1886. As a result of the Royal Commission the Irrigation Act of 1886 was passed by the Victorian Parliament, then only in its thirty-fifth year. It was during the public debates in parliament and in the press on the pros and cons of



investment in irrigation schemes, that the epithet ‘cabbage patchers’, a disparaging reference to intensive agriculturalists by contrast with large scale pastoralism was used. In turn the farmers of non-irrigated areas were often nick-named ‘dirt cockies’. These expressions can still sometimes be heard today, reflecting the distinctive rural cultures of the catchment.<sup>7</sup>

Following the Royal Commission, construction of the Goulburn Weir at Nagambie was completed during 1890/91; Waranga Basin was completed in 1905 [not without initial difficulties],<sup>8</sup> creating major storages for the further development of irrigated agriculture. Another prolonged dry period began in 1911-1912 and the Report of the Waterworks Trusts Association of Victoria, ‘strongly urged the Government to undertake and carry out a vigorous and comprehensive policy of water conservation’. Reference was made to ‘investigations of the Water Supply Department into the upper reaches of the River Goulburn ... (and), that a site had been found at the head of the river, which would permit of an abundant supply of water. The report noted that ‘the construction of a dam would be free from the engineering difficulties ... if the Trawool scheme (was) ... carried out’.<sup>9</sup>

The first stage of Eildon Weir was in fact commenced in 1915. The First World War interrupted the project and it was completed as the Sugarloaf Reservoir in the early 1920s.<sup>10</sup> ‘Big Eildon’, the second stage of the major regulation of the flows of the Goulburn River was commenced in 1955. Tenders, based on plans completed by the SRWSC in 1946, for the £12 million project, were received from eight overseas firms in 1950. The project was one of the largest in the world. The Victorian Premier, John McDonald, announced that

‘the Eildon project would change the face of Northern Victoria and add immeasurable wealth to primary production ... and become Australia’s largest water conservation scheme’.<sup>11</sup> Government had promoted closer settlement and intensive irrigated agriculture in the region from the 1880s, ‘though much of the land initially was utilised for grazing on large holdings, there was much trial and error by early settlers in establishing the limits of sustainable land use, and much impractical idealism on behalf of early governments’.<sup>12</sup>

A special edition of the Shepparton News, produced in October 1966, described Shepparton and its surrounding irrigated areas, as ‘rising from remote pastoral obscurity’ with ‘the scientific application of irrigation’. ‘Water, the indispensable element for living’, had made possible major population growth, and the primary and secondary industry development of the Goulburn Valley. The paper editorialised, ‘Without it Shepparton – if it existed at all – would be an obscure spot on an arid

plain’. The article outlined the growth of the population of the ‘Borough’ from ‘4,400 in 1927, to 17,000 today’ and projected 21,000 by 1970, highlighting the importance of the postwar boom in water conservancy and the impact of the building of ‘Big Eildon’ on regional development.<sup>13</sup> Today the area is a major contributor to the Australian economy. The annual economic output of the area known as the ‘Food Bowl’ of Australia is \$6.2 billion and 25% of Victoria’s export earnings.<sup>14</sup>





### Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare...

... Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare Group was formed at a meeting held on the 7th February 1994, at Frank and Mary Donovan's shearing shed at Pintadeen, Kilmore East. The success of the Glenaroua Land Management Group, of which Frank had been a founding member, and the Willowmavin Landcare Group, was the incentive to explore landholder interest for a new group. After a very well attended inaugural meeting, the group was formed and for a number of years was under the presidency of Frank Donovan. Current secretary Elyse Kelly noted that, 'Frank and Mary have been farming identities involved in every project of SCDC and other community activities for many years, from field days to hosting arboriculture students from Burnley and speaking at many functions'. During this time a good deal of scientific interest was shown in the area and a number of projects were begun (some of which are still progressing). The group registers between 20 and 40 members with around a third being 'active members' and distributes a 'new member welcome kit', an initiative commenced in 2005. The area has a significant commuter population and a wide range of other social activities available, unlike some more isolated groups. 'It is hard to attract new members; we are always committed to engaging the community and we try to keep a balance between an agricultural focus and environmental issues'.

The Sunday Creek and Dry Creek catchments cover an area of approximately 53 square kilometres either side of the Hume Freeway from the Wandong/Heathcote Junction in the south, Kilmore to the west, Broadford in the north, and Sunday Creek and Clonbinane districts to the east. Hilltop plantings in and around Kilmore East were early projects instigated by Frank and his committee, which gained significant support and resources from the Melbourne based Candlebark Group (seed collection, seedling growing, tree planting). Immense effort by the committee gained contributions from chemical companies and DNRE for a Gorse Eradication Project which is still gaining funding in South West Goulburn. The project was commenced after trial plots in Pound Gully proved successful and were later extended to Dry Creek and followed up by revegetation and CMA works in the creek bed. Across the first few years of the group an Interim Management Statement for the catchment was completed, a 'salinity trail' was created with explanatory signage [this has been upgraded in 2007 to form a Sustainable Landscapes Trail], and the first stage of the Kilmore Arboretum was established. David Laurie was employed as Landcare Coordinator in 1995 for three years and played a key role in the development of many initiatives. These have been long term projects which the group has continued to maintain. In 1998 the group became part of the Sunday Creek Sugarloaf Subcatchment Inc, joining forces with other local landcare groups; partnership has been a very successful strategy for sharing projects and attracting funding for weed control and revegetation subsidies and other projects.

In 2000/2001 the Sunday Creek/Sugarloaf Subcatchment Inc received Second Generation Landcare grants for further Gorse Control and reducing nutrients from off stream erosion. A collaborative approach between members saw approx. 200 foxes destroyed as part of the Fox Off program, [more recently the group has formed a partnership with the Field and Game Association for fox control]. In the same year Thistles & Things the SCDC Newsletter was begun and the group was represented on the newly formed Mitchell Shire Environment Committee. Involvement in catchment wide activities has been a priority and group members have collected water samples

as part of the Waterwatch Program since 1996. In 2006 the group commenced involvement in Clean Up Australia Day by hosting events in Kilmore East. This continues to be an important means of engaging with the wider community, as it has been particularly successful in attracting both landcare members and non-landcare members.

Current undertakings include the completion of a Local Area Plan, a process which began in 2000, along with documenting a history of the group and a map showing local place names with accompanying explanations. Weed and vermin control and revegetation programs are ongoing core projects; field trips to other Victorian rural areas to learn first hand about environmental and agricultural pursuits will be undertaken to strengthen the direction of these activities. Elyse commented: 'Our group was plodding ... Looking at our history has been valuable for looking at what we've done and moving on; the history has helped us focus and review our projects. Recently we've wanted to get some direction and have started up the LAP process again. We plan to develop our goals at our AGM in February 2008'. The LAP will incorporate much data from research recently completed on 'Multiple Outcomes for the SCDC catchment' and from earlier studies such as the GBCMA's river health plan for the Sunday Creek completed in 2003.

Highlights for the group have been recognition for members achievements; Alan and Sheila Stute winning the Goulburn Broken Sustainable Farming Award [2005], as part of the annual Victorian Landcare Awards [Alan has been the long serving treasurer of SCDC ], and Mary Donovan's 'Women in Agriculture Award', in the inaugural [2004] Mitchell Shire International Women's Day awards. The inclusion of two SCDC member properties in the International Landcare Conference bus tour of the South West Goulburn Area was a focal point in 2006.

### From complex, to comprehensive, to community

Land settlement in the latter half of the nineteenth century was accompanied by the development of multiple state government administrative agencies – each charged with facilitating a particular aspect of agricultural production or land degradation – water supply, soil conservation, salinity, river management, drainage etc, these have been dealt with in some detail in Section 2. The magnitude of the accumulating impacts of agricultural practices became increasingly apparent. Evidence showed that an integrated approach to resource management and the direct participation of communities was required. The growth of environmental awareness during the 1970s and later, in which the role of community was recognised, led eventually to the reorganisation of the fabric of government and the inclusion of rural communities in the care of the land.

Community land protection/remediation action has a history dating from the 1950s [and even earlier] and the origins of what was transformed into the program LandCare by CF&L in the late 1980s, are found in several of the community salinity and soil action groups of what is now known as the Mid Goulburn Broken region. These are notably groups such as Warrenbayne Boho, Sheep Pen Creek, Molliyulah Tatong, and Goorambat Devenish in the Mid-Goulburn and Whiteheads Creek in the Upper Goulburn area.

To understand Landcare in the Goulburn Broken region it is necessary to review particular developments across the three separate regions of the catchment, although it should be remembered that Landcare predates the CaLP Board and subsequent

CMA by a decade.<sup>15</sup> Landcare has inevitably reflected the characteristics of this complex catchment with its wide diversity of geographies, histories, demographics and production landscapes. A major feature of the catchment is the difference between communities in the irrigated, closer settlement areas of the catchment, the non-irrigated agricultural regions and the upper forested regions where the Goulburn and its tributaries have their origins.

Differences in the nature of the resource management activities in the three regions and the widely divergent funding applied, has shaped regional development. So too has the wider environment, and the ‘times’ in which local communities formed action groups. Distinctive landholder responses to local issues have created unique community responses to land degradation.

### The catchment geography of Landcare

The catchment of the Goulburn and Broken rivers covers an area of 2.43m hectares or 10.5% of the state. The area was formally declared a catchment for policy, planning and operational management purposes under the provisions of the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994; Part 2 Division 2, of which provides that the



Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister, may –

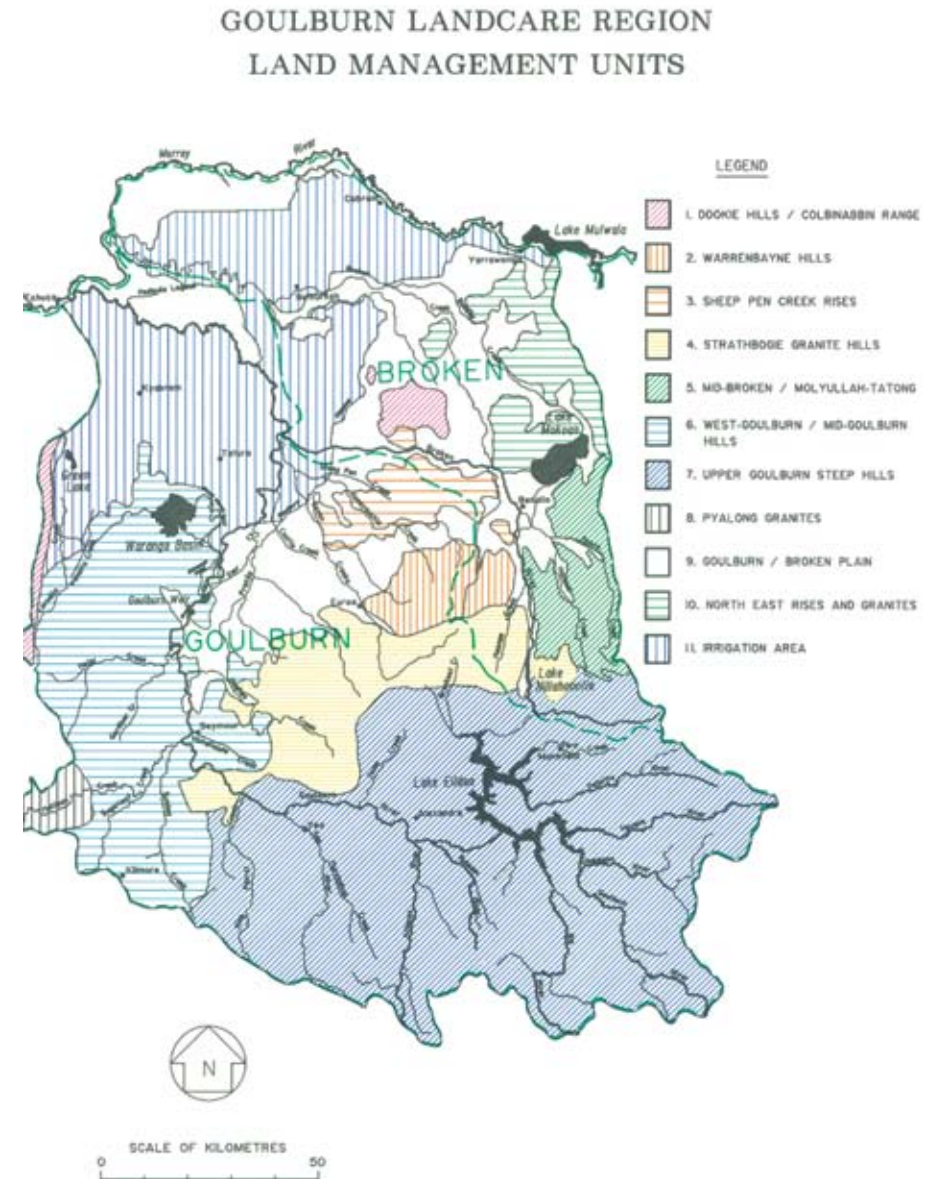
Determine the areas of Victoria which are catchment and land protection regions and define their boundaries;

Under the 1994 legislation, regional administrative arrangements were established initially as Catchment and Land Protection Boards; in 1997 these became Catchment Management Authorities [CMAs]. The northern boundary of the catchment is formed by the Murray River from Barmah to Yarrawonga and Lake Mulwala and its southern boundary reaches the outskirts of Greater Melbourne and the catchment of the Thompson, Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers. To the west it adjoins the catchment of the Campaspe River and to the east the catchment of the King and Macalister Rivers.

Approximately 70% of the catchment is freehold land cleared for agriculture.<sup>16</sup> Cattle runs were established as early as the 1830s and wool produced by 1853. Current land use includes hardwood timber, dairying and fruit production, sheep and beef production.<sup>17</sup> The last three decades have seen very significant changes in the production landscapes of the Goulburn Broken catchment and there have been important demographic changes [including significant peri-urban development].<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the topographic Land Management Units designated in the Regional Landcare Plan in the early 1990s,<sup>19</sup> a distinctive feature of the catchment has been the segmentation created by high capital and recurrent investment by government in infrastructure for agricultural development over a century. The marked historical differences created by closer settlement

policies and intensive, irrigated agriculture shaped the origins of regional Landcare in important ways. Economic and demographic changes of the last few decades continue to shape its contemporary development.



**Fig. 3: Land Management Units, Goulburn Region Landcare Plan**  
Prepared by Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1992

### Country Victoria in a period of rapid change

Significant changes in the agricultural economy have had critical impacts on the social structure of rural communities. In a study *Understanding Rural Victoria*, Neil Barr of the Department of Primary Industry Research Centre at Bendigo has analysed demographic changes, social trends and agricultural adjustment as they have interacted to create new social landscapes. The study makes the point that, 'although a relatively small and still declining segment of Victoria's population, the farm community

manages a disproportionate share of the state's land'.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding this imbalance, the contribution to Landcare, land management and rehabilitation is dependent on this small and declining segment. Expectations that there will be a continuing and similar level of input by rural communities to the management of natural resources, as in the last three decades, may need to be reassessed.

The study examined the possible role for government policy and services in rural areas and developed generic scenarios to highlight the interactions between economic change, rural migration, changing demographic

structure and lifestyle changes. The findings make an important contribution to an appreciation of the period in which Landcare has evolved. Significantly the Goulburn Broken catchment contains a mix of all of the identified social landscapes emerging in rural Victoria:

- ~ Production landscapes
- ~ Rural amenity landscapes
- ~ Transitional landscapes
- ~ Irrigation landscapes

Evidence from outline histories of Landcare groups, interviews with members and agency staff who have worked with them, shows

that to a large extent the contributory factors within each of the above scenarios, has shaped local Landcare. Case studies expose the major impact of generational change, agricultural adjustment and land holding patterns on farming and land management, and particularly on voluntary community activity, relying as it does on existing social capital and earlier patterns of rural life.

There has been a particular impact in regional areas where agricultural **production** is the major force shaping the social structure of the community and where it directly employs a significant proportion of the workforce. These areas have declined as a proportion of the



Victorian rural landscape and their towns have become less and less socially sustainable.<sup>21</sup> Agriculture in Australia has faced constantly declining terms of trade over many decades. The imperative for farm entities has been to increase scale to improve productivity and the absolute numbers of farms has markedly reduced. Community landcare members are very aware of these dynamics. 'The people who lend are encouraging farmers to be bigger – so were DPI, like Target 10 – "Get big or get out".<sup>22</sup> A result has been an overall decline in rural population and a demographic profile which is ageing and with fewer women. A member of the Goulburn Murray Landcare

Network commented, 'most of the people who turn up to Landcare meetings are the older generation - the generation in their fifties – who've handed on or moved out. The early vibrancy (of Landcare) was to do with profitability'.<sup>23</sup>

In many areas of Victoria, landscape **amenity** has attracted significant migration to rural areas, notably where land is close to urban centres which offer continued access to services. The study reports that rural population has grown in an arc around Melbourne and in relation to the centres of Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton and Wangaratta. The 'tree-changers' or

'grass-changers', the cohort of migrating retirees, have created competition for farm land and have raised prices. Farm businesses unable to compete and experiencing low returns are increasingly relying on off-farm work or leasing to remain viable. Few of the farms in these areas will be transferred to the next generation, and the population as a result of migration and market changes is older than the rest of Victoria. The study makes the observation that the 'bright future' of many of such locations depends on protecting the amenity features and landscapes that attract migrants. As people move into an area with high landscape amenity, much

of this 'amenity land' will not be used for commercial agriculture. 'New landowners' may need assistance with management of their 'unutilised' land.

A growing awareness of this obligation can be seen in the projects and activities typical of many Landcare groups that have developed in this characteristic landscape. 'We moved here eighteen years ago, we loved the land. One of our main objectives has been to revegetate the barren hills. We've locked up 50 acres and another 150 of remnant bush on the south side of the hills. That raises the question for Bush Tender and covenanting etc that farmers can tend to offer up less productive areas rather than particular ecologies'.<sup>24</sup>

The decline of agriculture and growing development of amenity rural land has created a **transitional zone**, much of which has been utilized by the sheep and wool industry in the past. The south west and central Victoria are sites where the wool industry, faced with high labour costs and reductions in the available workforce, is declining in face of land uses as varied as plantation forestry, alternative intensive farming, and 'bush' restoration. In some locations dairying and cropping have expanded by purchasing land from wool producers.<sup>25</sup> Many areas now face a cultural transition from an earlier era of relative isolation and simplicity to much greater diversity. Again this cultural and population mix has been a characteristic noted in many Landcare groups' accounts of themselves. Many have deemed it an advantage that 'Landcare can act as a social mixer at points where the agricultural zone is fragmenting'.<sup>26</sup>

For the **irrigation landscape** a key factor in the rate of structural change has been the





introduction of water markets, which has transferred water from mixed farming to higher value dairying and horticulture. Water trading affected by low allocations due to drought has changed the behaviour of the water market. Policy changes of the last decade have created a dramatic reshaping of the irrigation landscape, including high turnover of land owners. 'Driven by low allocations, high debt and an uncertain future, in the past two years some dairy farmers have been selling permanent water entitlement to downstream irrigators'.<sup>27</sup> This has been the cause for local community concern that the economic basis of their community may be completely changed. 'At the moment people are struggling, they don't know what will evolve. In the present situation, in terms of Landcare, there is a worry about volunteering being in decline; but government is still shovelling responsibility on to communities'.<sup>28</sup>

This analysis points to likely altered roles for Landcare in future decades, both in terms of managing productive land and in managing the social landscape through demographic and land use transitions. It may also signify an imperative to review the 'model' of voluntary group operation to find a better fit for particular areas. The original paradigm of a loose collective of farmers with mutual concerns, and the economic base to combine the self-interest of improving productivity with the overarching public interest, was developed in a very different set of economic and social conditions than those pertaining today.



### **Cate Culley...**

... Cate's first experience of Landcare came as a Salinity Extension Officer in Maryborough in 1993 looking after 8 Landcare Groups (all of which met monthly!!!). In that role she handled a range of advice on areas such as salinity, erosion, tree growing, crops, pest plant & animals and water management. She also handled funding advice & support to landholders & Landcare groups. She was responsible for administration of the Land Protection Incentive Scheme and coordinated Community Education activities for the Maryborough district - particularly field day programs. In addition to these already wide ranging responsibilities Whole Farm Planning courses & school education activities such as Saltwatch, & Waterwatch were undertaken. Cate added: 'Landcare is a high burnout job – it's a day job and a night job – lots of night meetings and late work'.

Cate moved to Broadford in 1994 and worked with the community and Landcare Groups developing Local Area Plans in the South West Goulburn. Landholders in the Reedy Creek/Dabyminga Creek Catchments form the group which covers an area from Mount Disappointment and the Tallarook Ranges through to the Goulburn River near Tallarook. Cate worked with landholders to form the Dabyminga Cooperative a Landcare network linking Reedy Creek and Tallarook Landcare Groups. Work here included creating a web-site, developing a Local Area Plan, assisting with funding applications and building linkages with other Landcare Groups. Cate explained that: 'LAPs have not been as developed in the dryland areas of the catchment as subsidies and government assistance have been traditionally much higher in the irrigation areas'. She played an important role as an NRE Fire Recovery Officer after the Glenaroua fire and assisted the development of the 'Building Bridges' program which partnered Northcote Rotary with Glenaroua Land Management Group in a major annual tree planting program.

Looking back over her work with the program Cate commented: 'Landcare groups develop through many different phases of group and individual dynamics'. Across the time at Maryborough and Broadford she witnessed groups grow, 'from an initial conversation into a committee, a group of interested people, an incorporated group, to a group with projects and funding and achievements under their belt. Then came the employment of a coordinator to manage major projects, bigger and better plans, more accomplishments, and often waning interest as all main goals have been achieved'.

Cate has seen Landcare evolve over several decades: 'Landcare per se hasn't changed, but its impact has changed in the face of farming changes and peri-urban development'. The 1990s saw a large number of groups starting up and over time a number formed Networks. 'It has been a good to network a number of groups; it allows the individual groups to cycle and change'. Many people have commented on the important role of Landcare in providing community cohesion, as social capital. Cate agreed that: 'Among other benefits Landcare acts as a "social mixer" at points where the agricultural zone is fragmenting'.

Research also shows that rural communities are more likely to participate where Landcare had a presence in the area. 'Some Groups have been a shining example; the rabbit buster program at Nulla Vale Pyalong West is a good example. The coordinator Jon Martin was critical to the success. He was tireless and committed in organising warren ripping and baiting. Like many others who worked with landcare groups across the 1990s, he was, as well as a "works coordinator", a "social coordinator". Cate believes that the additional resources brought by Coordinators was critical. 'With the hard work of the members, community and Coordinator I have seen the farms and the community blossom into an environment where social connectedness is high, rabbit numbers are low, tree numbers are high and on the rise and landholders are generally happy with their 'local area'.

Cate is currently working on the Streamlining Provincial Victoria, a Local Government & Land Use Planning Project that aims to incorporate Whole Farm Planning into planning processes to 'cut red tape'. She views the most important achievement of Landcare in the longer term as the spreading of an "idea". She believes this to be the most significant achievement of landcare over time: 'An ethos has been created, the investment over time has created a both a sense of community locally but also an ethos. Land remediation has achieved an acceptance in the vernacular and become the norm'.

### Reconstructing Landcare Pasts

By the end of the Decade of Landcare in 2000, the diversity of the origins of Landcare had to some extent been lost in the homogenised brand name ‘Landcare’. This Section looks at the unique history and special characteristics of Landcare as it developed at the local level in various regions of the catchment across the 1980s and 1990s.

Community action on land degradation issues across that time spans:-

- ~ an all party Parliamentary Inquiry into Salinity in Victoria
- ~ development of the Salinity Pilot Program based in the catchment
- ~ the evolution of community involvement and governance arrangements for river management in the catchment,
- ~ major changes in the public sector at state and national level
- ~ the creation of the Landcare program in Victoria,
- ~ the nation-wide campaign of awareness raising and political consensus generation that employed the vehicle, Year of, and Decade of, Landcare,
- ~ and the proclamation in Victoria of the Catchment and Land Protection [CaLP] Act 1994, creation of CaLP Boards and the subsequent establishment of Catchment Management Authorities.

Growth in numbers of Landcare groups in the five years following the creation of a national program is dramatically demonstrated in Table 3 below. The commonwealth government’s commitment to unprecedented expenditure

levels and long term planning acted as a major incentive. From a small base of groups registered in the late 1980s, associated with soil conservation and salinity or erosion projects, 16 Landcare Groups were registered in the region by 1989. Across the first half of the 1990s, 52 Groups and 2 Networks were established [a spectacular 425% increase]. This rate of growth, typical of a number of regions across Australia, was undoubtedly related to the range of funding programs available to eligible community action groups and was the end result of major promotion and publicity given to Landcare in the mainstream media.

**Table 3: Landcare Group establishment\* in the Goulburn Broken Catchment 1986 – 2006\*\***

***\*Many Groups were established but only registered as Landcare Groups several years later***

***\*\* Based on data from Landcare Groups of Benalla Region 1990, GMLN 2005, UGIC Report Card 2006, and Goulburn Broken Landcare Plan 1993***

1986 – 1989	1990 - 1995	1996 - 2006
Warrenbayne Boho LMG	Burramine Tungamah LCG	Nulla Vale Pyalong West LCG
Seven Creeks LCG	Castle Creek LCG	Kinglake LCG
Sheep Pen Creek LMG	Creightons Creek LPA	Reedy Creek LCG
Molliyulah Tatong Tree & LPG	Strathbogie LCG	U. T Creek LCG
Dookie LMG	Balmattum Sheans Creek LCG	Flowerdale LCG
Boweya Lake Rowan LCG	Gooram Valley LCG	Cerberus LCG
Chesney Vale LCG	Sunday Creek/Dry Creek LCG	Bonnie Doon LCG
Devenish Goorambat LCG	Home Creek LMG	Naringaningakook LCG
Burnt Creek LCG	Longwood East LHG	Picoia LMG
Whiteheads Creek LCG	Mount Camel Range LCG	Kyabram Urban LCG
Glenaroua LMG	Nagambie LCG	Tatura Urban LCG
Ford Creek LCG	O’Dea’s Road LCG	Sheppn Mooroopna Urban LCG
Ancona LCG	Samaria LCG	Goomalibee LCG
Upper Hughes Creek LCG [Crghins/Ruffy-Terip]	Swanpool & District LPG	
North West Mooroopna LMG	Warby Range LCG	
Undera LCG	Wilby/Boomahnoomoonah/Peechelba	
Girgarre Stanhope LCG	Yellow Creek LMG	
	Hughes Creek LCG	
	Howqua Valley LCG	
	Strath Creek LCG	
	Merton LCG	
	Willowmavin LCG	
	Dairy Creek LCG	
	Delatite LCG	
	Highlands LCG	
	Molesworth LCG	
	East Killingworth LCG	
	Yea River Catchment LCG	
	Tallarook LCG	
	Arcadia & District LCG	
	Bunbartha-Kaarimba LCG	
	Waranga LCG	
	East Shepparton LCG	
	Harston LCG	
	Invergordon & District LCG	
	Katandra West LPG	
	Katunga Sth LMG	
	Kotupna LCG	
	Muckatah LCG	
	Broken Creek Imprvmt LCG	
	Koonoomoo LCG [in recess]	
	Dhurringile & District LCG	
	Merrigum LMG	
	Wyuna LCG	
	Yarroweyah LMG [inactive]	
	Tongala LCG [in recess]	
	Networks:	Networks:
	Granite Creeks	Upper Goulburn Network
	Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative	Sunday Creek Sugarloaf Subcatchment
	Goulburn Murray Landcare Network	Dabyminga Catchment Cooperative
	Upper Goulburn Catchment Project	Broken Catchment Landcare Network

The latter half of the 1990s and later saw only six new groups established in the catchment while a number of groups went into recess or disbanded. The actual figures for this latter grouping are difficult to assess accurately, but the 2006 'Report Card' for Landcare in the catchment indicates five groups now in recess. A number of earlier groups appear to have gradually disappeared or been absorbed into larger groupings.

There is no complete database on Landcare Groups in the catchment, nor is an historical inventory available recording years of establishment or disbanding. The Goulburn Regional Landcare Plan 1993 offered the earliest comprehensive listing. It recorded a total of 47 Landcare Groups [Upper Goulburn – 11; Mid Goulburn – 21; SIR – 15]. In addition it listed 16 SoilCare Groups, 17 Drainage Groups, 20 Environmental Groups, 4 Tree Groups and 2 Farm Advance Groups.<sup>29</sup> This data highlights the pioneering role of the groups in the Mid Goulburn region. Whereas by 1999, the Goulburn-Broken Landcare Forum reported a total of 126 Landcare/ Land Management Groups in the region [SIR - 50; Dryland - 76], and a total of 7 Networks.<sup>30</sup> The Landcare Support Strategy 2005 listed a total of 92 groups [UG – 27; Mid Gln Brkn – 23; SIR – 42]. A regional overview of Landcare in the catchment prepared in 2006<sup>31</sup> listed 90 Groups and 8 Networks and the Landcare Report Card 2005/06 presented late 2006 lists 86 Groups. Apart from evidence of a significant decline in the number of operational groups, there are unaccountable variations in the data at each stage.

Reasons for these discrepancies are obvious. Landcare is a 'community based' program and groups operate within considerable autonomy, one result of which is an unpredictable

response and reporting rate. Another source of variations and gaps has been the differential use of terminology and the absence of any agreed benchmark data able to be used for

analysis and program evaluation. A number of the people interviewed for this project have commented on the 'very confused picture that Landcare in the catchment presents' and the

benefits of 'documenting what has actually happened' in a program as 'fluid and person-dependent' as Landcare inevitably has been.<sup>32</sup>





### Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group...

... has been described as one of the first Landcare groups in Australia, grew from a small group of landholders in the late 1970s who talked with the Soil Conservation Authority about the spread of salinity in their locality. A formal Group Conservation Project was established in 1983. The group grew to involve 150 landholders by 1990 and covered an area of 40,000ha in the lower hills of the Strathbogie Ranges - an area which included 11,000ha of groundwater recharge zones. From 1985 the group employed a full-time Coordinator, under National Soil Conservation Program funding, to assist with the development of projects across the group's 12 sub-catchment interdependent areas. As the Group evolved its momentum and methods became recognised as a model for other 'landcare' groups; it has a continuous history of community action on land degradation of more than twenty-five years and has enjoyed a high profile at local, state and national level over that time.

The early problems identified were salinised land, with either total or partial loss of production, 25k of gully erosion, 4000ha susceptible to sheet erosion, weed infestation, tree decline and habitat loss. The group obtained further funding from both state and federal governments and philanthropic trusts. WBLPG covered a more extensive area than a number

of similar groups and were positioned to take advantage of the resources and support available. By 1986 the group reported the completion of more than 10km of fencing for tree planting and pasture sowing, planting of 12,500 native and 5000 tree lucerne seedlings and perennial sowing of 30ha of salt affected land and 70ha of recharge land. The group had also begun the development of the Warrenbayne Boho Rural Urban Program; funds provided by the Myer Foundation enabled the employment of a member to manage a program of hands-on learning in land management targeted to urban people that ran for six years.

In 1987 the group was registered as one of the earliest LandCare Groups in the Goulburn Broken region. Across the next few years and the early 1990s the WBLPG produced a Rivers and Streams Management Plan for the area, a wildlife corridor project and a local geographic information system. By 1991 the group had revegetated 700ha of the recharge areas – a recognised example of significant community cooperation – as recharge and discharge areas cross a number of property boundaries. In 1996 WBLPG celebrated its tenth anniversary with 60 people attending the AGM and touring the area to visit sites of group activity which had significantly changed the landscape. Strategies were discussed for the continuing stabilisation of the rising watertable with the potential for commercial forestry to be explored. The group obtained support from the Murray Darling Basin Commission to carry out research in the establishment of farm forestry as a commercial and salinity management enterprise.

Over its twenty-five years plus of operation, WBLPG has received numerous awards and commendations for its history of achievements and its pioneering role in the Landcare movement. Its members have spoken on Landcare at national and international conferences and have held positions on a number of state and national landcare and environment advisory groups.



### Landcare in the 1980s: single issue, paddock focus?

There has been a received wisdom concerning the path from simple concerns to broader environmental perspectives that landcare has taken. In October 2000, the Australian Landcare Council held a workshop to examine the future of Landcare. The workshop concluded that:

Landcare developed from small beginnings in the mid-1980s to become a widespread community-based movement. It started in Victoria and elsewhere as a way to

engage local farmers into tackling soil degradation. At its inception it had a strong rural focus. The concept spread rapidly and the Decade of Landcare (1990-2000) gave impetus to adoption of the Landcare model as a way for communities to come together to tackle environmental problems.<sup>33</sup>

A summary of the proceedings of this workshop highlighted what were described as the key changes to Landcare over two decades:

~ From a single issue, paddock focus ...

to a sustainable landscapes approach

- ~ From marginal unconventional land managers ... to mainstream leadership status
- ~ From a voluntary, self reliant movement ... to a high and increasing reliance on external investment and regulation
- ~ From low levels of bureaucracy ... to complex compliance and accountability requirements
- ~ From a primary focus on on-ground action ... to catalyzing action and education about NRM issues<sup>34</sup>

It has been deceptively easy for these scenarios to be adopted as conventional currency when thinking about Landcare. The early historical record does not support this picture for the Goulburn Broken catchment. The Council paper depicts a particular model of historical evolution; a linear progression from simple to complex, local to state/national, narrow perspectives to catchment wide responses, insular private enterprise to comprehensive public interest.

A detailed look at a representative range of Goulburn Broken groups however, reveals the multiple issue and sub-catchment focus characteristic of some groups from their foundation. These groups used all levels of institutional and technical support, developed community education projects, accessed multiple levels of government and philanthropic funding and were highly accountable. Two groups among those first formed in the 1970s, which became models for subsequent groups, stand out – Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group and Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group.

This review of the development of regional landcare demonstrates that more could be done to preserve the history of community responses to land degradation in the Goulburn and Broken River catchments. It is in this region that some of the most significant initial contributions to Landcare have their origins. Patterns of development for the large number of groups established in the 1990s will also be explored through outlines of selected representative examples.



**The prototype of “landcare”:  
Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection  
Group**

The continuous history of Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group [WBLPG] from the 1970s to the present reveals examples of community initiative and government support, which, by the late 1980s evolved into ‘Landcare’ groups. Warrenbayne Boho modelled development for neighbouring groups. There is however, a more multi-faceted story revealed in accounts of specific groups than is conveyed by the myth of ‘simple beginnings’. The genesis of these groups commences in the decades following World War II.

By 1959 the Soil Conservation Authority was seeking legislative provision to encourage landholders to band together. The early GCA programs had a fairly formal basis and District Advisory Committees were provided for under the 1947 *Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act* legislation. The first three committees were established in 1950 following election meetings of landowners; the first two of these being Upper Goulburn – Shires of Mansfield, Alexandra and Yea, and Lower Goulburn – Shire of Benalla. It is noteworthy that Benalla was the site of the first Soil Conservation Board District Office established in November 1945. The GCA model proved popular and by 1964 eight GCAs had been declared. Staff shortages and limited resources created a serious problem in meeting demand from farming groups throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. Successive annual reports of the authority drew this to the attention of the government of the day.<sup>35</sup>



WBLPG evolved from a few concerned landholders worried about dryland salting and other problems in the 1970s. Several other early groups in the mid Goulburn region such as Sheep Pen Creek Land Management Group, Boweya Lake Rowan Landcare Group, Devenish Goorambat Landcare Group, Dookie Land Management Group have similar beginnings, which reveals the long community involvement with land degradation problems and the work of the Soil Conservation Authority.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the Authority introduced an alternative concept of

Conservation Projects, of which Warrenbayne Boho became an early example. By the early 1980s, the GCA Scheme had operated for two decades and 'group extension' was an established concept in Victoria and formed a key component of the platform from which Landcare developed. Margaret Wallis of Whiteheads Creek pointed to the very active and effective role the Conservation Officers played and the foundation that was created for later Landcare:

The Soil Conservation Group had very enthusiastic staff and they were very

important members of the community. They were most highly respected and became friends of the farmers and did an enormous amount to inspire them to become more aware. They were very valued. They were household names and they'd be around often – there were always lots of field days and working bees.

From the outset the SCA had a strong focus on cooperative programs with groups of farmers, perhaps because initially it had few staff and other resources. It is worth noting that like a later response to land degradation, the Salinity

Bureau, the SCA was administratively located in the Premiers Department and reported through the Premier to successive Ministers for Conservation - indicative perhaps of unresolved tensions between the agricultural/production focus and the conservation focus of government [see Appendix A for a listing]. Early farmer groups working with the SCA were well aware of the need to carefully balance production and conservation in the development of group programs:

*It's pretty hard if you are farming in a district and you've taken over from your father – it's hard to change. But if there are a few people thinking that way, then it's a little easier.<sup>37</sup>*

*Salting was only apparent in a few areas and we didn't want to create a big scare.<sup>38</sup>*

*It's not always easy to get farmers to change – they often need to see some economic benefit before they would try something new and different ... such as planting trees and replacing annual pastures with improved, fertilized perennial pastures.<sup>39</sup>*

The Land Capability Study for the Shire of Violet Town was to provide the knowledge base for the mobilization of community action in the region over the next few years.

Community concern about salting was the catalyst for a public forum auspiced by the Shire in 1982. At the public meeting attended by more than 100 landowners the Goulburn-Ovens District Advisory Committee was elected. These six landowners were to become the nucleus of WBLPG, their approach to the SCA for advice and assistance, led to the formal establishment of a Group Conservation Project in 1983.<sup>40</sup> An important development that also assisted the group's progress over



the next eighteen months was the preparation of submissions for the public hearings of the Parliamentary Salinity Committee, which gained very encouraging support from the Inquiry. These were prepared jointly over a series of community meetings to ensure the balance of views and local support essential to credibility. In mid 1984 Darrell Brewin local SCA Conservation Officer became an ex-officio member of the Group [as later did Kevin Ritchie then Assistant Regional Manager for Benalla].<sup>41</sup>

As noted, dryland salting was the prime concern of the group of landholders who became WBLPG. The Chairman of the SCA in his 29th Annual Report for 1977/78 made the following points:

Much has been said in the press during the year, in both rural and city press of the problem of salinity in northern Victoria. The treatment of the topic has varied from emotive to objective. However there is no doubt about the underlying community concern. It has long been realised that in the northern irrigation districts salinity is a major and indeed immediate threat. Nor is the problem associated with dryland farming anything new to the authority. What is new, and a prime cause for concern, is the possibility unsuspected until recently that reduced regional catchment tree cover is causing a gradual rise in the level of saline groundwater, particularly in association with old underground stream systems. Where this rising saline water approaches the surface, vegetation is killed and the soil becomes bare and unproductive. This has major implications for widespread areas of Northern Victoria. Research into salting has been carried out primarily by the State

Rivers and Water supply Commission and the Department of Minerals and Energy and the Soil Conservation Authority. Recently the SCA has convened an inter-departmental technical committee on dryland salting to coordinate research. The Authority brings to the attention of government the need for increased funding for research and reclamation of areas of land now unproductive.<sup>42</sup>

By the early 1980s, the SCA was also reporting on promoting greater community awareness of dryland salinity and had developed a mobile display caravan, a poster series and educational resource kits. Public meetings with landholders in study areas increased significantly from 1979-1982 [the last year of SCA operation before it was absorbed into the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands].

In April 1985, an important meeting of sixty landholders met at the Warrenbayne Hall to hear the plans for the conservation project that had been developed. The Director of the Land Protection Division CF&L and representatives of Agriculture and Rural Affairs [DARA] and the Premiers Department

attended the meeting at which Darrell Brewin by then a regional officer with CF&L, gave an outline of the project, which covered an area from Long Gully Rd in Shire of Violet Town to the Midland Highway, Shire of Benalla and the foothills of the Strathbogies. The proposal included over 140 landowners. An indication of the various forms of land degradation in the area were demonstrated in a slide presentation and a booklet prepared by CF&L. Newspaper reports of the day indicate that WBLPG 'hosted the second half of the meeting, which was chaired by Cr Pam Robinson and incorporation of the group was

discussed and unanimously adopted by the meeting'.<sup>43</sup>

By October 1985 WBLPG Inc had been approved for a \$30,000 National Soil Conservation Program [NSCP] grant to employ a Community Development Coordinator – one of the first of its kind in Australia. John Kerin the Commonwealth Minister for Primary Industry announced that priority had been given to community groups making a contribution in kind and involved in soil conservation and sustainable land use. The NSCP was designed to ensure, 'that the whole community adopt a land conservation ethic'.<sup>44</sup>

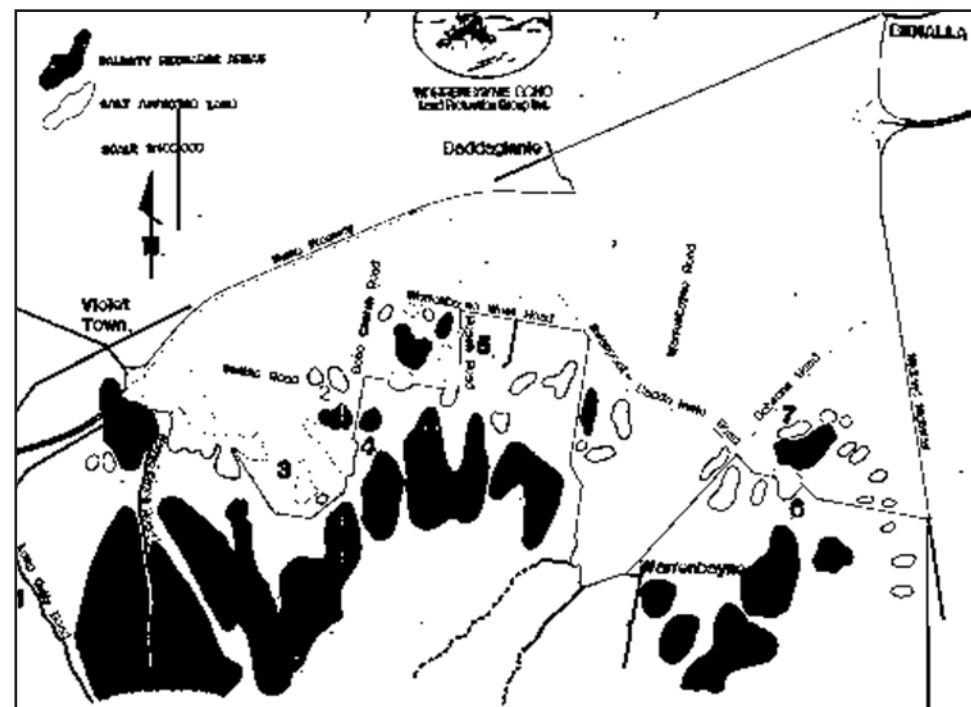


Fig: 4 Warrenbayne Boho – salinity recharge and salt affected land mapping



### Pamela Robinson...

... has been involved in community development and 'Landcare' for four decades. Pam came to Australia from Portadown, County Armagh in Northern Ireland in 1963, in her 'gap' year to spend twelve months on a working holiday. Over the next few years she travelled extensively met and married, Warrenbayne farmer, David Robinson in 1969 and settled in rural Victoria. As Hon. Secretary to the Goulburn Regional Council for Social Development from 1973 to 1975, Pam gained valuable early experience in the initiation of regional projects and working with community groups. The innovative Australian Assistance Plan [AAP] was established by the Whitlam Labor Government to promote regional planning and facilitate community involvement in coordination and planning of regional and local services.

From the early 1980s Pam became involved with neighbouring farmers in looking at problems on farms: 'white salty stuff', 'places where the sheep liked to lick and roll', 'trees dead for no reason'. 'The Soil Conservation Authority [SCA] was doing works in the district, 'a neighbour Angus Howell had a dam done and they did erosion works'. 'Angus and I became generally interested and talked with lots of people'. SCA staff worked well with works on the ground, but weren't

traditionally in a close relationship with landholders, 'they went in with dozers and farmers watched'. 'The general feeling was that Soil Con had done good works, but without close community involvement there wasn't enough follow up or maintenance of projects'.

After much community discussion Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group was established at a public meeting where the community agreed to undertake a Conservation Plan. Pam was elected foundation Chair of the Group and remained in that position for six years to 1989 after which she undertook roles as Public Relations Officer and Secretary until 1994. The SCA provided a lot of assistance with survey work and developing reports on land management for the area. There was no direct funding to the Group, but 'We used to meet in the Soil Con offices; they helped us with mail outs, copying that sort of thing'. At this period considerable change was occurring in land focused agencies as well and 'many new staff worked with us; there was a lot of new community focus and that was important'.

As Chair and Coordinator of WBLPG, Pam and Angus were invited by Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands [CF&L], to address the Commonwealth/State Conservation Ministers meeting in Adelaide in 1985, where the Victorian Minister made a commitment to the development of a community action program to tackle land degradation issues.

Pam had been elected as a Councillor for the Shire of Violet Town in 1982 and in 1983/84 and again in 1993/94 became Shire President, representing the Warrenbayne Riding for a total of 12 years. On the basis of her experience and local knowledge of land management issues, in 1986 she was nominated as an inaugural member of the Goulburn Broken Salinity Pilot Project Advisory Council and in 1989 was appointed by the federal Minister for Primary Industry, Jim Kerrin, to the National Soil Conservation Advisory Committee. 'I was so keen and interested in a range of things and in linking

up government departments and their activities; at that time there was high energy between people and many fortuitous connections. The rewards were there. We knew we were on to something good'.

In 1988 funding was obtained through the National Soil Conservation Program to employ a Coordinator and to make a video of the Group's work. Pam scripted and directed, Landholder Group Participation – a Model for Action that told the story of the evolution of WBLPG as an exemplar of local farmers tackling land degradation. In Pam's words the video was designed to show 'ownership of what we were doing; solutions and positive benefits of community action; the necessity for adequate government agency support; how to keep groups going and get landholders involved; seeking funds and importantly keeping at it'. With a total budget of \$8000, the video was made in April/May 1988. Viewing it today, Pam commented: 'It was so homespun but so high energy and credible; so indicative of the times'.

There have been numerous forms of recognition for her developed expertise and extended community service, including a National Landcare Certificate of Appreciation, Australia Day Award, and membership of the first National Landcare Advisory Committee in 1993. In 1990 Pam was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for service to Local Government and conservation. In recognition of her work promoting women in Local Government and Agricultural Industry Bodies, Pam was a representative with the Australian Delegation to the 46th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2002. Across 2002 – 2003 Pam chaired the Independent Community Engagement Panel for the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council for the Living Murray Project and in 2007 was appointed to the Ministerial Council for Climate Change Adaptation.

### 'A slow ongoing thing'

Production losses in the area due to salinity were reported as approximately \$120 - \$160 per hectare. Jack Heywood a third generation farmer in Warrenbayne commented, 'There was a bit of it (salinity) up Collins Gully way, but we didn't know what it was. It's been a slow, ongoing thing and it's got worse over 20 or 30 years'.<sup>45</sup> The Group planned to plant perennial pasture species and trees on rocky catchment slopes and fence off, to control grazing. The coordinator would help farmers draw up farm plans, record information and network groups in small sub-catchments across the total project area. WBLPG also planned to access state government salinity funds believing that, 'if local landholders work together in small groups, using farm machinery, or special equipment loaned or hired from the Department of CF&L, fencing and planting can be carried out quickly and people who live in **a particular catchment will develop a feeling of responsibility for the land across property boundaries**'.<sup>46</sup>

The employment of a paid coordinator early in the group's development enabled a high level of achievement and the maintenance of a program of action. Members began to see positive results rather than problems. 'Ten years ago I didn't have time to plant a tree, never planted one. Now I can see the value, just the value it puts on the property, the shelter belts, when we get all these trees around the property we're going to be able to lamb ewes any time of the year. It'll keep the cold off the country and grasses'll grow too'.<sup>47</sup>

The coordinator position was made possible through a 1985 ground breaking grant. Lindsay Nothrop, the first Program Manager for the

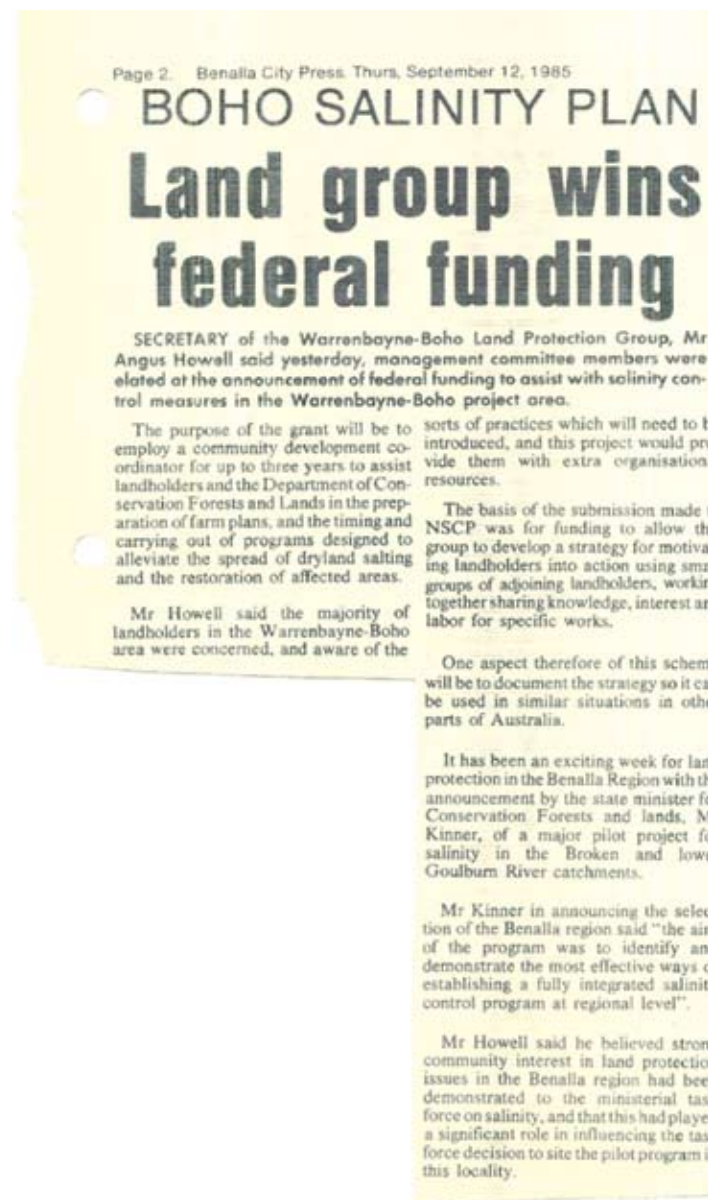
NSCP in 1983, outlined the development of ideas for the new program and highlighted the important role that the funding to Warrenbayne Boho had played at that time.

Our first break came in 1984 with an approach from Pam Robinson and Angus Howell who were the leaders of Victoria's Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group. What they offered was something that had never happened before in Australia, and just what we were looking for – community ownership of soil conservation. Community representatives had previously sat on government committees in many states but this was different. This time the initiative came from landholders rather than governments. That year we changed the guidelines and specifically sought community involvement projects. ... ..

A statutory advisory committee for the NSCP was established in 1986 ... Pam Robinson was appointed a member because she had been so valuable in the early stages. ... .. at a SCAC meeting Pam Robinson suggested that we stop referring to 'soil conservation' and adopt the term 'Landcare'.<sup>48</sup>

**Benalla City Press, article on National Soil Conservation Funding for Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group, September 1985**

*Source: Pam Robinson*



WBLPG became the first registered Landcare Group in the Goulburn Broken catchment, in July 1987, and received along with other landholder groups such as Molliyulah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group, grants for community education.<sup>49</sup> At the first Community Landcare Conference at Bendigo, in 1987, Joan Kirner in her opening speech offered unconditional use of the term 'Landcare', which had by then been registered, to the national Minister Peter Cook.<sup>50</sup> These details on the historical record serve to demonstrate the role that the founding members of Warrenbayne Boho played,

in both the development of the Victorian program and also in the expansion of the program to the national level and the growth of the plan for a decade of special effort in soil conservation and land management.

The high level of community energy and achievement made WBLPG an early role model and a source of ideas and advice. At the Group's AGM in August 1986, the Chairman reported on the enormous amount of interest that had already been shown in the activities of the Group by 'a continual stream of visitors from government departments, interested conservationists, other landholder



groups and overseas visitors'.<sup>51</sup> Works carried out for the Group Project area over the previous year included 10k of fencing for tree planting and pasture; planting of 17,500 trees; 30 ha of salt affected land sown to salt tolerant grasses; 70 ha perennial pasture sown on recharge land. A later Group report c.1995 showed that this level of activity has been maintained over the first decade:

- ~ 360+ speaking visits to other groups
- ~ 100+ visits by state/federal politicians, government staff, landholders, research groups
- ~ Members invited to speak on Landcare in Victoria, NSW, SA, WA and New Zealand
- ~ Group members invited on to state and national salinity, soil conservation and Landcare advisory bodies
- ~ First group in Victoria to initiate farm forestry in Landcare [supported by MDBC]
- ~ Produced a corridors plan, a rivers & streams management plan and a detailed local geographic information system
- ~ Developed a rural/urban development program with philanthropic funding

A WBLPG member's comments in a 1988 video are an indication of the level of group activity: 'I was fairly shy, personally, it was pretty scary, you had up to 100 people coming to sites. It was nerve wracking to explain it to them. I feel more confident now – now I like to learn new ideas and I watch what others are doing'.<sup>52</sup> Throughout the early 1990s WBLPG continued with a significant on-ground works program including weed and pest control, revegetation and creation of

habitat corridors and for its efforts and high levels of achievement received a range of awards and acknowledgement. These included ABC National Tree Care Awards, a Planning Achievement Certificate from the Town and Country Planning Association, an inaugural Banksia Award for environmental achievement and recognition from the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee for its school camps program.<sup>53</sup> In 1993 the Group celebrated its first 10 years of Landcare action by, 'filling three mini buses and inspecting current project commercial forest plantation sites and past achievements which have led to dramatic changes in the landscape'.<sup>54</sup>

In 1999 a draft Local Area Plan for Warrenbayne Boho was completed which aimed to develop a vision for the area across the next 10 – 20 years. The priority issues addressed in order of importance included – community viability, salinity, and economic sustainability. The Plan listed the following actions as critical to the areas long term environmental sustainability:

- ~ Diversifying forms of income via tourism and alternative local products [incl. a legal market for kangaroo meat]
- ~ Moving to a 50% tree cover for the area [esp. recharge areas]
- ~ Improving soil pH and pasture
- ~ Fencing most waterways to manage stock access and remove woody weeds
- ~ Total eradication of foxes, feral cats and rabbits over a 20 year period

The report developed over consultation meetings with landholders and LPG members at the end of the decade of Landcare, concluded that farm and community viability was currently weak due to very low

commodity prices, rising costs and an aging community. Low levels of disposable income now limited the capacity of the community to continue the level of participation and contribution of earlier years.<sup>55</sup>

The following year a Local Area Plan for the Mid Broken Area that encompassed Warrenbayne-Boho, Molliyulah Tatong, Swanpool and Samaria was drafted, it noted that over the previous fifteen years these communities had 'put a major investment into ... restoring the landscape of the district ... which in some areas had transformed the landscape and gone a long way towards reducing salinity and restoring the habitat of

threatened bird species such as the Regent Honeyeater and the Grey Crowned Babbler.' Considerable effort had been invested in the management of riparian zones and stream frontages badly damaged in the 1993 flood. This plan also commented on the threats to farming and community viability and thus the continued potential for the community voluntary action to match the natural resource management task ahead.

In 2005 Debbie Hill, a member of Warrenbayne Boho LPG since 1983, was the recipient of a 'Long Service Award' by the Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee. Debbie is representative of a number of

farmers in the group who like herself have played an integral role in the development of the group and its projects over more than twenty years. The citation highlighted her work in 'the rehabilitation and enhancement of the local environment through the planting thousands of trees on the family property and supporting Group planting projects, by personally driving the project to implement biological control of Paterson's Curse, playing a very active role in Waterwatch and the Threatened Species Project.' The promise of long term action, from the earliest days of the group's formation, evident in the following comments of group members from a 1988

video, has been sustained. 'The group has been a great encouragement to go further' ... .. 'I think the group has accelerated with the all work done together'... .. 'I got involved in the group and its been very exciting and rewarding; great to just see trees growing again and the pasture improving and neighbours watching' ... ..'We could see something had to be done the country was deteriorating and stock were declining, when this National Soil Conservation Program came, we really got going' ... .. 'I didn't have a great deal of faith in it, but farmers have this last 3-4 years come into it magnificently'.<sup>56</sup>





### **A parallel story: Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group Scheme**

**W**hiteheads Creek Catchment Group [WCCG] was another early Landcare group that had its origins in cooperative projects, first with the SCA in the 1970s and then with the Mid-Goulburn River Management Board in 1986. The Group was registered as a Landcare Group in June 1987 [WCLCG]. The catchment of 110sq km of cleared pasture is in the Shire of Seymour to the east of the township, and contributes water to the Goulburn Broken irrigation areas to the north. The original Whiteheads Creek Group Conservation Area [GCA] comprising some 27 landholders in the discrete catchment of Whiteheads Creek, was formed with the assistance of Greg Sheehan from the SCA Broadford office in 1977. The project was commenced after severe floods in the Seymour area in 1973/74, with the aim of improving pasture on bare slopes to slow run-off and general erosion control to protect the township of Seymour from further flood events.

The Whiteheads Creek catchment has a ring of steep rocky hills rising 200-300m, covered with shallow, rocky, iron stone soils. Thunder storms in the higher slopes frequently caused the creek to overflow its banks even in the summer period. The GCA project planted 10,000 trees over a three year period and 30ha of recharge zones [12% of the area] were planted to phalaris and cocksfoot under the guidance of the SCA. Over 100+ha of lucerne were sown in the flatter country. Considerable work was undertaken in the first few years, but over time the level of activity dropped due to lack of funds and diminishing support from the SCA.<sup>57</sup>

The Mid-Goulburn River Management Board project was documented by Miriam Wallis in an article written for the conservation journal *Trees and Natural Resources* in 1987:

Hubert Miller, Chairman of the Mid-Goulburn River Management Board together with Jock Wallis, who besides being a member of the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Committee was involved in the 1977 Group Conservation Area Scheme, started to talk to landowners in the Whiteheads Creek area and to Bruce Radford from CF&L's Broadford office – also a member of Catchment Coordinating Group and involved in the 1977 scheme. The decision was thus made to reactivate the landowner group. There was still some work from the 1977 scheme in the pipeline, for which money was becoming available, in addition to the \$25,000 grant to the River Management Board to fund an integrated land and waterway project in the Whiteheads Creek catchment.<sup>58</sup>

Whiteheads Creek had been chosen for the project as it was a relatively small area with the full range of land degradation problems creating significant impacts for the local community. It was also important that there had been a GCA Scheme and active landholders in the area. An aspect of the project which proved disappointing to the community was that the funds, provided by the Rural Water Commission, were restricted, literally, to stream management. Landowners with their prior experience recognised that the problems in stream, erosion and flood management started on the catchments hill-slopes. At the end of 1986 the Victorian Government Cabinet Task Force on Salinity advertised assistance available to community

groups to tackle salinity problems. Jock Wallis prepared a submission and was successful, receiving \$3,700 for calendar year 1987, to spend on pasture improvement, fencing and tree planting in the hill country.

The landholder group met in February 1987 and heard Nan Oates outline the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Groups Strategy Plan, and John Tilleard present a preliminary stream works schedule for the Integrated Catchment Project. After attending a Salinity Pilot Project Advisory Committee [SPPAC] workshop on salinity, Jock and Miriam Wallis decided to call another meeting very quickly and to include everyone in the area, no matter how small their holding [until this point only major landholders had been involved]. The CFA membership list was used for mailing, with the result that a gratifyingly large number of people turned up to the meeting. An immediate decision was made to formally constitute the Group and office bearers were elected at the next meeting in May; by June, Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group became an accredited Landcare Group - a community action, self initiating group, independent of government, where members were active participants.

The Group rapidly found itself involved in wider community issues including education for school students in salting and gullyng problems in the catchment. Miriam concluded her article with the comments:

Much credit must go to Hubert and Jack as the influencers and legitimisers. It is vital that we have the right mix of strong leadership and member participation ... we have come a long way in getting organized in only six months, the hard work is to come and real achievements



will take a long time. We have been fortunate in getting funding. Let us hope that government concern about the greatest environmental problem this country faces is reflected in the budget.<sup>59</sup>

In a story familiar to most active Landcare Groups, a postscript to this article, noted that the wettest July for many years had held up planting of the 2000 trees purchased by the Group, with vehicles being bogged and the ground too soggy to hold posts for fencing. 'It has been a battle to get most of the works completed before shearing'!

The major land management problems in the catchment have all been tackled over time. Soil erosion was the first focus for the

group, as much of the catchment consists of steep hills, very susceptible to tunnel, gully and sheet erosion resulting in severe silting problems in the area and downstream into the Goulburn River. Dryland salting was the second focus for the group with awareness raised by the Salinity Project in the Goulburn Region in the late 1980s. Soils within the catchment are mostly of marine origin and there are high groundwater salinity levels. Widespread clearing has resulted in rising watertables contributing high salt loads to the Goulburn and downstream to the Murray. Loss of biodiversity is the longer term problem being tackled by the group through extensive corridor and hillside tree planting and low density native revegetation.

In a speech at a River Management function, at Trawool, March 1989, Jock Wallis, President of Whiteheads Creek, made a number of points. He noted that demographic change had shaped the community over a number of decades, 'many years ago there were some 70 children attending the school and a short time later the area supported a cricket team, but as the years passed so did the inhabitants, the school, the public hall and the church'.<sup>60</sup> After the demise of the early GCA scheme, the Fire Brigade remained for a time the only organisation which brought the community together. However with the formation of the Landcare Group in 1987 this began to change again and Jock noted that new entrants to the area were contributing a new sense of community. 'The Landcare Group was formed with some 20 commercial farming properties ... in the catchment in the Highlands and Hughes Creek catchment and further to this there are twenty, 40 acre blockers ... some of whom are keen members and good planters of trees'.<sup>61</sup>

Across a period of thirty-five years Whiteheads Creek has received flood prevention funding from the Whitlam government after the 1972 Seymour flood, formed a GCA group in 1977 in conjunction with the SCA, then with River Management Board funding became the Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group in 1986, and finally an accredited Landcare Group in 1987. The Group has undertaken extensive tree planting over the twenty years of its existence as a Landcare group, significant erosion control works, salinity management and education. Whiteheads Creek with its plains area and hills area has constituted a small model catchment and a number of pilot programs and research studies have been undertaken in the area. The history of

Whiteheads Creek is testimony to the value of integrating natural resource management in a defined geography and the contribution which can be made by an engaged community.

At the moment there are few works on the ground due to the drought and the group is perceived to be in a particular phase 'not working as well as it has done – the group was a pathfinder in Victoria – it has had to maintain interest over a long period – a few stalwarts are keeping the flame alive'.<sup>62</sup> For many Landcare groups, like Whiteheads

Creek that have been active over such long periods, there are stages in group life cycle when it is hard to sustain peak levels of involvement. A stage when a perception grows that 'you might have done it all ... there's no commitment yet to new ideas ... the bigger picture needs to be revived ... people are just surviving'.<sup>63</sup> Recent conditions have also militated against pursuing environmental works for all Landcare groups. People have been somewhat preoccupied during the drought and the severe fire season of December 2006 and January/February 2007.

The history of local community action provides a ground level view of government policy and program responses to land degradation over a number of decades. Whiteheads Creek's history also depicts the shifts in agricultural production and demographic changes. As is often the case, the local school has been closed as the local families changed over a generation, and population numbers decreased. The area is now less 'rural' and more 'town' focused. The number of commercial farmers has diminished and the production basis to environmental improvement is no longer the sole driver for the catchment.

There's been a lot of population change here – just next door to us two 200ha farms were subdivided into 40 acre blocks. In latter years these people have been the backbone of the Landcare Group here. They have taken offices. The original farmers have gotten older, done their stint, have been enthusiastic and worked hard for many years; these people have taken up the cause and done the same. They've been invaluable members of the Landcare movement.<sup>64</sup>



**Historic plaque erected by Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group evidence of the important social dimension to Group activity**

**Source: Whiteheads Creek Landcare Group records**

## Milestones, Memories and Messages

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Reflecting on the Group's achievements over two decades and more, Jock Wallis emphasized the fundamental importance of the social capital that has been created by these processes and the need to preserve the intangible connections and sense of identity derived from place and community. Planning

for the twenty year celebrations this year the WCLCG Secretary, Lesley Dalziel commented, 'We're going to try and have a fun night – we can't do anything on the ground at the moment – we'll have music and fun to recapture that community feeling - I watch for that on the radar'.<sup>65</sup> In 2005 Lesley was

awarded the Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee's, Hubert Miller Perpetual Trophy for her work as a committed conservationist and long time contributor to the Landcare group. Lesley was a representative of local Landcare and environmental concerns on the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating

Group and worked on the development of the Strategy for the Mid Goulburn Catchment. She has also been a significant driving force in the project to establish a heritage reserve - Light Horse Memorial Park in Seymour.



### An irrigation region Landcare story - Girgarre Stanhope

**G**irgarre Stanhope Landcare Group [GSLCG Originally Land Protection Group], commenced as a Salinity Study Project, and was the first Landcare Group established in the irrigation area. Like other early groups, such as Undera Landcare Group, Harston and North West Mooroopna Land Management Groups, it was formed in the late 1980s. All started with multiple, major community concerns about rising water tables, salinity, lack of surface drainage and scarcity of tree cover. The group was part of a number of the early studies run by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Salinity Program Advisory Council [SPAC] on which the salinity strategies were based and lead to the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan [SIRLWSMP]. The high level of community involvement in this process across both the irrigated areas and dryland areas of the catchment had influenced the Cabinet Taskforce in their selection of the Goulburn region for implementation of the Salinity Pilot Project. Most of the early groups were designated Land Management or Land Protection Groups as the term Landcare was seen as too 'green' for 'active farmers'.<sup>66</sup>

The extension activities of the SCA had come to an end and after the early salinity and drainage studies were completed and a number of local groups lost some of their early focus and energy. Drainage was the early high priority, but only a few areas went from Drainage Groups to Landcare groups. Ken Sampson of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority commented:

It was a pretty important step to do that 'rebadging' at that time. There are



## Milestones, Memories and Messages

not many times that new resources come to an area. With Joan Kirner's involvement and the retargeting process, quite a lot of new dollars came to the area and generated a lot of community involvement. For the first time there was a lot of regional involvement in setting funding directions. The salinity Bureau broke down the traditional departmental funding scenarios.<sup>67</sup>

Foundation membership of the Girgarre Stanhope group was mainly irrigated dairy farmers who came together to get expert advice in the management of salinity problems and to coordinate efforts to gain funding for projects. A major salinity control experiment was implemented in the Girgarre Stanhope district over an area of 1000 hectares, using groundwater pumps and an evaporative basin. Over the life of the project groundwater levels were reported to have dropped an average of 30cm. A grant was approved for a project to revegetate the area that is the present day Girgarre Evaporation Basin and approximately 70,000 trees were distributed. Despite some early opposition to the location of the basin, the site became noted for the forest which surrounds the 'dam' creating an attractive feature in the local landscape.<sup>68</sup> The site was regularly used to demonstrate the use of groundwater pumps in the control of salinity and as a location for education workshops for local and visiting school groups studying wildlife, soils, farm forestry, land management and water quality.

In 1994 coordinators were appointed under the National Landcare Program for a period of three years, to assist Girgarre Stanhope and Undera Landcare Groups respectively. The role of the coordinators was to extend existing projects and provide assistance to groups

to tackle problems on a larger scale through field days, and seminars relating to irrigation, farm planning, tree growing, chemical usage and farm financial management. At this time Girgarre Stanhope LCG was working on the development of an improved system for low flow groundwater pumps, specifically tailored to their low yielding saline aquifers.<sup>69</sup>

With additional resources, activities undertaken by the group included encouraging district farmers to develop whole farm plans, undertake laser grading, install ground water pumps and do further revegetation work.

Projects across two decades have included:

- ~ Revegetation of the disused railway line from Girgarre to Rushworth to create a green corridor
- ~ Development of a 7ha demonstration site for laser grading, deep rooted lucerne and tree planting
- ~ Construction and maintenance of an 8k community drain – 1990
- ~ Electromagnetic survey in 1993 for the installation of a public groundwater pump
- ~ Employment of a part-time Coordinator 1993-1995

- ~ Bi-monthly newsletter to 325 households [current]
- ~ Brochure outlining Group objectives and projects
- ~ Flights over district to highlight land degradation
- ~ LEAP fencing, tree planting and educational projects
- ~ Construction of information shelter at the Evaporation Basin
- ~ Environment and salinity projects in SIR primary schools<sup>70</sup>



Currently the group is focusing on the development of a Local Area Plan and the conduct of a bird survey to develop indicators of local environmental health. As for many early groups a critical goal at the moment is the maintenance of momentum. The treasurer of the Group Craig Tuhon commented that Girgarre Stanhope is now in a survival phase:

Most of the farmers have now moved – to bigger farms, different careers, some have retired, drought has affected some – a number are not working dairy farms anymore. There are fewer resources available to do ‘works’ at this stage. Things have changed there’s a new

demographic – we have a number of ‘horse properties’ and share farmers. They have a different attitude.<sup>71</sup>

The group has not met over the last year, as both president and secretary are dairy farmers dealing with drought. The newsletter is however still distributed to 250 mailboxes to keep people abreast of useful information. It is generally the practice that individual farmers will access environmental incentive grants for laser grading and tree planting on an individual basis – these are not dependent on group mediation. Most people who attend LCG meetings are an older generation, who have handed farms to sons to manage. ‘The

new generation of farmers is much busier than when dairying was operated on a family farm model. They are now milking 400/500+ cows and have invested heavily in large machinery. There is a “Get Big or Get Out’ mentality’.<sup>72</sup>

North-West Mooroopna Land Management Group [NWMLMG] and Undera Landcare Group [ULCG] were formed 1987 and 1988 respectively. Like most groups in the irrigation area they were interested in rising watertables and water quality monitoring; the main drivers being lack of surface drainage and salinity. These groups consisted largely of dairy farmers, some beef and orchards. NW Mooroopna has had a major program of

monitoring watertable wells, 100+ have been established and over the life of the group main arterial drains and five community drains have been installed and 100,000 trees have been planted [mainly revegetation of community drains]. The group encourages landowners to redesign on-farm irrigation and drainage systems and to install re-use systems to keep nutrients on properties. Tom Dumaresq a member of the group has received many awards for his Landcare work – the Charles Jones award in 1992, the State Tree Farmer award in 1993 and most recently the Victorian Sustainable Farming Award at the 2007 Victorian Landcare Awards.<sup>73</sup>





### Janet Hagen...

... is possibly the longest serving Landcare Coordinator in the catchment starting with Hughes Creek in 1994. Janet is a landholder farming cattle; she and her husband a teacher at the Ruffy Primary School bought a property in the area in 1983. Work as a "Coordinator" was initially only 5 hours a week liaising with property owners on rabbit control work, it grew over a couple of years to 15 hours. 'The job has grown around me'. The Group consists of a number of community action groups which later became Landcare Groups. 'There were a lot of things going on before Landcare was invented'. Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative combines 4 Groups – Whiteheads Creek, Upper Hughes Creek, Hughes Creek and Highlands covering the lower reaches of the Hughes Creek Catchment from Tarcombe, Bungle Boori through to the Hume Highway at Avenel. 'In earlier days before 1994 when the CMA split the catchment it also included Creighton's Creek, Nagambie and Burnt Creek'.

A Strategy for the area was developed in 1995 and reviewed in 2002 with the development of a Local Area Plan. The Network's priorities changed from agro forestry and rabbit control to pasture improvement. 'Early on ripping was critical for rabbits – we have gone from backwoods, rabbit infested, bracken covered battler's country, to desirable prime real estate'! Weed control through community cooperation was

the first priority, with rabbits and revegetation and soil and water health. Unlike most Landcare groups Hughes Creek doesn't operate on a membership system; all landholders in the area are automatically eligible for grants and the hire of equipment.

At the time the Group Strategy was developed, Janet was employed by the Hughes Creek Executive as the Landcare Coordinator, with the position funded for 3 days per week. The Local Area Plan became the Coordinator's 'work plan'. After a recent review, managing biodiversity has become the highest priority – the area has wetlands with the largest sub-alpine sphagnum bogs in Victoria and the habitat of the endangered Macquarie Perch – and Whole Farm Planning is being promoted. 'Hughes Creek has always been very goal focussed because of the strategy – it took a lot of work. We got funds through philanthropic Trusts as well as government'. 'We took responsibility for roadside weeds – we used to have working bees – later we got members to mark areas and employed a contractor'. Janet perceives her role as 'shielding the members from all the changes and irrelevant, confusing information. There can be too many demands on Groups – obligations and expectations are much greater than before'.

A new issue for the Coordinator is that funding for on ground works has declined, with no funding in the current financial year. 'We have raised the awareness and the interest. People are doing Whole Farm Plans while Links Officers are sitting around twiddling their thumbs'!

The rural community in the area has changed over the 14 years Janet has been in the position and the Group now focuses more broadly. 'It used to be all men's activities – killing rabbits and weeds – now a lot of women are involved and we are working on preserving the biodiversity of the district'. Janet commented: 'For a long time Landcare was a marginal community group – now after twenty years we are more acceptable, safer. People have actually put signs on their gates, they didn't want to earlier on'. 'My ideal for the future would be to have a "Community House" - Landcare has never had a 'home' – a base where you could keep records and equipment'.



### Busting the rabbit plague – district-wide Landcare

Eradication of rabbits was one of the chief instigators of a number of Landcare Groups in the early 1990s and even earlier. The competition for pasture and significant erosion caused in some areas constitutes a ‘Landcare story’ in its own right. Rabbits were first released at Barwon Park in 1851 by Thomas Austin and spread across Australia at approximately 130k per year. There is evidence that some farms were abandoned because of rabbits as early as 1881 and legislation was introduced to eradicate the pest. By 1926 there were an estimated 10 billion rabbits in Australia and in 1944 104 million rabbit skins were exported.

A few early groups targeting rabbits in the late 1980s and later participating in the Rabbit Buster initiative of the state government in the mid 1990s, could be categorized as single issue focused, though none of these could be described as ‘paddock’ focused. Even at the earliest stages of community action on rabbits the project scope was district and landscape. Rabbits had become a staple part of rural life, often being the basis for extra food and income, from the 1920s and 1930s right through to the 1990s.

I remember my Dad telling me stories, of how during their lunch hour at school the kids would form a line and chase rabbits into a corner of a paddock and hit them on the head with sticks. That would have been in the 1920s and 1930s.

Rabbits were the main thing. We were shooting up to 300-400 a night at that time. We’d go out with a box of 500 and come home when they ran out.

The biggest achievement was the great drop in rabbit numbers once we started dozing and ripping the warrens – some people were very wary, but eventually it drew people out and integrated city and country mentality a bit.<sup>74</sup>

The era is also recalled in a history of the Merton area compiled as a tenth anniversary project by Merton Landcare Group:

The annual rabbit drive brought everyone out, no guns allowed – men, women and children would shout, holler, bang tins, and generally make a huge racket to drive the teeming bunnies to the netted

enclosure, then send the dogs in to the surrounding burrows to pick up the stragglers. Mr. Arthur Harris, the rabbit buyer, came over from Euroa to collect the catch and hand over a substantial amount of cash for the school funds.<sup>75</sup>

Fred King an early member of Dookie Land Management Group recalled:

From the family point of view rabbits were an issue for generations. It was a whole way of life people had forgotten what it was like before the “rabbit”. Right from my childhood Dad was always out, poisoning rabbits, ripping rabbits, rabbit fencing.

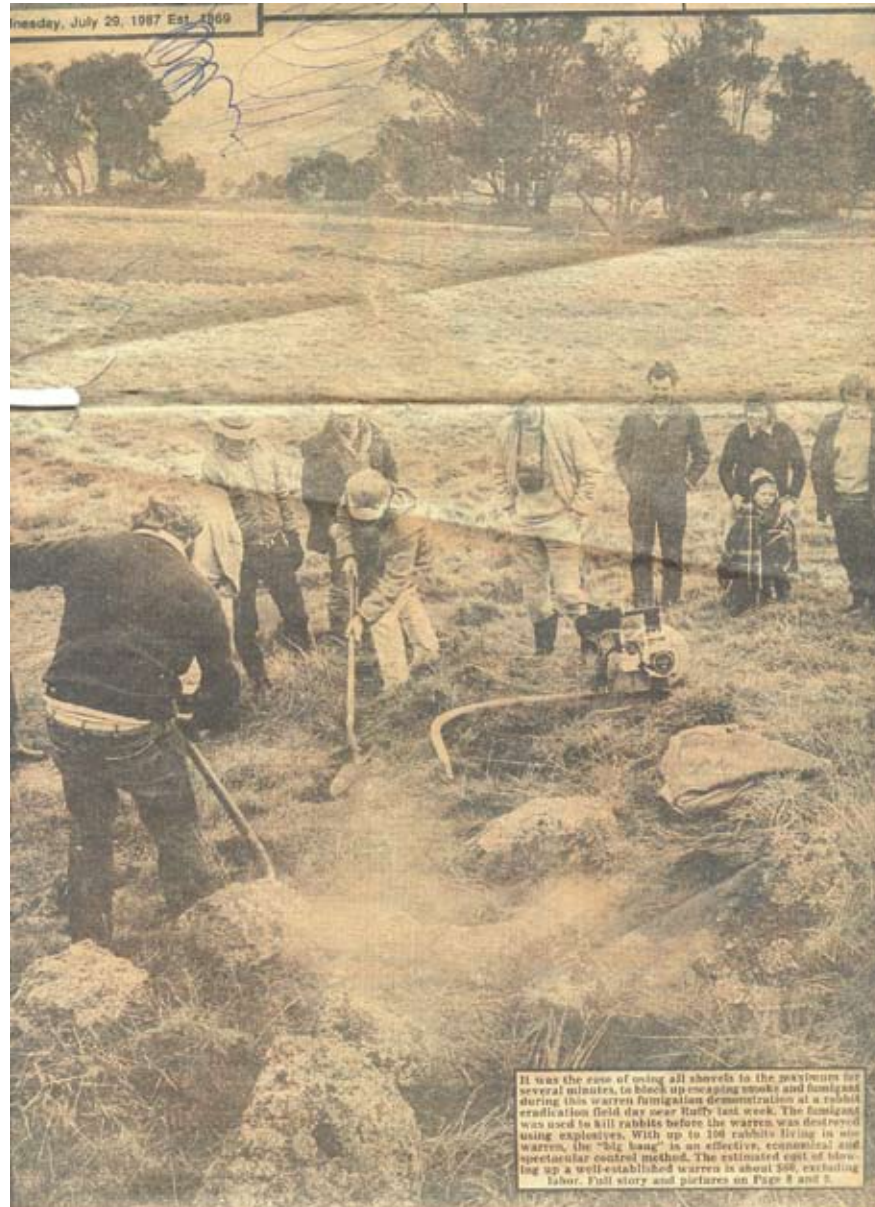
It was something you did – you always had a rifle in the back of the Ute. You could make a bit of pocket money as a kid. The father used to tell me about the rabbit drives when he was a kid in the thirties. He’d show us where they used to drive hundreds of rabbits into a corner. To put in a proper rabbit fence for a lot of people, rabbit netting, was almost prohibitive.<sup>76</sup>

Several groups developed campaigns of rabbit eradication which predate Landcare. Examples include Burnt Creek and Ruffy-Terip Rabbit Action which operated with the assistance of CF&L and the CSIRO. In seriously



affected areas like the Strathbogie Ranges community action to manage the rabbit plague was common. A 1987 newspaper item reported that after an 18 month delay, due to RSPCA concerns, a long planned field day demonstrating [along with other eradication methods] the use of explosives on rabbit warrens was held in Ruffy. John O'Connor, property owner, said he had resorted to explosives because, 'the terrain makes it impossible to seal burrows for effective fumigation. We'd fumigate and a few days later the warren would be re-opened by rabbits. It's important to keep right on top of rabbits to keep them under control'. The report concluded: 'With that sort of concerted action repeated throughout the rabbit control area, landholders and CF&L hope rabbits can be practically eliminated from the entire area'.<sup>77</sup>

Between 1952 and 1954 CSIR research resulted in the release of the myxomatosis virus and initially 99.8% of rabbits were killed. Resistance to the virus developed over four decades and by 1990 Australia's rabbit population had reached 600 million. In 1996 Rabbit Calicivirus Disease [RCD] was released and once again reduced the population by more than 50%. Across the same time the Rabbit Buster program, a coordinated Landcare/NRE rabbit control program reduced rabbits by a further 30% from 1996 -2003 and has seen some areas aiming to become rabbit free.<sup>78</sup>



Newspaper report of a field day held at John O'Connor's Ruffy property, Avondale - demonstrating rabbit eradication methods, Weekly Times, July 29, 1987 P. 9

Source: Janet Hagen, Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative



### **Dookie Land Management Group...**

... was established in 1987. Dookie township is in the centre of the group area, which had been a Soil Conservation Authority district in the years leading up to the landcare program. Support for soil conservation in the district has a long history. A report: *Soil, Land Use and Erosion Survey Dookie, Victoria* was published by CSIRO in 1949 and

carried out by R. G. Downes who would later head up the SCA. Many SCA structures such as waterways, gully batters and banks were erected to deal with the extensive soil erosion endemic in the area for decades. The region consists of rocky hills, cleared in the nineteenth century and riverine plains. During very wet seasons the bare hills allowed excessive run-off causing sheet erosion. They also acted as recharge areas for groundwater which appeared as soaks and discharge, often saline, many kilometres away. Clearing had been followed by several fires and a rabbit population so great that any regrowth was destroyed. The landcare area is in the vicinity of Dookie Agricultural College between Benalla and Shepparton. The group formed in the early years around concerns about salinity. Fred King an early President of the group commented: 'With the high recharge area from the hills there was a very direct cause and effect. It meant salt popping up in the best red soil cropping areas – wet patches in the middle of paddocks'. The Land Protection Incentive Scheme [LPIS] grants available at that time, were attractive to farmers as they assisted with improved cropping techniques, pasture management, water use efficiency and erosion control measures.

With recognition of the problem of salinity, membership of the group grew. Test bores had been originally established by CF&L in the early 1980s and regular monitoring measured the depth of the watertable and salinity levels in the ground water were tested. Salinity grants became available through the Goulburn region Salinity Pilot Project. The landcare group became increasingly interested in deep rooted pastures such as lupins which lower the water table and provide a viable cash crop. In some areas the seepage of water was clearly evident, 'where test wells had been put in you sometimes had stand pipes with water running out of them'. Dookie Agricultural College

became a great resource for the group. Fred King recalled, 'A lot of research went into the area, there was mountains of science and a lot of student projects. It meant all sorts of add-ons; a lot of mutual benefit'. The very direct and obvious relationship between the recharge areas and presence of underground water coming to the surface made for very effective field trips and demonstration areas for CF&L and DARA. The area is one of the best cropping areas in the state, with farms in the main, held for three or more generations. 'There was a real link between the past and the present – the old cockies were terrific mentoring blokes'.

In 1991 the National Soil Conservation Program funded [NSCP] a coordinator, Justin Sheed, who was appointed for three years, a highpoint for the group. For the office holders who had been doing an enormous amount on a voluntary basis, this brought a very welcome professionalism and ongoing attention to project maintenance. An important role played by the coordinator, as is the case with most groups, was the capacity to access additional funding. The objective at this stage, in parallel with many groups across the Benalla region, was to 'merge the productivity and salinity management – merge efficiency and yield - with conservation. This was the big push from the Department'. Typical onground projects included, direct tree seeding, break of slope planting, vegetation corridors. An early longer term project was the revegetation of the old Dookie-Katamatite rail line. After months of unsatisfactory negotiation with government departments, 'we just went ahead and did it. We covered about a ten kilometre stretch in those days'.

Fred King recalled that a number of landcare members were seen as 'keen tree men – the hill-toppers'. The bare, rocky, Dookie Hills were well known to locals as a source of many problems. The research and geological study had been done; the work of the SCA had resulted in manuals used extensively by many farmers and government agencies. Planting of hilltops and along 'break of slope' lines was pursued as it was believed to significantly reduce recharge. Direct seeding machines were seen as less labour intensive and more effective over larger areas. 'That was the theory. In some kind years rainfall-wise that worked, but it could be a bit hit and miss'. Great interest was also shown during the 1990s in Whole Farm Planning, and aerial photographs of individual properties were made

available to landholders to assist with planning fencing, wind breaks and pasture layout on the contours. Fencing of areas of remnant vegetation was also undertaken and a seed bank was established at the Agricultural College.

As the district was a renowned, high quality hay exporter, weeds have always been very important for farmers and thus the land management group. Lucerne planting was popular, this very strong production background meant weeds endangered profitability. In recent years a program to formalise this work has been established – Weeds Managed Properties- and farmers can be accredited after inspection, enabling them to charge a premium price for their hay. In the mid 1990s a network of landcare groups from Mansfield to Devenish and Warrenbayne created the Broken Catchment Network and another coordinator was appointed in 1996 funded by DNRE. Projects undertaken by the Network were TO55 – research into salt loads and groundwater. 'There was a lot of emphasis on trees and promoting lucerne and by that time viticulture had begun to be developed based on useable ground water'. The network operated initially under the auspice of the CaLP Board and was eventually superseded after the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority took up its charter in 1997. In April of that year Gerard McKinley was a DLMG representative on an inaugural landcare exchange program with Alberta, Canada. He commented on the initiative to implement landcare in Canada: 'There is a general recognition of most of the same problems and Canada has a great potential for community groups to tackle them as they have done here in Victoria'.

The DLMG is a group with a long history and was very active in its first ten years, especially during the time a coordinator worked with the group. Like most groups it has experienced cycles of high and low activity. 'A 4-5 year cycle for a committee is pretty average – people burn out'. The group has recently been reactivated and a new executive group was created at the beginning of 2007. Funding has been received to take up the rail-trail project again and snail control in regional grain silos is being assessed. A recent project which reflects the earlier aim of the group to combine productivity with conservation is the Auto Steer tower that has been erected locally to assist farmers through GPS, with accurate sowing for improved pasture management.

**The first years of the “Decade of Landcare”**

The first few years of the ‘Decade’ witnessed an explosion in landcare group formation. A total of forty-six new groups were formalised in the Goulburn Broken catchment across a five year period; approximating eight per year. The combination of the promotion and funding and readiness of local communities to participate in the ‘Landcare ethic’ was the basis for a phenomenal

community, lay level, response to issues of land degradation.

Among the groups formed in the 1990s some communities actively pursued the social capital opportunity which ‘Landcare’ presented. The community development strategies that had flourished in the 1970s and 1980s in education and health and which had worked their way through to a conscious component of ‘community’ land management, were now being adopted as a means of

recreating community for its own sake. Many groups were forming in localities that had successively lost local schools, bush nursing hospitals, police stations, in the rationalization of government services of the 1980s.

In addition to this exponential group level growth, the first Landcare Networks were developed in the first half of the 1990s – Granite Creeks, Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative and Goulburn Murray Landcare Network. The objectives were provision

of coordinated support for local groups, providing a unified voice to influence planning at a regional level and sharing ideas and information. Networks began to be funded as a cost-effective means of devolving program support and developing a more ‘professional’ approach to services and administration than the capabilities, resources and interests of local groups permitted. This phase of development and the maturing of Landcare are examined in Section 4.0.



### A 1990s story - Merton Land Management/Landcare Group

Discussions to establish the Merton Land Management Group [MLMG] – the name changed to Merton Landcare Inc in 1996, were catalysed in 1991 by concerns from Department of Natural Resources and Environment [DNRE] about salt levels in the Merton Creek. At the time there were funds available under the Goulburn Broken Salinity Pilot Project. Salt patches in the area

had been mapped since 1956 and the more recent Saltwatch program had reestablished a monitoring program. One particular site shows pressure in the ground water that is actually more than a metre above the surface of the soil. Comparisons with the base data recorded in 1956 shows that the area has remained almost exactly the same. The salinity in the area is believed to derive from the geology of the area and is not due to clearing.<sup>79</sup> Ailsa Fox a

Landcare member remembered:

An area down near the highway, beside the site of the old Brankeet West School, was at that time quite bare with salt visible. Over the years as the paddock has been sown down ... .. to perennial pasture, the patch has eventually grown over. Some of the highest salt readings for the district come from the gully that supplies the seasonal creek behind our old house.<sup>80</sup>

The area is located on the Maroondah Highway about halfway between Yea and Mansfield in the upper region of the Goulburn catchment. The history of land management in the Merton catchment shows that like other groups, the area had been a Soil Conservation Authority study area and was extensively mapped over a three year period. A Group Conservation Area [GCA] had been formed in the 1970s. Mapping had identified problem sites, as well as proposed works for erosion





to share and understand the joys, trials and customs of those who worked so hard to establish this supportive farming community. We also have a need to understand the present changes and the directions in which they are leading us.<sup>83</sup>

Highlights of the early years of the group were the development of a Group Charter that outlined the 'mission' which notably included an emphasis on social events, effective communication, as well as 'whole farm planning' and environment works. One of the first things planned was a bus tour of the area, taking in the erosion sites and the barest hilltops, to look at problems and

discuss what could be achieved. In 1994 this was extended and funding was sourced for a 'Flyover Day' allowing groups of members fifteen minute flights to view catchment problems. In the same year an Oral History project was commenced to capture the stories of local people and things that had shaped the past development of the area. Over the next few years as well as the standard range of Landcare projects – tree planting, fencing, hill top planting, erosion works, weed spraying – Merton developed a Railway Walk on disused land and later a Cemetery Walk. Bev Day set up a nursery at the local school and later at Alexandra as an Aged Home activities project, initially doing her own propagating, though

watering and maintenance later became an obstacle.<sup>84</sup>

Merton today has a membership of 35+ families, Bev, the current President commented: 'You still don't get people to events – you really need to ring around. Groups are very generationally based. They've just started up a new Landcare Group at Bonnie Doon – there's younger people there'. Like many other groups across the catchment, Merton has seen noticeable population change. 'There are more weekenders now. They join the Landcare group because they want to "join" the community and we are a source of information and assistance'.<sup>85</sup>

In 2001 Merton commenced a Local Area Planning process – a draft plan was developed – which is now in the process of being updated. The group is concerned to develop a format for cataloguing and referencing the wide range of documents, maps, reports and other materials which have been collected over the group's life. One technique has been the purchase of a GPS instrument to mark accurately where photos had been taken and record updated images of the same sites ten years on. In a comment that would be familiar to many Landcare groups, Bev remarked: 'We've got filing cabinets full of records, but no-one can access them, or knows what is there, or where it is!' There are now several initiatives to convert some of these records to digital form to preserve a record and to facilitate accessibility. A DVD developed as part of this project won Merton LCG an award at the 2007 Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee Award night.

Merton has been very innovative and invested a great deal of effort in the communications area and the development of a local landholder data base, that despite facing some privacy problems, has been of great utility for all group projects. An oral history compilation tape, based on interviews with early local landholders, was created with assistance from Mansfield Library, *Listening to Merton – Images of Change in a Rural Landscape*. In recognition of the imagination, hard work and commitment to better land management that is now visible in the area, key Merton members have been nominated for Landcare awards across a number of years – these included, John Fraser who received the UGIC Award for Excellence [2007], Bev Day [2001 & 2005] and Ruth Solly [2002].





### Bev Day...

... has been President of Merton Landcare since 2006, after serving as secretary from 1994 to 2002. She followed a good friend Ruth Solly who had carried out the role from 1999 to 2002. Merton Land Management Group held its inaugural meeting 25th of February 1992 and start

up funding was sourced through Project Mansfield. The name changed to Merton Landcare Inc in 1996.

Discussions to establish the Merton Land Management Group started in 1991 based on concerns about salt levels in the Merton Creek. Salt patches in the area had been mapped since 1956. At the time there were funds available under the Goulburn Broken Salinity Pilot Project. However for the Merton Group extensive local erosion was their top priority and tree planting on the bare hillsides. Funding for fencing was obtained initially and later a full tree planting program got underway.

Bev and her husband, Brian, had moved to Merton in 1991 where they were farming beef cattle and selling weaners on almost 1000 acres. 'We had lived for some years at Kangaroo Ground, on a hobby-farm, my husband was a plumber; we had a dream that we would move to a real farm in our "retirement"!'. Bev has put a lot of effort into living in the country. 'I've really enjoyed it. I sometimes feel I know the catchment, knowing the local plants and getting involved in trees'. She first joined the Ancona Landcare Group, and later assisted with the formation of Merton Group, taking on the job of sourcing books for a small library, and later plants for projects. As the landcare Group got underway Bev started native plant propagation groups at the local school and Kellock Lodge Hostel in Alexandra where seedling trees were grown for a few years [until lack of an interested activities person finished this project]. Meanwhile, Bev's nursery at her own home was growing and producing 6000 trees per year.

Bev commented that Merton has been very innovative and had concentrated on the communications area – putting out continuous newsletters using a landowner data base for the area as well as their membership listing. The group has learned that, 'unless you plan well and phone around, you don't get people to events'. An early project was a 'Welcome Kit' for new landholders. In 1992 a Bus Tour was organised to look at problem areas – the barest hills and worse erosion. A second Ridge Line Tour, sought out the 'hidden treasures of Merton', to look at the catchment from different angles. In 1994 a very successful 'Fly-Over Day' was held in combination with a Field Day. The Group chartered a plane [at a cost of \$800], which flew successive groups of members over the catchment of Merton Creek. These projects gave a wider group a broader appreciation of the problems and what was being done or planned.

Bev edited the oral history project "Listening to Merton: Images of Change in a Rural Landscape", a compilation tape of twenty interviews with local people, which commenced in cooperation with Mansfield Library. It focused on capturing the history of the district and of the group. A one-day workshop for training in effective oral history methods was conducted by a professional oral historian at the outset.

A more recent project has used recipes as a thread for a book telling the story of the settlement and development of the district. 'We wrote to past residents asking for a recipe, photos and an anecdote'.

In the last few years, like many Landcare Groups, Merton has developed a weed program. Bev noted that, 'weeds have been mapped, mainly gorse and blackberry on a few properties along the creek, fortunately there is very little Paterson's Curse here'. As for most areas, weeds require ongoing management and the group has extended its focus to adjoining Home Creek and Strath Creek, working with the CMA and conducting roadside weed spraying. Climate change has also become a high priority.

After almost two decades of rehabilitation and revegetation projects, Merton has a long history of Landcare work. Bev observed that: 'We've got filing cabinets full of records but no-one can access them or knows what is what'. Her aim is that the group work up a model for better use their records; a 'before and after' data record of the landscape change achieved by the group. To this end the Group has purchased a GPS unit to mark accurately where photos have been taken over a ten year period. The Group is entering a mature phase and reviewing projects and developing ongoing Management Plans to ensure the viability and sustainability of their work of the last sixteen years. Bev stressed: 'It is critical that we can hand on to the next group of members and office bearers and they can understand what has been done and why, pick up and carry on the work'.

Bev observed that Landcare is very generationally based and that groups go through cycles of enthusiasm with younger energy and periods where the energy drops and often membership also, as people move in and out of areas. 'There are more "weekenders" now. They join the Landcare Group to be part of the community and participate'. 'We've had some beaut nights'. The success of Groups has depended very much on the vision and drive of office bearers particularly the lead given by Presidents. 'We've had very good Presidents – each contributed something different – their own strengths, imagination and ideas'. Merton Group has received a number of awards; in 2001 Bev Day was awarded the Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee Award for Excellence, and a Natural Heritage Trust Year of the Volunteer Award.

### The story of Landcare in the 1990s - Shepparton Irrigation Region

In 1990 a survey of Landcare groups in the irrigation area was undertaken – to assess how best to support them and to give them new directions. In the early 1990s Landcare was expanding rapidly across Australia and in Victoria. However development in the irrigated areas of the catchment in those years displayed a different pattern. The main aim of most groups was tackling salinity and rising watertables and only groups that broadened their interests evolved into Landcare groups. Up to 1992 there were still few Landcare groups in the SIR.<sup>86</sup> Ken Sampson, Executive Officer of the SIR Implementation Committee observed: ‘a lot of community groups had drainage as a high priority in their activities - surface drainage at that time was the critical issue - but not too many went from Drainage Groups to Landcare’.<sup>87</sup> The community consultation process which was a key element in the development of the SIR Land and Water Salinity Management Plan had however, revealed the potential to encourage Landcare development, which was also seen as a strategy to ensure ongoing support for the SIRLWSMP.

In 1990 Geoff McFarlane a Conservation Officer with CF&L, was recruited to the position of Community Education Officer with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in Shepparton, bringing with him a great deal of experience of the development of Landcare in the Benalla area. ‘When I went to Shepparton, they wanted to get Landcare going – there weren’t many groups in the area at that time – I realised that community ‘ed’ was critical; you needed to educate people’.<sup>88</sup> Geoff approached existing groups such as

Stanhope Girgarre, Harston and farmers in key areas and talked about some of the approaches taken around Benalla. Groups such as Wyuna and Invergordon were started during this period; others like Undera ‘had been struggling and we got it up and going’. The drivers for these groups were ‘trees and watertables’, many dairy farmers who formed Tree Groups were looking for plants that would withstand salinity and wet conditions. Geoff recalled that at the time he started in the position the watertable well flags were indicating that the watertable had dropped – whereas in fact the flags had become saturated! ‘We put a lot of effort into developing flags that would float. The flags

were designed to develop awareness – red for less than a metre, yellow for 2 metres and green for 3 metres or more. It gave you a visual indication’.<sup>89</sup> Ultimately 1400 test wells were installed and a few hundred “awareness metres”. Geoff started the Watertable Watch Group which became a big program compiling data to provide maps for all groups.

Discussion with groups and agency staff generated a submission to the National Landcare Program [NLP] and in 1993 a project titled Facilitation and Development of Community Groups – Shepparton, designed to operate over three years, received \$150,000 in funding which was matched by the Victorian government [expenditure over 1994 -1997

totalled approximately half a million dollars].<sup>90</sup> Geoff McFarlane was the Project Leader and a Project Officer – Julia Carpenter was employed for the three years of the project. The ambitious objectives of which were:

- ~ To ensure the formation of 7-10 [new] Landcare groups per year actively involved in long term planning and implementation of works to alleviate problems associated with land and water degradation [altered in 1995 to 2-5 by the project steering committee]
- ~ To network groups in the region with each other and the general community
- ~ To achieve a measurable increase in land degradation activities<sup>91</sup>



The project enjoyed extensive resourcing from DNRE staff. A system of group ‘contact’ officers, was established, ‘to ensure that all groups had access to an officer to advise on running the group and services available’. Interestingly staff were given additional training for this function as it was stressed that group support was ‘separate from the technical role that agency staff play’.<sup>92</sup> Thirty-five salinity extension staff were trained along with the project officer in strategies to facilitate community participation; 15 group skills workshops were run in the region, covering topics such as: group management, delegation, setting aims & objectives and action plans, fundraising, writing newsletters, press releases, doing radio interviews, effective group structures.

The project proved very successful; over the three years 22 Landcare groups were formed. The Final Report indicated that 90% of the SIR geography had been covered in the first eighteen months and that the project had focused in the second year and a half on the establishment of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network [GMLN]. The idea for a network of groups had been suggested at an early Watertable Watch program meeting. Geoff McFarlane commented: ‘I’d wanted to start up a network in Benalla. I went to many meetings and talked a lot. I could see the benefits of groups talking to groups and not reinventing the wheel. I’d learnt that from taking farmers on bus trips – they got new ideas and saw the bigger picture. It was a powerful way of doing extension’.<sup>93</sup>

Over the life of the project a comprehensive database and GIS mapping of group areas and regional projects was developed, ‘There was a lot of interest in watertables and an emphasis on watertable wells and monitoring. We put a

lot into mapping to resource Landcare groups to go to the next stage, to use monitoring data for management purposes’.<sup>94</sup> The National Landcare Program report concluded that ‘a significant mind shift has occurred with the key resource managers in the SIR. Landcare representation is now sought at all levels of decision making’.<sup>95</sup>

**Table 6: Landcare Development – Shepparton Irrigation Region 1984-2006**  
*[Based on data provided by GMLN, Landcare Gateway Website, GBCMA Website, DNRE, GIS Group Active Landcare Groups 1993-1997, SPAC Annual Report 1991/92 & 1992/93 and interviews]*

YEAR	DRAINAGE/TREE/ENVIRONMENT SOILCARE GROUPS	LANDCARE GROUPS	LOCAL AREA PLAN GROUPS	PROJECTS
1984	Goulburn Valley Tree Group			
1985	Nathalia Tree Group Merrigum Tree Group			
1986	Caniambo/Kialla SCG Cosgrove SCG Undera North Drainage Group	Girgarre Stanhope LCG		
1987		North West Mooroopna LMG		
1988	Picola SoilCare Group Rochester SoilCare Group Harston Community Drainage	Undera LCG		
1990	Goulburn Valley Environment Group			
1991	Cooma Manley Rd Drain Group Muckatah Community Surface Drainage group	Dookie LMG Harston Community LCG East Shepparton LCG Katandra West LCG		
1992	Muckatah Community Surface Drainage Group Corop Lakes Action Cttee Cornelia Creek Drainage Group	Burramine Tungamah LMG Invergordon LCG Bunbartha Kaarimba LCG		
1993	Yarroweyah Watertable Management Group Floridan Park Salinity Action Group Echuca West Salinity Control Groups	Lockington & District LCG Waranga LPG Kyabram South LPG Tongala LCG [in recess]		Watertable Watch Superb Parrot Project
1994		Arcadia & District LCG Katunga LCG Koyuga/Kanyapella LCG [in recess] Moama & District LCG [in recess] Merrigum LMG Lower Campaspe LCG Wharparille LMG Wyuna LCG South Yarrowonga LCG		
1995		Kotupna LCG Muckatah LCG Nth Murchison-Toolamba LCG Broken Creek Improvement LCG Koonoomoo LCG [in recess] Dhurringile & District LCG		
1996	Campaspe West Salinity Implementation Group	Naringaningalook LCG Nanneella Timmering LCG Picola LMG Congupna LCG		
1999		Kyabram Urban LCG		
2000			Cornella LAP	
2001			Invergordon & District LAP Wyuna LAP	
2002			Nathalia & District LAP Nanneella & District LAP	
2003		Tatura Urban LCG	Bunbartha, Kaarimba, Zeerust Local Area Plan	
2004			Muckatah Katamatite Naringaningalook Local Area Plan Dhurringile and District Local Area Plan	
2006		Shepparton Mooroopna Urban LCG		



### Geoff McFarlane...

... has had a career in rural extension spanning 38 years – he started work with the Soil Conservation Authority [SCA] as a Technical Assistant working on the Eppalock Project. In the 1970s he moved to Benalla working in Farm Water Supply Division which provided a highly valued service to farmers in the planning of dams, drainage and irrigation systems. After the amalgamation of SCA, Forests Commission and a number of other agencies in 1983, he found himself working for the large new agency Conservation Forests and Lands [CF&L], as a Conservation Officer responsible for earlier Group Conservation Areas in the Benalla area [GCAs commenced in the 1960s] many of these groups such as Goorambat Devenish, later evolved into Landcare Groups. Geoff was supported strongly by the Regional Manager, Kevin Ritchie and he worked on the formation of a number of other Landcare Groups in the Benalla area. 'Benalla was one of the leading lights at the start of landcare, Kevin should be recognised for the immense support he gave', Geoff commented, 'Farm Tree Groups under the VFF were also starting up then'.

As a local landowner Geoff became foundation President of the Molliyulah Tree and Land Protection Group. Farm Tree Groups were a program started by the Hamer Government and promoted by the Victorian Farmers Federation [VFF]. A number of Landcare Groups across Victoria started life as

Tree Groups. The Molliyulah Tatong group in the early days gained Landcare funding for a nursery to supply trees for members propagated from local seed, and involving the local primary school. Locating indigenous trees in numbers required for revegetation was a problem at that time. Geoff said that he strongly believed that it was detrimental for government staff to routinely become office bearers, 'the community needs to do and know their own organisations. It's quite a complicated issue; ownership can be taken away from the community'.

Geoff also noted that it became important for groups to develop a good working structure: 'At first meetings were held monthly; long meetings started to lose people. It was really important to develop committees. Any group I was involved with I tried to get them to delegate. Warrenbayne Boho was very special in the way they operated, they had a Coordinator, a good committee structure and they involved a lot of people'. Geoff was keenly supportive of Junior Landcare and supported its development in schools, running the first Junior Landcare Conference in the area. Goorambat Devenish had a strong Junior Landcare [Launched in May 1988, Junior Landcare is based on the vital contribution of young people to the land they are to inherit].

While in the Benalla area Geoff started the Whole Farm Planning program [WFP]. His introduction was a week long orientation program at the Potter Farmland Scheme in Western Victoria, a revolutionary farm management plan set up in the 1980s to encourage farmers to plant trees and move fence lines to overcome erosion and salinity and improve land quality. 'It took a lot of personal contact to get them to change – a lot of them had physically put fences in, and ploughed the paddocks, ridden horses – their perspective was why change it all?'

In 1990 Geoff took up the position of Community Education Officer with Dept of Agriculture and Rural Affairs [DARA] to work in the Shepparton Irrigation Region [SIR] developing the landcare program. At this time only a few Landcare Groups had been established in the irrigated areas of the

catchment. Over the next couple of years a number of new groups were established and by the mid 1990s there were more than twenty Groups active in the SIR. In 1992 Geoff was the recipient of the Sidney Plowman Award for Services to Soil Conservation. He visited Canada in 1993 as the award recipient and discussed the potential to implement Landcare in Alberta Province. An exchange tour was organised and April 1997 saw the first phase of an exchange program between Victorian Landcarers and a group from Alberta. North West Mooroopna Landcare, Hodgson and Horseshoe Creek Landcare, Dookie Land Management Group were among those represented. Groups looked at environmental issues and all forms of agricultural production. Geoff recalled that: 'The enthusiasm shown by our hosts to diversify was astonishing'.

The early drivers for Landcare in the SIR were 'trees and water tables', and Geoff initiated a program of mapping water tables for Groups [ultimately sending graphs out monthly to 800 farms]. He was also responsible for developing improved gauging equipment for water table wells which were manufactured in bulk by a local Disability Resource Centre. This was so successful that orders were eventually going interstate. A significant achievement was the development of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network [GMLN] the first Landcare Network in Victoria. Geoff observed: 'Networks were different – they were more business-like, got more support, employed facilitators for projects, which took a load off the Office Bearers'.

Salinity measurement was the next step for Landcare and funding was made available for the employment of a Facilitator in 1994. Geoff continued to work for the development of Landcare in the SIR throughout the 1990s until his retirement. This included the major project of developing Local Area Plans [LAPs] across most of the region and improving support to Landcare Groups.

### Improving support for Landcare in the SIR

In 1998 a study of the farming community's response to rising water tables and salinity, commissioned by the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network [GMLN] found that there had been a decline in Landcare participation and community awareness of salinity levels. These findings, based on telephone interviews with 140 landholders, prompted the GMLN and DNRE to commission further research and an MOU was developed with the Johnstone Centre at Charles Sturt University, to generate high quality information to enhance the effectiveness of the Network and Landcare in the region.

The first research undertaken [of 5 proposed studies] was based on a 12 page questionnaire posted to a random sample of 300 Landcare members and community leaders during May/June 1999. The final report October 1999, found that awareness of salinity and water table levels was not as high as previously and many respondents expressed confidence that onground work would be undertaken to prevent salinity undermining the long term viability of their area. A high percentage believed commodity prices would be a greater influence for the future. Awareness of the activities of GMLN was very high [87%], through watertable monitoring, newsletters, awareness bus tours, primary school education and rabbit control activity.<sup>97</sup>

An interesting focus of the survey was an attempt to measure 'burnout' among Landcare members, as this had become an issue of concern towards the end of the Decade of Landcare. Despite some difficulties in identifying an appropriate measure, the researchers found that, 'burnout does not

appear to be a major issue with Landcare participants at present', though they were strongly of the view that it was likely to become more prevalent. Their conclusion was based on the historically high levels of Landcare activity in the SIR and across Victoria,<sup>98</sup> and in the context that rural people, with their high work and volunteer commitments would be faced increasingly, with management issues such as, ineffective group leadership, poor direction and priority setting, retention of active members and perceived inadequate resource levels.

As a result of these findings, recommendations, with input from key agency staff, were made to the SIR Implementation Committee of the GBCMA [SIRIC]. Development of Local Area Plans had been considered in the first phase of the development of the Regional Catchment Strategy and it was decided that given the need to provide improved support to groups, offer new directions and broader priority setting, it would be an effective course to link Landcare with the Regional Catchment Strategy [RCS] process.<sup>99</sup>

A new initiative of the GMLN and the GBCMA was a funding submission to the Natural Heritage Trust [NHT], for a three year project to focus on high priority sub-catchments in the SIR, and 'to concentrate on-ground effort in a strategic manner involving the majority of local landholders'.<sup>100</sup> The submission originally sought funds to develop twelve Local Area Plans, but obtained funds for eight. Community input to regional planning had been a part of the development of the SIR Land and Water Salinity Management Plan [SIRLWSMP] that was first released in 1989 under the management of the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council. Following

regionalisation of catchment management, implementation of the SIRLWSMP became a component of the RCS, and responsibility of the CMA.

The Local Area Planning project aimed to generate an 'increased level of maturity in the catchment community', create a vision for local areas and increase the level of funding obtained for onground works as a result of more credible works programs.<sup>101</sup> The community involvement process under the NHT funding was carefully targeted and provided novel means of support for a more

coordinated approach to Landcare. GMLN played an important role in articulating the aims of the project to local groups.<sup>102</sup> Each LAP incorporated a number of Landcare groups and other stakeholders in 'High priority/High Value' locations identified and analysed through a process of multi-criteria mapping overlays.<sup>103</sup> The matching funds provided by the Victorian government meant that fulltime staff resources were devoted to the project, which was piloted in Cornella where the first LAP was launched in 2002. The LAP project undertaken as a partnership between DNRE/DPI, GBCMA and GMLN established



Natural Resource Management plans for eight sub-catchments across the SIR: –

- ~ Cornella [2000],
- ~ Invergordon [2001],
- ~ Wyuna [2001],
- ~ Nathalia Broken Creek [2002],
- ~ Nanneella [2002],
- ~ Bunbartha Kaarimba Zeerust [2003]
- ~ Muckatah Katamatite Naringaningalook [2004],
- ~ Dhurringile [2005]

The LAP process in the SIR is a very significant part of the Landcare story in the region.<sup>104</sup>

The last of the eight plans to be developed, for the Dhurringile district, included the Toolamba, Tatura and Murchison communities; it was launched in May 2005. The Plan developed over a three year period is described as ‘our roadmap ... to protect and build upon our significant cultural, social and environmental heritage’.<sup>105</sup> The process of community engagement employed in the LAP process developed in sophistication over the five years from 1999 – 2005 and included media campaigns and well resourced public meetings.

In April 2002 a Community Planning Group for Dhurringile, supported by DPI and GMLN staff, was formed and met over three years to build a community consensus and knowledge base on environmental, economic, demographic and social issues, assess priorities and work up an action program. In August 2004 Agency and Community Feedback sessions were held to review the draft plan and its proposed priorities. The LAP process for several areas has meant a recovery of much local history. The oldest town in the region Murchison was proclaimed in 1854, with Tatura and Toolamba proclaimed townships in 1874. It is noteworthy that all three towns are currently enjoying population growth unlike most small country towns.

Dhurringile and District Landcare Group was formed in 1996, a first project had been the installation of 100 Watertable Watch testwells which were monitored on a monthly basis and salinity levels tested twice yearly. Results led to the installation of private groundwater pumps and extensive tree planting in high risk areas east of the Tatura Wastewater Treatment Plant, along the Murchison/ Toolamba community surface water management system and along the Mosquito Depression dryland. The Group has also been very active in primary school education.

The LAP for the district now covers an impressive and comprehensive compilation of issues. They range from soil sodicity, salinity, water quality, efficient water management, management of riparian zones and remnant vegetation and biodiversity, to roadside conservation management and climate change. A work program outlines actions, all of which have been assessed against importance, urgency and feasibility. Based as they are around sub-catchments, Local Area

Plans have been broader than Landcare, and in some cases have operated independently. Some Landcare groups have changed with the LAP process. ‘They’ve all operated in different ways; some have developed a life of their own and have decided on their own direction. It’s hard to judge the impacts, it appears that apart from enthusiasts that this year and maybe over the next the level activity has dropped’.<sup>106</sup> For most areas the LAP process has lifted the planning and conservation program to a more effective, integrated level and now a number of areas employ coordinators through a percentage of program funding. The LAP implementation process in SIR is currently being reviewed. One of the LAP areas report to SIRIC every second meeting and a regular, annual joint meeting is held. Helen Murdoch a Landcare Facilitator during the late 1990s observed that, ‘the character of the SIR, primarily its economic value and agricultural importance to Victoria, has meant a high level of input from government; the infrastructure costs are high and that has justified the high costs involved in community support’.<sup>107</sup>

The large scale, managed, and resourced effort in the SIR, in the first stage saw significant development of Landcare numbers and effectiveness at group level. In a second stage, development focused at the network/ coordination level. This is in contrast to some degree, with the progress made by Landcare in the rest of the catchment. Several factors are involved. SIR has a long history of government investment and extension support for agricultural/irrigation development. In the 1980s and 1990s the salinity project brought further resources to an area which has historically been very effective in attracting funding. The SIRLWSMP developed as a result



of the Salinity Pilot Project created an ongoing planning and program structure and a focus across an extended geography which became an important context for Landcare. No comparable, ongoing, framework existed in other areas of the catchment.

Other factors include the close nexus between land management and livelihood for farmers in the SIR, where issues like salinity, groundwater and surface drainage decide changes to farm practices very directly. This is not the case in non-irrigated farming areas where salinity relates more to ages old geology than to farming methods; the connections are both less immediate and the pay-offs much longer term.

A combination of more compact geography, effective networking over a significant period and higher levels of funding have seen the SIR operate generally more effectively as a regional Landcare program.

### Conclusion

The pattern of the development of Landcare and Landcare Groups in the Goulburn Broken catchment has been indivisible from the contemporary policy, political, economic, and environmental framework. It is apparent from the earliest history that there were many antecedent groups as well as specific triggers for the formation of groups including soil care, tree groups, salinity projects, drainage projects. While these varied in composition and structure they had common ground in targeting on-farm land degradation and threats to productivity. A clear finding of all the early research on the program is that the role of government staff in generating interest and facilitating formal structures

was critical. It does not appear that agency staff remained the 'driving force' for most groups; however the role of funding programs and bureaucratic oversight has been a significant 'shaper' of group directions. Landcare groups were established on the basis of geography – catchments, watersheds, valleys or creek lines – with a view to ensuring a level of homogeneity and manageable scale. What has emerged over time has been a tension between the model of local/neighborhood scale that was administratively/culturally manageable and the larger

catchment scale, more effective for landscape change projects.

Seen within the context of developments at state and national policy and administrative levels, the multiple streams of development are evident, as is the interpenetration of players and events that created critical decision points and change trajectories. The reorientation, once the program became national, and integrated a number of disciplines was clearly very important. As was the communication campaign that made 'Landcare' a household word within

a few years. In hindsight it is apparent, that by no means the least important ingredient was the generic community development perspective of the earliest years, and the critical role played by committed individuals. While agency staff have played an important preliminary role, the evidence is unequivocal that establishment and maintenance of self-sustaining groups has been due in all cases to concerned individuals who embraced the vision and potential of the program and took up leadership responsibility for long-term strategies and organisation.



## CHAPTER 4

# Investing in the fabric of Landcare: The organisational evolution of Landcare over two decades

It always helps to get the history right to start with ... The Decade of Landcare was announced in July 1989 with an initial Commonwealth commitment of \$340 million. Ten years down the track what can be concluded? How did we do? ... Clearly the problems have not been solved ... however ... we have made a significant start. There now is much wider recognition and acceptance that land management practices have to change. The ethos of land management has shifted forever towards sustainable resource use ... In many ways the situation today is similar to when the NFF and the ACF formed their initial alliance on Landcare. ... A long term Government commitment is needed to give landholders the confidence to change their management practices more quickly.

*Rick Farley*

*Executive Director, National Farmers Federation, 1988-1995  
Landcare Australia, Tenth Annual Report and Yearbook, 1999*

Those early years were so exhilarating and frantic as we watched the concept being embraced by the community. Landcare created and fostered a wonderful synergy of willing and enthusiastic people from all walks of life – government agencies both state and local, farmers and farming groups, environmental groups, individual landholders ... wishing to become involved. It established a new benchmark for sound land and water management, which has since been adopted both nationally and in some cases internationally.

*Nan Oates*

*'Landcare – it's not just about the land' in  
Landcare in Victoria, ed. R. Youl 2006*



### **'Twenty years on ... How did we do?'**

Across twenty years the Landcare program has matured organisationally. This section documents important developments such as regional management, expansion of networks, the growth of support services to volunteer groups and the nature of rehabilitation and resource management projects. The basic form of local or district clusters of landowners accredited to receive, from 1986, Land Protection Incentive Scheme grants through the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands, has generated a number of additional structural and program arrangements. First of these was the creation, in the early 1990s, of a parallel national program which greatly heightened the profile of the program and increased funding. From a policy perspective, the elevation to a national and shared Australian governments approach to land degradation has meant, as Rick Farley commented, 'a much wider acceptance that land management practices have to change' and, 'an ethos of sustainable resource use'.

But it has been equally significant that the combination of state sponsorship and nonprofit voluntary action at the local level has been a social form which has allowed for flexibility and extension.<sup>1</sup> Some local groups developed their own adaptations and more advanced technologies; others have remained relatively simple but become more or less active partners in wider networking arrangements. Organisational resources and professional services have grown; both at bureaucratic and community level, though perhaps not to the same degree. The two main developments have been the provision

of support services to groups, and the amalgamation of local groupings into district or sub-catchment networks. There have been three major stages of Landcare development. The original CF&L program managed centrally, the regionalisation of Landcare under Catchment Management Authorities in the late 1990s, and the comprehensive reviews at the end of the Decade of Landcare, which led in Victoria to Second Generation Landcare and the state/regional/local partnership model. This section will document a number of these developments in the Goulburn Broken catchment.

### **Landcare on the brink ... of crisis?**

In 2004 the Charles Sturt Institute for Land Water and Society reported on the condition of landcare and observable trends, twenty years on.<sup>2</sup> Their study was based on comprehensive survey questionnaires distributed to 709 Victorian Landcare groups and compared findings with data from similar surveys in 1993, 1995, and 1998.<sup>3</sup> Victoria is the only state where this body of longitudinal data is available. The survey sought to measure group membership and activity levels across Victoria and examined regional variations in group/program operations.

When the study was published in 2006, to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of landcare in Victoria, newspaper headlines proclaimed, the 'pioneering Landcare movement' to be 'in crisis' and its viability over the next three to five years to be in question without real government intervention.<sup>4</sup> What the media highlighted was the drop in Landcare Group numbers in Victoria from a total of 859 in 1998, to 709 in 2004. The study, and comparisons with longitudinal data, showed a significant reduction from the highest aggregate group numbers between 1995 and 1998. There had been a considerable downturn in membership;



twenty percent each year since 1998. Landcare in Victoria by the end of the 1990s could be said to have reached a plateau.

The authors ascribed two possible reasons for this phenomenon. Either, 'groups have been established in most areas and some groups have accomplished what they set out to do' or, the downturn in numbers, 'reflects a decline in the underlying health of the volunteer movement'. There are substantially fewer landcare members than in the past. The trend is for Landcare to engage a smaller proportion of landholders, down from 50% in 1995 and 46% in 1998, to 41% in 2004. While existing

groups continue to attract new members, this is at a rate below the attrition rate [30% of all members in 2003].<sup>5</sup> Across the same period rabbit control work fell from 56% to 30% and salinity work fell from 36% to 22%. The researchers found that these trends to be a cause for concern and proposed further investigation and regular monitoring.

One of the strongest findings of the study was the need to focus much more, on, what the authors called 'supporting the fabric of community landcare'. Analysis showed the importance of providing infrastructure and support services to assist groups to

operate effectively and more efficiently. Landcare members indicated that a preferred proportional allocation of resources would be 42% - money and/or materials for onground NRM work; 22% for labour; 23% to provide a coordinator to support group activity, and 13% for technical information and advice. In support of these priorities almost one third of Victorian groups reported employing their own coordinator [most of who work part-time across a number of groups]. 'Survey data provides strong affirmation of the contribution of group coordinators to communication with other groups, flow of information to the

group, and the group's capacity to develop and submit successful funding bids'.<sup>6</sup>

Findings on group effectiveness were unambiguous. Factors which correlated strongly with achievement of effective outcomes included:

- ~ Availability of capable leaders
- ~ Development of action plans
- ~ Development of new member information kits
- ~ Regular review and evaluation of project success
- ~ Review and recording of achievements



## Milestones, Memories and Messages

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The 2004 study provided a clear indication that effective leadership, internal group organisation and the adoption of basic management approaches were critical to the level of group activity and effectiveness of NRM outcomes. An interesting comparison is offered by a study conducted at the beginning of the Landcare program, in 1989, which found then, that organisational structure was based on simple consensual models of decision making, 'a large majority of groups [90%] had more general meetings than committee meetings, and emphasized ... members sharing problems and ideas', rather than the development of management strategies.<sup>7</sup> It would be easy, and it is often argued, that landcare at group level, has become more sophisticated in organisational and management terms with the passage of time and acquisition of experience.

A close examination of survey data across two decades, shows that many groups today, still operate as late 80s groups did. The authors of a 1993 review hypothesised, that as groups age, they will become more effective. On the other hand it may be that they will become less effective as initial enthusiasm is lost:

It is possible that older groups are more effective for reasons other than increased experience. For example, these groups may have emerged earlier because of the severity of land degradation problems or because of particular attributes of founding members.<sup>8</sup>[my emphasis]

The findings of the 2004 study were similar to the observations of many people interviewed for this project. Group effectiveness appears to grow more from the capabilities of founding members and office bearers and the resources available to the group from external agencies,

than from the accretion of experience over time. A Warrenbayne Boho member encapsulated this: 'Committees are the people who are really motivated, people with the imagination, who are interested in planning for the community – they're committed individuals – they want to see things that are visible on the ground. There's a lot of voluntary effort and hard work in visionary action'.<sup>9</sup>

Curtis and Cooke's twenty year study, found that while 'most groups have established a supportive culture'; many groups had not adopted relatively simple and effective organisational or management approaches. Almost 50% of respondents indicated that their group had no clear idea of where it was headed. Almost half of all responses indicated that the group didn't provide information to new members. A significant

30% indicated that the group had no clear way of evaluating projects [and an additional 37% were unsure on this item]. The case studies documented in this historical overview, show good management techniques were routine almost from the outset; neither time, nor group maturity, were the critical factors in operational effectiveness. Reinforcing this the study found that the infrastructure supporting landcare was of the fundamental importance.





**Muckatah Landcare Group...**

*... after many years of discussion, plans to drain the Muckatah Depression were finally coming to fruition. The presentation at local public meetings of a series of feasibility studies and engineering models became the catalyst for many community level discussions of the opportunities the scheme offered, for tree planting, environmental projects and improving overall water quality. There was a strong view that a local Landcare group was needed. A public meeting held in the Katamatite Uniting Church Hall on April 26th 1995, was attended by approximately 40 interested local landowners. Muckatah Landcare Group was inaugurated, with Ivor Lukies as the first President and Adrian Buykx Snr. Secretary.*

*Muckatah lies on the north-east boundary of the Shepparton Irrigation Region, south of Yarrawonga. The area was first settled in the late 1870s and 1880s; irrigation was introduced to the area in 1940, under the Murray Irrigation Scheme and dairy farming was developed. While there are five community centres across the region such as Muckatah, the only town centre in the area is Katamatite [population c. 300] and towards the end of the 1990s a Local Area Plan was being developed through community consultation for the entire Muckatah, Katamatite, Naringaningalook area [LAP 2004].*

*In the mid 1990s water table levels were the greatest concern for the Group and funding of \$1700.00 was sought for 30 test bores, which were installed in October/November 1996. These were spread across 110kms and it required a 5 hour trip to read them all; 20 bores registered water in the first years. Stuart Jeffs who monitored the bores for eight years commented: 'Most bores were easily accessed – a few were well off the road and the electric fences needed to be negotiated, (one had a kick like a mule)! Over the seven years of recording, many bores have gone dry, with just five giving a reading in July 2003 when testing finished'. The lowering of water tables over much of the SIR has been achieved with better drainage, but is in large part a consequence of the worst drought on record. Thanks to the commitment of the local community to the Watertable Watch Program a valuable data base of information on watertable levels in the immediate area has been compiled.*

*In July 1999 the first stage of the Muckatah Depression Drain was finally completed, and officially opened by the Prime Minister John Howard. The project runs from Kinnairds Wetland to O'Dwyer Rd., Burramine a total length of almost 80km and was concluded in 2003/2004. Heavy rain in February 2005 proved the success of the scheme with farms drained in days rather than weeks as in earlier times.*

*Extensive roadside tree planting has significantly changed the appearance of the area over the last ten years along the Benalla - Tocumwal Rd., and in McPherson Rd., and along the banks of the Boosey Creek. Katamatite Primary School students have worked with the group and also established trees at the entrance to the township. Weed control has become a high priority and plans are being implemented to have entire areas sprayed by contractors under group supervision to ensure effective and timely coverage.*

*In 2003 Muckatah LCG was appointed Committee of Management for the Peter Kennedy Grassland, an area of a Crown Land consisting of plains grassy woodland. The group plans to clear the area of weeds and 'in time transform it into*

*an area of native grasses and vegetation. Some members of the group have decided to preserve areas of remnant vegetation' or wetland on their own properties as 'Land for Wildlife'; or covenanted as 'Trust for Nature'; at least one area is reported to be home to nesting Brolgas.*

*As for many landcare groups the development of social connections and sense of place has been an important objective for the group and over recent years an informative newsletter has been produced and community field days have been a regular feature. 'Reflecting on what has been achieved by enthusiastic volunteers; thousands of trees planted along roadsides, on private property and crown land; tree corridors have encouraged native birds and fauna ... and the group has successfully become family oriented and very involved in improving our local area'. A former member of the district commented: 'I feel proud to have been part of the group of people at that meeting [to form the group] and enjoyed contributing to the establishment and growth of the group in those first few years. Although we have moved away we watch with delight the changes that have, and are still occurring, in the Muckatah landscape'.*

### Goulburn Broken Landcare twenty years on – how are we doing?

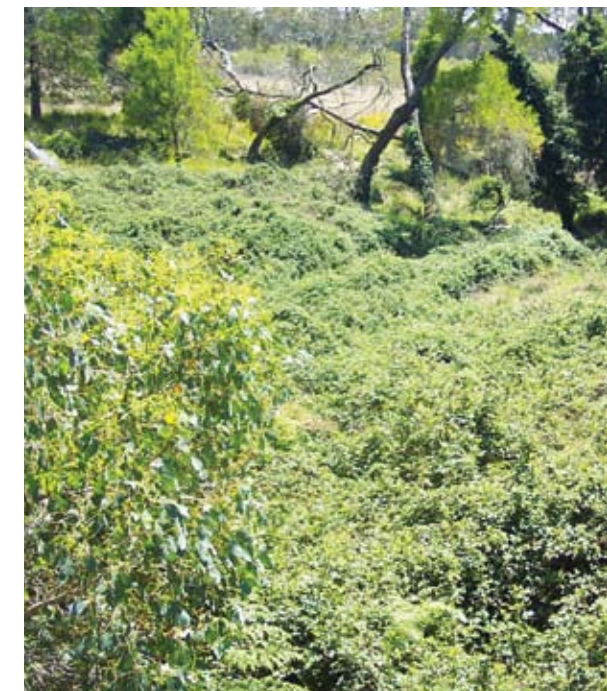
The significant reduction in landcare group numbers between 1998 and 2004<sup>10</sup> was also observed in the Goulburn Broken catchment [see Table 7 below]. Approximately half of the landcare groups in the GB region returned surveys in the Charles Sturt University study [a sample of forty-seven groups]. However though Landcare group

numbers overall and group membership were declining in some regions, the median size per group remained the same as previous years for Goulburn Broken. While 41% of landholders were Landcare members across Victoria, the figure for Goulburn Broken was a lower 29% [reflecting perhaps the diversity of landholding in the catchment]. This level of membership had been stable for a number of years in this catchment and reported member participation

rates were among the highest among the ten catchment regions. Recruitment rates were reported to be declining across all groups, but notably, attrition rates were lowest in the Goulburn Broken, reflecting a stability of group membership over time.<sup>11</sup> The following table shows group formation rates since program inception in Goulburn Broken Landcare by comparison with the Victorian data [see Appendix G]

In addition to membership trends, the twenty year review sought extensive data on how groups operate in areas such as leadership, internal organisation, decision making processes, capacity of groups, planning, project follow-up, resource management, social connection and relationships with government agencies [including Local Government and CMAs]. A high percentage of respondents in Goulburn Broken felt that

Year	GB Region Landcare Groups	% Victorian Landcare	Data Source
1986-88	13	17.3	Goulburn Dryland Salinity Management Plan & SIR Land Water Salinity Management Plan
1989	17	14.7	The Research Network – An Evaluation of Rural Community Participation in the LandCare program [prepared for Dept. CF&L]
1990-93	44		Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group, Integrated Catchment Management Seminar Nov. 1993
1994	52	7.7	Salinity Program Advisory Council Annual Report 1993-94
1996	98	12.6	Landcare Survey DNRE 1996 – GB catchment Vic LCGrps; Know Your Catchments, Vic 1997
1999	126		GBCMA Nagambie Landcare Forum - CEO Report
2002	104		GBCMA – Landcare into 21 <sup>st</sup> Century – Final Report
2005	92	11.7	GBCMA Landcare Support Strategy
2004	86	11.9	Curtis & Cooke Survey 2004
2006	90	12.4*	GBCMA 2005/2006 Landcare Report Card – returns from ~ 70% of groups; 6 Grps reported to be in recess; 2 new groups



**Table 7: Goulburn Broken Catchment - Indicative number of Landcare Groups 1986-2006**

*Source: Data compiled from a range of planning reports, landcare surveys, and conference proceedings. Due to variations in terminology figures are indicative only; \* based on 2004 Victorian totals*

group decision making, addressing relevant issues and leadership was effective. One of the survey findings of concern was that on average across Victoria only 45% of groups had prepared an annual/action plan, a worrying 38% reported having 'no clear idea of where the group was headed'. By comparison, the figure for the Goulburn Broken was one of the highest at 89% [possibly reflecting the significant investment in Local Area Planning in the catchment]. However only 58% of Goulburn Broken groups reported providing new member information and only 36% reported 'evaluating project success'. One of the measures agreed strongly by

all groups was the high degree of social connection generated within groups. This finding highlights that an important outcome of landcare activity, in addition to resource management and onground works, has been the generation of 'social capital' for localities. Goulburn Broken scored among the highest on this measure. Reflecting the complexity of the natural resource management task in this catchment, landcare respondents rated among the highest [77%] in perceiving that 'the scale of the environmental problems in our region is beyond the capacity of landcare groups alone to address'. Approximately 50% felt that there had been 'some success' in increased

understanding of what sustainable farming involves; only 7% felt that 'high success' had been achieved in this catchment. A much higher 67% of Mallee landcare respondents, and 35% in the North East catchment reported a 'high success' rate.

The first Goulburn Broken landcare Annual Report Card was prepared in 2006. Of the 90 groups listed, 6 were 'in recess' and while 60% of all groups rated their group as operating effectively, 15% reported their groups as 'just hanging on'. The stress on the landcare membership, of the 'long dry' which has been highlighted by many commentators is dramatically evident. The Shepparton

Irrigation Region Implementation Committee reported that 59% of groups rated their group as 'hanging in there', with 3 groups now in recess. By comparison in both the Mid Goulburn Broken and Upper Goulburn regions 70% of groups rated their groups as 'very healthy'. Across the catchment as a whole for 2005/06 almost 300 landcare group meetings were convened, 132 field days held and 112 on-ground projects were delivered.<sup>12</sup> One of the major factors in sustaining the level of group formation and continuing effective operation across two decades has been the delivery of support services to Landcare groups by facilitators and coordinators.



**This bigger picture ... an integrated vision for catchments ... CMAs 1997**

After the establishment of CMAs, Landcare became a regional program. In February 1997 the Working Party on Future Arrangements for Catchment Management in Victoria, reported to government on the major advances that had taken place in natural resource management over a relatively few years from the mid 1990s. Salinity management plans had been completed for all the major river basins in the state and whole-of-catchment waterway management programs covered 40% of Victoria.<sup>13</sup> From the late 1980s the impetus to halt land and waterway degradation and improve environmental management had mobilized many community and regional groupings. The government policy statement on catchment management arrangements of February 1997 highlighted that:

A major driving force for change has been the rapid growth of the Landcare movement currently comprising 785 Landcare groups working to achieve productive solutions to land and water management problems. All of these programs are firmly based within the community. Their grass roots input into program development and on-ground implementation has been the most significant factor in their success.<sup>14</sup>

Following the proclamation of the Catchment and Land Protection Act in 1994, Catchment and Land Protection [CaLP] Boards were established in the ten natural resource management regions of the Victoria. An immediate initiative of the CaLP Boards was the development of Regional Catchment Strategies. Given the need to streamline the

institutional arrangements which had evolved in multiple locations and at multiple levels during an exciting upsurge in environmental awareness, the working party recommended catchment management arrangements that would, 'integrate existing successful resource management programs such as waterway management and salinity, and emerging issues such as nutrient management, into this bigger picture'.<sup>15</sup> Landcare had played a critical role in these developments and now would be contextualized by the regional governance that replaced the policy landscape of the 1980s and 1990s. The following table summarises these landmark changes.

**Table 8: Stages in community landcare development and regional catchment management**

1985	Salinity Pilot Program established in Goulburn Broken region
1986	Victorian Department of Conservation Forests and Lands launches LandCare
1989	National Landcare Program & Decade of Landcare launched
1990	State of the Environment Report – Victoria's Inland Waters
1991	Victorian Decade of Landcare Plan
1992	State Landcare Committee established
1993	Goulburn-Broken Regional Landcare Plan [Nine regional Plans released]
1994	Catchment and Land Protection Act [Catchment and Land Protection Council est.]
1995	Catchment and Land Protection Boards est. [Regional Catchment Strategies commenced]
1996	Catchment Management Structures Review [land, waterway, salinity, biodiversity]
1997	Victorian Government Response to Catchment Management Working Party; Catchment Management Authorities est. [Draft Regional Catchment Strategies prepared]
1997	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority – Regional Catchment Strategy enhanced
1998	GBCMA Landcare Management Guidelines published; CaLP Act (Amendment) Act
1999	Goulburn Broken Catchment Landcare Forum - Nagambie
2000	Victorian Catchment Management Conference - Ballarat
2000	International Landcare Conference – Melbourne [Second Generation Landcare Taskforce est.]
2002	Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare
2002	GBCMA – Landcare into the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century project
2003	Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy [Revised, updated version of GB Strategy 1997]
2005	VAPSGLE Evaluation – Building on success and planning the future of Landcare support
2005	Second Generation Landcare reviewed by region
2005	GBCMA – Community Landcare Support Strategy
2006	Goulburn Broken Landcare First Report Card
2007	Victorian Government Second Generation Landcare Review
2007	Goulburn Broken Landcare Second Report Card

The series of milestone developments outlined in the table above have shaped the character and background organisational arrangements surrounding landcare at local, state and regional level. In the Goulburn Broken, important region wide strategies and programs in salinity management, waterway management, catchment coordination and soil conservation were implemented across the first half of the 1990s. The first irrigation region and dryland salinity management plans were developed and restructuring of waterway coordination and management culminated in the complete handover of catchment-wide strategy responsibility to Catchment and Land Protection Boards in 1995. The role, to create a framework for 'agreed on objectives for land and water management in their regions and determined priorities for action and investment'.<sup>16</sup>

The Goulburn Broken CaLP Board faced significant issues when it was established in 1995. The wind up of the Salinity Project Advisory Council by government meant the continuation of the Salinity Project, as well as the responsibility for catchment resource management. 'The politics of involving all the River Management Authorities was a difficult process', recalled John Pettigrew. 'The Board was convinced that one body should become responsible for the catchment. The key was building up trust'.<sup>17</sup> The Regional Catchment Strategy planning process commenced by the CaLP Boards and extended by CMAs 'provided the setting for regional development based on the competitive strengths of sustainable natural resource management'.<sup>18</sup> As catchment strategies achieved recognition as the over-arching approach to the development, management and conservation of land and water resources in each region, policies

evolved which sought to integrate ongoing investment in landcare into regional priorities. The rapid progress to a national landcare program at the start of the decade had meant a great wave of endorsement for conservation. The effect, a marked growth in group numbers and on-ground projects in the Goulburn Broken region has been discussed. Successful

projects under the National Landcare Program included several important coordination and facilitation projects - the stand out example being the National Landcare Program, Facilitation and Development of Community Groups in the Shepparton Irrigation Region, 1994-1997, outlined in Section 3 of this report. By the time the Victorian government handed

management responsibility for landcare to CMAs in 1997 there was a well developed and cohesive mindset at community level and over one hundred local landcare groups of varying size and complexity had been established across the Goulburn Broken catchment.



### Landcare in the new millennium - The Action Plan 2000 - 2012

At the end of the Decade, landcare was subject to major policy and program reviews at state and regional level. The Victorian government announced the formation of the Second Generation Landcare Taskforce at the International Landcare Conference in 2000. The brief from the Minister was to:

- ~ Review the current context and development of Landcare
- ~ Consult widely with Landcare stakeholders
- ~ Recommend strategic policy directions; and
- ~ Develop an action plan for the next five years

The taskforce reported in 2002, advocating two main strategies. The first to maintain as a primary focus, Landcare's hands-on, land management component and secondly, to comprehensively raise the skill and capability level of groups and individuals. It was deemed vital by all stakeholders to strengthen the investment in 'the fabric of landcare' in order to maintain the natural resource management contribution of Landcare volunteers.<sup>19</sup>

Recommendations stressed the need for increased state government investment in Landcare coordinator and facilitator positions, and the alignment of Department of Natural Resources and Environment [DNRE] funding with Regional Catchment Strategy priorities and improved statewide support to the Landcare program. What was implemented, were regional Landcare coordinator positions for each Catchment Management Authority, a Statewide Landcare

position 'to provide leadership of the regional landcare coordinators', and support for the development by each CMA of a 5-year Regional Landcare Support Strategy.<sup>20</sup>

In recognition of the stage landcare had reached and deficiencies in the employment and career conditions of many landcare support staff, it was believed to be very timely to support the emergence of a profession of rural and natural resource management facilitators. This was to be addressed by encouraging a professional association and developing practical improvements in

employment conditions. The development of a single source of information such as a web-site, potentially able to provide, 'a stable, reliable source of information to Landcarers, and apply a whole of government approach to awareness raising' was also endorsed. Financial support for increased levels of training for Landcare support staff and for community volunteers was strongly recommended, along with greater access to, and coordination within DNRE, industry and conservation programs. However little of the latter appears to have been developed.

### Catchment Strategies and the landcare movement - Landcare and CMAs

The findings of the Second Generation Task Force in 2002 had to a large extent evolved from processes already begun by CMAs. The concern was what landcare might and should look like at the end of a decade of rapid growth. John Dainton, founding Chairman of the Goulburn Broken CMA, in a speech to the first Landcare Forum organised by the CMA in April 1999, noted with concern that, 'the authority has



recently been given the task of supporting Landcare Groups ... the role was transferred from DNRE to the Authority with very little financial assistance'.<sup>21</sup> He acknowledged that landcare groups needed support and, that the implementation of the Catchment Strategy would require a 'healthy landcare movement with a good understanding of the role of the Catchment Management Authority'. The CMA, adjusting to operating landcare at the same time as fleshing out its primary mission was stretched, and gave all the appearance of awkward efforts to fit into the glass slipper of 'community'.

While acknowledging 'the critical role of landcare', the Chairman indicated that there were signs of stress in the movement and areas where it could be improved, 'one of the issues we need to reflect on today is whether the current state of landcare is cyclical or whether there are more fundamental problems'.<sup>22</sup> The Forum was told that the uncertainty about recent changes, a reduction in agency officers available to support landcare, paralleled by the complexity and lengthy time delays in securing funding were making it difficult to maintain member interest and involvement. In order to better plan and prioritise works in their area, and be more accountable, Landcare groups needed improved communication and more effective delivery of support services.<sup>23</sup>

A manual, *Landcare Management Guidelines*, was launched during the Forum in 1999. A growing concern at bureaucratic level, had been the emerging practice in Landcare groups of accruing 'large reserves of funds', generated from received, but unexpended grants. As case studies in this volume have demonstrated, for Landcare Groups the planned implementation of projects was often

thwarted by weather and seasonal conditions, making it necessary to hold funds over. This situation was not acceptable to funding agencies. The guidelines developed by the CMA, aimed 'to achieve a clear accountability ... and deliver increased Government and community trust and support in Landcare objectives and outcomes'.<sup>24</sup>

### Revitalising and regionalising Landcare

Motivated by the looming end of 'the Decade' a National Heritage Trust [NHT] project Community Supported Landcare into the 21st Century was funded in Victoria. The statewide, strategic project was aimed at identifying the requirements to successfully

underwrite a 'viable landcare movement into the future'. The project [to be managed by a steering committee and administered by DNRE] undertook 10 sub projects in each CMA and CaLP Board region. Each region submitted their respective components independently. The Goulburn Broken CMA submitted a project proposal, Revitalising Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment [1999]. Backgrounding the historical development of landcare in the catchment, Bill O'Kane, CEO of the CMA observed:

As groups matured the projects became more ambitious and started to become capital hungry. The ability for the local community and state grants to fund capital works was soon passed ... since the mid 1990s governments have reacted strongly, providing substantial resources directly to community groups for capital works but no or little general coordination/facilitation funds. At the same time there have been substantial reductions in extension staff.<sup>25</sup>

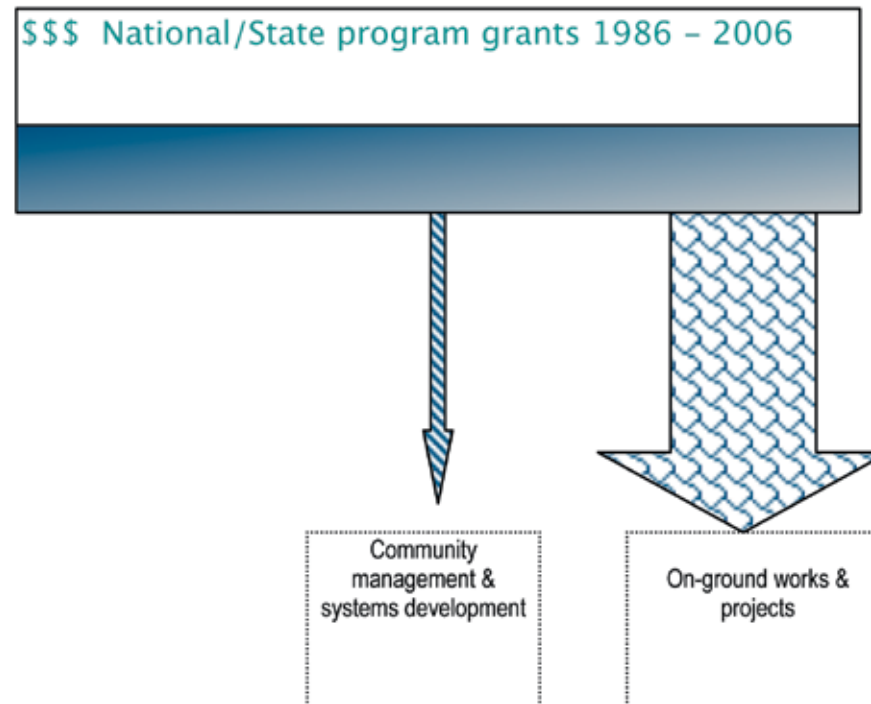


Fig: 7 Comparison of the relative levels of program support and capital funding

The 'Revitalisation' project in the Goulburn Broken catchment designed to facilitate the uptake and application of the Management Guidelines, had the twin objectives of ensuring 'the adoption of best management practices by the estimated 128 Landcare Groups', and the development of a regional investment approach. This would promote priority on-ground works and improved reporting on a 'catchment condition basis' [rather than individual local projects].<sup>26</sup>

Because of the lack of credible data the project proposed to conduct an inventory of Groups in the catchment, 'to determine exactly how many exist and how they are operating'. Over a two year period it was proposed to implement a new monitoring, evaluation and reporting system and transfer the process to other catchments. Presenting its report in March 2002, the project identified an actual total of 104 Landcare Groups, with a total of 3540 members and 8 Landcare Networks. Issues facing groups included:<sup>27</sup>

- ~ Internal group operations
- ~ Faltering motivation and participation
- ~ "Drowning" in paperwork
- ~ Ineffective communication
- ~ Reluctance to take on executive positions
- ~ Funding frustrations
- ~ Lack of new membership
- ~ An ageing rural population

A review of community education efforts in the catchment conducted in 2001 reinforced the increased complexity and demands within which landcare now operated:

In recent years there has been a change in the way that Landcare groups operate

and the types of activities they are now involved in. Landcare is now regarded by some observers as being more 'top down' rather than landowner and community driven, perhaps as a result of much of the funding for activities and support being from government (Marsh 2001). Certainly the administrative and legal requirements that such funding brings has increased, leading in many cases to volunteer 'burn-out' and loss of ownership. ... Some observers have even suggested that Landcare is now an 'industry' rather than a community force for environmental action (Marsh 2001).<sup>28</sup>

The 'Revitalisation Project' conducted a series of training workshops, sponsored attendance at a State Landcare Forum, and saw the appointment of four new Coordinator positions. A total of fifteen skills audit and strategic planning workshops were held for Landcare office bearers over the two years and a Resource Booklet with key program and contact information was produced, along with a 'model' landholder package for group adaptation. A system of Landcare awards was instigated in each Implementation Committee region to acknowledge achievement and highlight role models and 'best practice' at Biannual Regional Landcare Forums.

The process of aligning Landcare initiatives with the Regional Management Plan cycle was achieved by integrating Local Area Plan [LAP] priorities with the Regional Investment Plan using a single, two page, annual Expression Of Interest process for NHT, NAP and Second Generation Landcare funding programs. This resulted in a single catchment bid and CMA management of funds. Some of the most significant changes effected during the project concerned the work practices and

management environment for support staff. Links were established between landcare facilitators and coordinators and bimonthly network meetings convened. Redesign of the position descriptions and roles for support

staff to create clear expectations and key result areas, was seen as urgent. The issue of an effective management context for support staff remained a subject of discussion and has been examined in recent reviews.<sup>29</sup>



### **‘Cultural translators: information brokers’ – Facilitators & Coordinators**

The history of landcare in the Goulburn Broken region demonstrates unequivocally the key role that facilitation of group formation and coordination of group projects has played. Stand alone facilitator and coordinator positions have been the main vehicle for the delivery of support services to landcare; a service delivery model that has remained unquestioned over most of the period. A Discussion Paper prepared for the Australian Landcare Council in 2001 described the role of Coordinators/Facilitators [referred to as landcare support staff from this point] as essential linking agents. ‘Such community support positions have a pivotal role in regions to raise awareness and capacity, and to coordinate strategic community responses’.<sup>30</sup> Over most of the Decade of Landcare, employment of support staff was either funded as a proportion of project funding or funded directly from the federal government through the National Soil Conservation Program [NSCP], later amalgamated with water programs as the National Landcare Program.

In 1989-90 the NSCP funded 416 projects. One of the earliest funded landcare coordinators was the position with the Warrenbayne Boho Land Management Group. A problem that had been treated to that point, with only a physical dimension, had a social dimension added that was to become a critical feature of landcare.<sup>31</sup> Angus Howell, who became the group’s first full-time coordinator, recalled: ‘The group was to regard this as a model, and record its methods and actions, so that it might be transferable to other landholder groups’.<sup>32</sup>



This enabled WBLPG to undertake an ambitious range of activities at a very professional level. In addition to extensive 'hands on' work on the ground, the group prepared papers on topics such as, 'Effectiveness of Small Group Development', 'How to get the Message Across' and 'A Model for Action', members were invited to speak at numerous workshops and conferences, were invited to New Zealand to act as consultants on parallel initiatives, and prepared some of the information for the early landcare kit developed by CF&L.

The group's capacity to maintain its salinity and revegetation projects across 100

landholder properties, and, to handle group management effectively, was testimony to the role a coordinator could play. 'Paid coordinators can achieve enormous amounts of work quickly ... we are just paid to do the hack work', commented Angus Howell in a 1992 newspaper profile of his role. 'The group has been successful in its submissions for support because it was such an active positive group. Coordinators liaise between farmers and government agencies, chase outside resources and prepare field days. When we have a problem we organize forums to discuss the situation'.<sup>33</sup>

A number of other positions were funded from a variety of funding sources, including Bill Willet coordinator with neighboring Moliyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group, a group that was assisted in forming by WBLPG. Bill observed: 'It's been a benefit to have had a group close by and especially a group with a coordinator. Moliyullah Tatong has grown and the amount of projects that we are involved with at the moment is getting beyond everybody. We will try to get funding for a coordinator'.<sup>34</sup>

Relatively few Group Coordinator positions, as opposed to a project coordination component of an on-ground works grants, were funded. An additional example of a specifically funded position was Udera Landcare Group Coordinator project in the SIR, funded for \$33,000 over a three year period 1993/94 – 1996/97. In order to more effectively coordinate and monitor existing group projects, the coordinator was involved in three key areas:

1. Community education and awareness
2. Planning
3. Resource Inventory

To involve the local community in Watertablewatch, Saltwatch and the local school in Udera projects and events, the coordinator worked with various sub-committees, to develop action plans for community drainage, a vegetation strategy, for groundwater pumping in the local area, further develop the network of watertable test bores and a detailed proposal for reclamation of saline ground including a cluster of small evaporation basins. Surface drainage schemes, groundwater pump sites, test well locations and all existing remnant vegetation, shelterbelts and agroforestry plots

were mapped. The production of quarterly watertable maps enabled the group to monitor the results of surface drainage and groundwater pumps on groundwater levels.

An evaluation report prepared for the National Landcare Program at the conclusion of the funding period, commented that the employment of a coordinator had an immediate positive impact on progress on all projects. 'Many jobs were done that would not have been done ... early progress was made quickly'. However group members felt that too much work and operational knowledge was handed over to the coordinator. Projects were completed successfully but the group was not as involved as they felt they should have been. In these early exemplars of coordination projects the twin goals of implementing on-ground projects and facilitating group development were not well articulated. The concluding comment from the panel evaluating the project in 1997 is indicative of the intrinsic difficulties for community volunteers in providing clear directions, setting priorities and effectively managing paid staff. Based on more recent observations this remains a relevant issue:

It is important, in terms of competency development for facilitators & coordinators, that a successful position demands a fair amount of sophistication in managing the group. It is important that skills are transferred to the group and the coordinator is not taking over the responsibilities of the group. This should be built into coordinator training.

It is also essential for the group to manage the coordinator by having strong work plans and good review processes.<sup>35</sup>





### David Laurie...

... studied Botany at Melbourne University, graduating in 1985 he taught for several years, first at Shepparton, then Wandong, Wallan and Flowerdale. He had bought land at Strath Creek and after several years teaching, in 1991 became a Landcare Facilitator. He was employed to work

15 hours per week jointly for Whiteheads Creek Landcare and Glenaroua Land Management Group. 'There was a big focus on salinity initially', he recalled, 'a lot of projects were hilltop plantings. My job was applying for funding and making it happen; we had big planting days with up to 60 people'. Glenaroua was a big area David played a key role in establishing the group and guiding project development. 'A big project called "Blockie-Greenies" was an attempt to try to get smaller landholders involved'. David noted that perceptions have changed over a decade or so, 'Glenaroua was ordering trees, someone asked, "Are we ordering understorey?" "No", was the answer, "we just want good types of farm timber"! Ten years on he is now routinely supplying understorey plants from his nursery.

David's knowledge and experience as a botanist and his nursery at Reedy Creek [Valley of a Thousand Hills Nursery] has been the background to his quiet promotion of the use of indigenous species for large scale farm planting. His 2003 Hubert Miller Award nomination highlighted that, 'he has been involved personally in the planting of tens of thousands of plants over the Goulburn catchment'. He is famous in the area for the "David Laurie planter" a short, light weight pick/mattock combination, he designed for planting tubestock. He has organised and led numerous wildflower walks and field days and has campaigned for the management of valuable sites such as Mount Piper and Monument Hill – he was involved in the establishment of the Arboretum at Kilmore East and the protection of several other sites in the district. He noted: 'There is more interest now in native grasses and habitat planting; earlier, landcare grew out of agricultural extension work with commercial farmers. Landcare has

diversified and responded to government environmental management and biodiversity grants, then, it was more salinity and waterways. Some farmers don't like that direction; they preferred the old "Lands Department" days'.

David joined DPI in 1993 where he completed an environmental report on the recently decommissioned rail line from Tallarook to Mansfield. Later he completed a survey of roadside vegetation for the Kilmore, Seymour and Mitchell Shires, which in 2003 formed the basis for the Vegetation Protection Overlays in the Mitchell Shire's Planning Scheme and subsequently ran training for Shire works crews. He was a member of the Mitchell Shire Land Management Steering Committee from 1997 – a body that later became the Environment Committee – while building up his nursery.

Across two decades, David has played a key role in the management and rehabilitation of habitat. 'The main thing I've noticed in 20 years is that people's awareness has changed enormously. Concepts that I was taught at Uni have now become mainstream. Then, "ecology" was a "Greenie" issue. Things have changed considerably and that has been an important achievement of Landcare'. Over that period David has passed on the techniques of establishing successful planting. In 1996 and 1997 he again worked as a Landcare Facilitator for Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare Group, working 10 hours per week, a typical allocation for coordinator positions. A signature project was the work in the gorse control program round Kilmore and many of the local signs still carry David's phone number. He commented: 'Frank Donovan negotiated with Elders to get samples of various chemicals and we did a "trial" – a great deal was achieved with relatively small funding'. It is worth noting that much of this work was continued on an entirely voluntary basis after funding ran out. David established a Waterwatch project – testing at 15 sites for salinity, turbidity, phosphorous and nitrogen. "Most sites weren't too bad, but some creeks at the top of the catchment – high up – had very high salt levels'.

David was a representative on the Upper Goulburn Waterways Authority [UGWA] from 1995 and an inaugural member of

the Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee [UGIC] 1997 – 2003. He continued as a member of the River Health and Water Quality Committee of the CMA and the Biodiversity Steering Committee. He is currently the President of Dabyminga Catchment Collective and a representative on the South West Goulburn network. Of the long contribution he has made to landcare and the catchment he remarked ruefully, 'Landcare is about committees'. Dabyminga where he is currently President, has just completed a Paterson's Curse project, 20 landholders were involved in aerial spraying 800ha. The project cost a total of \$2000 in funds with the landholders contributing 80% of the total project. David commented that landcare can work in two ways, either reactively applying for grants that are made available within the CMA or government priorities or tackling local problems identified locally. 'Quite often what funding bodies would like is not the same as what landholders want to see'.

Dabyminga has also just completed a long process of preparing a Local Area Plan [commenced originally in 2000]. While acknowledging that is important for groups to be more strategic, David commented, 'People go to landcare really for the social aspect, working bees etc, we need an understanding of what landcare can do - what the purpose is – there can be an overly optimistic view about what landcare can achieve'. He expressed a strong view that the main purpose was to gradually change the community mindset. 'Landcare is a way of getting messages out to the community – strategies, water quality, biodiversity – and a good way to give individuals a hand'. As one of the longest participants in, and observers of landcare, he felt that there had been, very significant changes in community attitudes and farming practice over time.

### Catalysing establishment, smoothing the way, sustaining momentum

Landcare support staff have existed almost as long as the program itself and in some instances predate it. From 1990, The Department of Conservation and Environment [DCE] organised Facilitator and Coordinator Workshops at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute in 1990 and in 1991 at the Creswick Forestry School. Andrew Campbell defined the roles at the National Landcare Coordinator's Workshop, held at Beechworth in 1989: the facilitator ... 'catalyses the early stages of group establishment, offering some guidance in problem identification, goal and priority setting, contacts and sources of assistance, smoothing the way for groups, making things easier'. By contrast the role of the Coordinator was, 'to sustain the momentum of the group and ensure group efforts actually take effect on the ground'. Campbell made a detailed list of coordinator tasks, ranging from assistance with organisation, leading planning, coordinating projects, linking members and being a source of technical advice. In addition he envisaged that coordinators would be heavily engaged in public relations and liaison work on behalf of groups.<sup>36</sup> Role development, definition and differentiation were central preoccupations at these early forums. Much of the discussion clearly points to the long legacy of "rural extension work", on which the new program would draw in managing the interface with community, farmers, landholders.

Complexity of funding was already an issue by 1990 – eight state and federal programs offered a total of around \$4.0 million in grants.<sup>37</sup> Not only were multiple levels of administration and budget cycles

involved, but the differing provisions and grant conditions could be convoluted and illegible at community level. As funding for projects increased over the 'decade', only a small proportion was available for coordination of projects. Janet Hagen, one of the longest serving landcare support staff in the catchment, started in 1994, working 5 hours a week. This gradually grew to 15 hours, coordinating rabbit action projects from a percentage of Rabbit Buster funds. She commented: 'the job has grown around me'. As the group developed and produced a Local Area Plan, Janet became in her own

account, 'a proper landcare coordinator in 2002', working 3 days a week, reporting to the Hughes Creek Collaborative Executive; the LAP became the Coordinator's work plan and was updated annually.<sup>38</sup>

Bill Willett Coordinator of Molliyulah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group reported in 1991, that the group received income from a number of sources: 'there is the nursery, sale of tree guards, member subscriptions'. From this the group paid for 33% of the coordinator's two day per week position, and the NSCP provided the balance over a three year project. Typical of these patchwork

arrangements the coordinator position was directed by a steering committee and managed several projects - a demonstration revegetation block, a nursery set up to provide cheap, quality seedlings to the community, drainage salinity and pasture improvement projects.

A marked comparison with these type of part-time projects was the facilitator for the entire Mildura region managed by the Mildura Land Protection Regional Advisory Committee. The landcare support person worked within the DCE regional structure and reported to the Senior Planner – Resource Conservation.



The facilitator worked with 6 Landcare groups, 5 Tree Groups, 2 Friends Groups and various conservation groups, covering a very large area from Mildura to Wycheproof – 4.3 m hectares.<sup>39</sup> These two examples constituted the range of types of landcare support positions found in the program which continued to be typical of the diversity of staffing structures throughout the 1990s. Workshop participant lists of 1990 and 1991 show that of the thirty who attended the first training event, 50% were DCE employed staff. By 1991 not only had the participant numbers increased to 47, but there was a

greater representation [62%] of community based groups [18 Landcare Groups; 10 Rabbit Action Groups and 1 Ragwort Action Group]. Goulburn Broken was represented by Whiteheads Creek, Glenaroua, Burnt Creek, Warrenbayne-Boho, Devenish-Goorambat and the Coordinator for the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group. The greater level of interest in training and development is indicative of greater awareness among community management groups and the growing linkages between members of an emerging workforce.

The topics chosen for training sessions are indicative. The first year focused on ‘Group Effectiveness’, ‘Incorporation’, ‘Funding Options’ and promoting ‘Group Identity’. Geoff McFarlane, who was a speaker at the 1990 Workshop addressed: *What makes a successful group?* Stressing the critical importance of planning and setting objectives, he argued: ‘New groups may start with a broad objective ... but as the group matures a more specific focus can be incorporated. Development of group objectives and short term action plans was highlighted as the core function of facilitators/coordinators.

However a chief characteristic identified for ‘effective groups’ was that of independence, ‘groups are always encouraged to solve their own problems without outside help. DCE can provide guidance where necessary’.<sup>40</sup> This tension between autonomy and accountability recurs frequently in debates about Landcare over the next decade.

Hughes Creek has offered an example of an unusually stable and enduring group/support staff relationship. Most were more ephemeral. The Burnt Creek Newsletter of Spring, 1990 focused on rabbit eradication campaigns in the district and counseled: ‘It’s



that time again. “BLOODY RABBITS”. Now is the time to become more active with your neighbors, sort out your combined rabbit problem. You may not have the facilitators in future to mediate your combined problems’.<sup>41</sup> The newsletter was used to introduce a detailed Workshop session on conflict management. A presenter from the Northern Victoria Dispute Settlement Centre, Bendigo, covered examples of relationship, data, interest, value and structural conflicts, and ended with a session on conciliation and negotiation - an interesting skill development session to have had organised at this period of the program’s evolution.

The recent evaluation of Second Generation Landcare Grants [SGLG] program estimated that the SGLG supported the employment of around 25% of all local Landcare coordinator and facilitator positions in Victoria. The study noted, ‘with diminishing DPI availability in many areas, local landcare staff are often the only contact available to members and landholders for information and assistance’, and reported that coordinators bring substantial amounts of funding into areas, multiplying SGLG grants by an estimated factor of 2+ on average.<sup>42</sup>

### **Important responsibilities, diverse roles, after hours work – apply within**

Landcare support staff [LCSS] in all states have worked in challenging conditions from the beginning of the program. Observers have noted that ‘workers are scattered and many are isolated both geographically and professionally, and employed by a variety of organisations’.<sup>43</sup> The critical role played by coordinators and facilitators in supporting landcare activities has increased significantly

in recent years. The increased demands on this workforce have been recognised in the last few years. In response to growing concerns Land and Water Australia funded a research project to assess management of workloads and burnout in landcare members, leaders and coordinators. A survey sent to LCSS in April 2001, showed that burnout resulting from ‘a low sense of personal accomplishment’ was a factor for a large percentage of staff. The report recommended four main strategies to improve job satisfaction and working conditions. Role overload required urgent attention, along with development of a clear range of expected outcomes. Short-term contract employment was seen to militate against ‘strategic facilitation and effective work planning’, and training was ‘considered to be an important investment’ in the landcare workforce.<sup>44</sup>

Further research exploring landcare working conditions and job satisfaction was commissioned by the Victorian Landcare Network and the Statewide Landcare Coordination Team, in January 2005. The survey examined demographic data on landcare support staff, role perceptions and current levels of job satisfaction.<sup>45</sup> The survey revealed a great diversity of employment conditions, backgrounds and roles. The biggest employers of LCSS are Landcare Networks [43%] and CMAs [29%]; 9.5% are employed by Landcare Groups. Employment conditions for LCSS in the Goulburn Broken are complex [see Appendix D]. For a number of staff the formal employing agency, management and reporting auspice and operational location are each entirely discrete and even geographically separate entities. The average annual salary was \$40,000, however only 60% work full time; while 80% are employees, 20% are

contractors. It is noteworthy that 70% are in their first position with Landcare and 36% have been in their jobs for less than a year. High turnover of staff is a recognised characteristic of these types of government program funded positions.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the high priority given to ‘community capacity building’ in the landcare program in both state and national reviews since 1999, only one in four LCSS have any form of community development or social process training. The report commented:

The pool of skills and abilities among LCSS need to reflect this focus. This will require that employer organisations and managing groups greatly increase

opportunities, resources and inputs for community development training ... and modify current recruitment processes to focus less on technical skills and more on community development.<sup>47</sup>

Evidence from survey data showed that because landcare communities give more urgent priority to ‘on-ground work’, there were significant constraints to achieving community development as a major focus. While the policy goals at government level may favour community capability development, the fact that the majority of LCSS are employed by Landcare Networks, and that there is a declining membership, means significant tensions are likely to be experienced.



### A coordinated approach to land rehabilitation – the role of networks

An important development in Landcare has been the growth of effective Networks of local groups that has enabled more effective scale for management and planning strategic projects. At its peak of group and member growth in the mid 1990s Landcare was contemplating landscape scale change. Resources from government and philanthropic institutions were added to the significant private landholder and community volunteer contributions. A few networks were established prior to CaLP Boards [the first regional framework]; these were serviced by coordinators and agency staff attached to River Trusts, the Catchment Coordinating Group, the Salinity and other projects. As new regional arrangements were established to integrate land and waterway management, resources for support services were not transferred fully to CMAs, nor to catchment projects. However accountability and service demands on Landcare networks continued to expand. The function of networks in the delivery of landcare programs has been acknowledged by many commentators and in multiple research findings.<sup>48</sup> They have played various critical roles – maintaining information flows and group identity through periods of low, or no activity; conduct of forums to share ideas and experience across a range of district groups; targeting NRM projects to sub-catchment level; arranging financial support for poorly funded groups or projects; support to new groups; employment of LCSS; operating as clearing house ‘centres’ and structured information distribution across wide geographic areas.<sup>49</sup> Networks are not necessarily a recent adaptation of

the ‘landcare model’, several in the Goulburn Broken date from the mid 1990s.

Interesting examples include Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative formed in March 1994. It was one of four networks of landcare groups formed in the mid 1990s, along with Granite Creeks, Goulburn Murray Landcare Network and the Upper Goulburn Catchment Project, which later became the Upper Goulburn Network, forming an umbrella for a

larger number of groups than involved in the original catchment project. [See Appendix J for a complete listing of networks and component landcare groups].

Formed to meet different objectives, and in different contexts, with the generic aim of developing a coordinated, and more efficient approach to land rehabilitation projects, networks have become an important development in the structure of Landcare.

Three generic types of networks have emerged in the Goulburn Broken region:

- ~ Network service provider organisation
- ~ Network of sub-catchment groups with landscape and project focus
- ~ Network of sub-regional groups with a collective interest, discussion forum /steering committee function.





### **Goulburn Valley Environment Group...**

... represents the only collective 'environmentalist voice' in the Goulburn Valley. Small meetings of local people in Shepparton in 1989 led to the formation of GVEG Inc in 1990. At a meeting chaired by Shepparton's mayor Jeremy Gaylard, Barbara Leavesly the secondary teacher who had sought to establish a contact point for environmental concerns and activities, was elected as foundation President. Membership rose to more than one hundred and enthusiastic monthly meetings were held with a range of guest speakers. The structure determined at this early stage, to extend both a policy role and undertake practical action, was a central committee and a number of action groups formed to tackle particular issues, ongoing projects or organise events. In addition to this working structure, GVEG became a member group of the Conservation Council of Victoria. Action groups focussed on recycling, salinity, environmental education; others organised field trips, explored fundraising and developed a newsletter. A regular newspaper column was begun in December 1990 and featured the GVEG logo chosen through a public competition.

In 1991 funding was sourced for the Broken River Action Group, to commence rehabilitation of the deteriorating river and its frontages. A high profile media campaign galvanised

many community volunteers and extensive revegetation work was commenced. Gemmills Swamp, a wildlife reserve that encompasses 170 hectares of Red Gum floodplain forest and Tall Spike Rush wetlands where pelicans, ibis, swans, egrets and ducks can be sighted was a priority. In 1991 GVEG organised for the removal of stock-grazing from the wetland, the establishment of a nature trail and accompanying leaflet, signage and management plan. The research committee published "A Year in the Life of Gemmills Swamp", to promote local awareness. Other campaigns included sand mining at Kialla, logging in old growth forest and cattle grazing on public land. At the Shepparton Show in 1991 GVEG mounted a stall with compost bins as prizes to promote recycling.

In 1992, conservation of the 250ha Mooroopna Common riverine forest was commenced and is still a focus of the group today. In 1994 major funding was received for a flora and fauna survey along the Broken, Boosey and Nine Mile Creeks. In the same year action projects included input to the Regional Landcare Plan, working with the Yorta Yorta on the future of the Barmah Forest. Working bees were held to remove woody weeds and other weeds at the Boxwood historic reserve. GVEG joined forces with Merrigum Landcare Group to create a wetland. In 1996, after conducting surveys of landholder attitudes towards fencing of creek lines, GVEG launched a booklet to guide streamside management, "Manage Your Banks", and the ongoing Broken River restoration remained a high priority. Other publications have included, Dargalong Racecourse Grassland, Gardening with local Native Plants, Environmental Weeds in the Shepparton Irrigation Region, and Priorities for Nature Conservation on the Northern Plains.

By 1997 the group had gained positive endorsement of its role, in the form of funding for a Coordinator which enabled regular representation on various water quality and river health committees including the Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee (SIRIC). Other community environmental representation has continued via the Farm Working Group, Waterways Working Group, various Natural

Resource Management committees, and infrastructure committees such as Vic Roads Goulburn Valley Highway Duplication Projects. In 2001 achievements included the completion of a survey of the biological values of more than 400 kms of creek frontage along the Broken, Boosey and Nine Mile Creek systems that resulted in the CMA launching a Broken Creek fencing program and the Victorian Government establishing 60 ha of reserve along the creek system.

A key role played by GVEG has been input into many policy development processes, reports and subsequent implementation strategies, examples include: the Mid Murray Forest Management Area Plan; Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy; development of a Native Vegetation Retention policy; input into policy for the City of Greater Shepparton. GVEG has sought to provide a collective voice on environmental issues in the Goulburn Broken catchment. The group was instrumental in the establishment of an effective alliance with environment groups in the region, including Benalla and District Environment Group and groups from the Seymour area, to coordinate and enhance conservation and environmental lobbying at all levels of government. At the action/onground work level, GVEG had close links with 'landcare', many GVEG members have participated in local Landcare groups and programs; GVEG action groups have on many occasions accessed Landcare funding for revegetation and biodiversity protection/enhancement projects. The history of the group displays multiple interconnections of people and organisations, and the interpenetration of policy campaigns and action projects.

### Catchment Networks

Granite Creeks Landcare Network was formed to create an 'integrated, whole of sub-catchment, natural resource planning project'. The first edition of the Newsletter for the Granite Creeks project, a network of six landcare groups, was issued in May 1996. It reported extensively for landcare members on the Granite Creeks: Strathbogie Ranges Landcare Project. A project management committee had been elected in February 1994, with two representatives from each participating group – Balmattum Sheans Creek, Creightons Creek, Burnt Creek, Longwood East, Castle Creek, Seven Creeks. The committee managed the development of a strategic plan, to deal with land and water degradation across the area, 95,500 ha, or 950 sq km, mainly on the southern edge of the Hume Highway, and on the slopes and plateaus of the Strathbogie Ranges between Violet Town and Avenel. Landholders recognised the advantages of coordinating action across a wider landscape with similar and inter-related problems and set as their global aim:

To develop a sustainable environmental and economic balance in the catchments of the Strathbogie Ranges by overcoming land, gully and creek erosion, and thereby improving stream quality.<sup>50</sup>

Strong support for this extension of the landcare model, came from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources [DCNR], the Victorian Farmers Federation, Department of Agriculture, the Rural Water Corporation, Euroa Nagambie Regional Water Authority and the Shires of Euroa, Goulburn, Seymour and Violet Town. The six landcare groups individually, had already undertaken

substantial environmental works. The earliest formed, Seven Creeks Catchment Group was formally accredited as a LandCare Group by CF&L in 1988, when it had 90 members and was undertaking land protection work over 40 properties. In addition to a significant landowner contribution the project was funded by CF&L and the Rural Water Commission.<sup>51</sup> Burnt Creek Landcare accredited in March 1990, developed similarly from a predecessor Rabbit Control Group established in 1988.<sup>52</sup> Between 1991 and 1993 a major focus was a comprehensive and coordinated rabbit control program in Castle Creek and Sheans Creek catchments and an extension of the rabbit eradication programs of Burnt Creek and Seven Creeks. Over the same period a project funded by the Murray Darling Basin NRM Strategy, planted 25,000 trees.

~ The ambitious coordination/networking strategy developed in 1994 identified five main program areas:

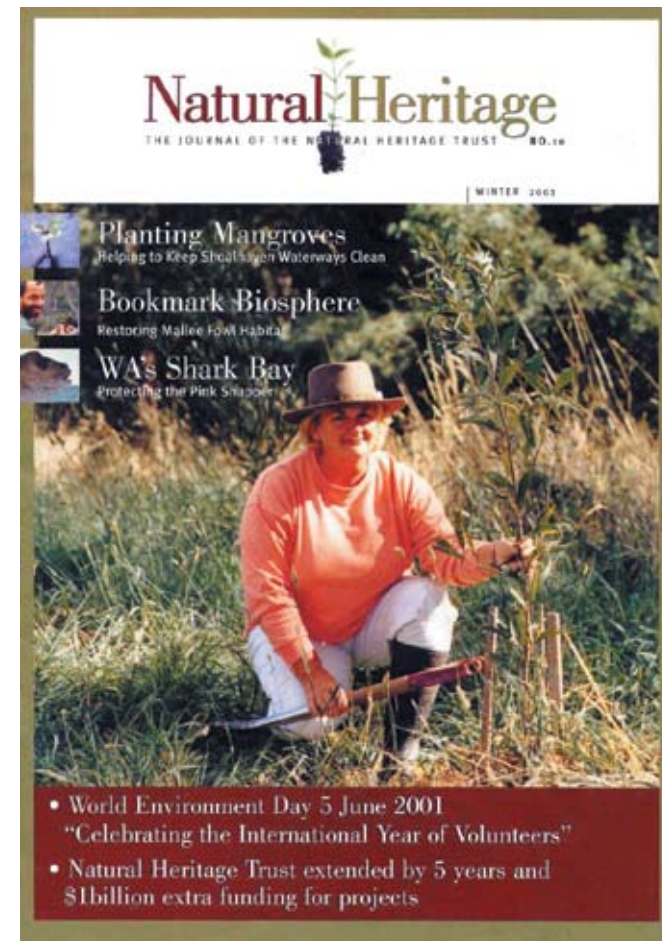
- Rabbit Eradication
- Tree and Understorey Establishment
- Pasture Establishment and Maintenance
- Weed and Vermin Control
- Creek and Gully Stabilisation

At its commencement, the project was successful in securing funding totalling \$53,000 from Philanthropic Trusts [Sydney Myer Foundation and the William Buckland Foundation] for two project staff positions for 1996/97/98 – Project Secretary and Education Officer. Rabbit Action Funds from DCNR - \$37,500 enabled the employment of a Rabbit Action Facilitator. To monitor project outputs and build an effective knowledge base a series of site maps were prepared.

The 1996 Newsletter reported:

With little data collected in the dryland area on natural resources, we could be assisting ourselves and promote further study into our area. We need to know the current state of affairs in order to

set priorities and document change – recording data provides a reference for the future. Monitoring may also provide an asset in terms of bidding for future funding ... may become a prerequisite for future funding.<sup>53</sup>



Rabbit Eradication was a priority for the network due to the scale of rabbit populations in the pre Calcivirus years; a range of control measures were employed, with several different methods being trialled in discrete locations. 'The wild rabbits inhabiting the belt of granite hills in the Strathbogge Shire of north eastern Victoria are almost legendary in their ability to survive the annual barrage of control measures implemented by landholders and government agencies'. Over 43% of the 95,5000 ha Granite Creeks area was rated Grade 1 for rabbit density [10+ rabbits per hectare] a DSE equivalent of more than 45,000 sheep and estimated production losses of up to \$7.0m per year.<sup>54</sup>

It is indicative of the level of interest and concern that 80 landholders were reported to have attended a Rabbit Control and Harbour Removal Workshop hosted by Seven Creeks held over a holiday weekend in National Landcare Month 1996. The newsletter reported, 'interest in the Calcivirus was clearly evident as the group were presented with the latest information available ... a release date is still not forthcoming, with the program needing to pass through several Federal Acts including the Biological Control Act, the Environment Protection Act and the Agriculture and Veterinary Chemical Code Act ... CaLP Boards are working to ensure Victoria takes the opportunity ... the virus is unlikely to be released before 1997/98 as the federal government is insisting on further testing of icon species [wombats, koalas etc], and links to humans, before considering release.<sup>55</sup>

An important strategy developed by the Network was the engagement of the large numbers of non-residential landowners and 'those who do not have a traditional farming background', to raise awareness and

knowledge of the issues and secure financial contribution to projects. Commencing in 1996 several innovative Information Forums were conducted at a Melbourne location for "City Based Farmers".<sup>56</sup> Efforts to raise awareness and participation levels by landholders became increasingly relevant as cutbacks in government services continued. The same newsletter noted the closure of the DCNR depot at Seymour, a casualty of the recent restructuring of DCNR to create the mega department DNRE, which integrated conservation, environment and agriculture under two ministers Pat McNamara and Marie Tehan.

The improvement of stream quality in the badly eroded and degraded waterways of the southern Strathboggies was a major objective and resulted in the establishment of Waterwatch in the area. Regular volunteer measurement of salinity and turbidity became an element of the coordination project. Seven Creeks for example, remained one of the 21 unregulated catchments across Victoria and important habitat for the endangered Trout Cod. A Flow Study was eventually announced by the CMA in July 2005, to prepare a Stream Flow Management Plan [SFMP] 'to create a balanced and sustainable sharing of available water between all stakeholders in the catchment, including, the environment, licensed diverters and non-consumptive water users (recreation and aesthetics)'.<sup>57</sup>

It is indicative of the long time frames involved in landscape scale natural resource management projects that in November 2005 a Granite Creeks EOI sought funds for a project to commence a five year program for waterway stabilisation, restoration of salinity affected areas, protection of streambeds and enhancement of biodiversity across the sub-

catchment. One of the main means to achieve this long term objective was the development of eighteen whole farm plans in the sub-catchment. The Granite Creeks project has

continued but its role as a network of landcare groups has gone through cycles over time and the individual member groups appear to have reverted to a focus on projects at a local scale.





### Ed Adamson...

... played an important role in the initiative to establish Delatite Landcare Group; he was a founding member and first Vice President when the group was formed in October 1993. Ed started his working life with the Soil Conservation Authority in the 1960s, first in districts round Melbourne

and then moving to Alexandra in 1968, where he managed Group Conservation Areas in the region. 'There was fairly solid government funding for landholders to join together under government auspice to deal with erosion and improve pastures'. After some years he became aware of the depletion of native vegetation and started using native vegetation in projects in preference to 'pole planting'. He recalled: 'It was early days I hadn't really come to terms with how to do it. I was experimenting in the backyard at Alexandra'. Over time it was learnt that the essentials for farm tree establishment were good preparation - deep ripping, weed spraying and ongoing weed control. He commented: 'When the SCA was in its heyday, it was very well respected; academic but also strongly practical'.

In 1969/70, Ed became involved with the Mansfield Courier and the Stoney and Tehan families, who he described as 'leading lights in the district and very interested in revegetation and focussed on local environmental issues; they were representatives on the Soil Conservation Advisory Committee'. Ed became Managing Editor of the Courier and developed the paper into a readable tabloid with a focus on the local community issues. From 1973 – 1980 Ed worked as a field officer with the Natural Resources Conservation League, an organisation formed in the period to heighten the promotion of native species in revegetation and landscape management and in particular the use of native plants in rural areas. For many years the NRCL conducted a very successful tree nursery operation to supply tube stock for revegetation projects, schools and other organisations.

In the early 1980s, Ed enrolled in the Masters in Environmental Science at Monash, to further develop his experience with ecology rehabilitation and whole of catchment approaches to land management. While a 'student' Ed spent time in New Guinea undertaking a consultancy project for Monash University reviewing land use and the effectiveness of a large small holding settlement in West New Britain.

Pursuing his growing expertise and commitment to farm tree projects Ed worked with the Ministry of Planning in the mid 1980s, and prepared a report, *The Relationship between Trees and Rural Productivity*. Soon after this he joined the Victorian Farmers Federation [VFF] and Garden State Committee program aimed at facilitating the formation of Farm Tree Groups across the state. When he commenced, the program had seven Tree Groups launched. Thirty-seven groups were created across Victoria over the time he managed with the program. As part of this campaign he wrote an article for the journal of NRCL, *Trees and Victoria's Resources*. Mansfield and District Farm Tree Group was established in 1988 with Ed's assistance and publicity in the Mansfield Courier. The group looked at early paintings of the area by Eugene Von Geurrard to get a sense of the landscape before clearing and undertook a number of plantings and produced a brochure sponsored by Elders. The group was finally disbanded in May 1995. Ed remembered: 'It had run its course and by then Landcare was well underway, a lot of the early landcare impetus emanated from the Mansfield Tree Group'.

In the late 1980s Ed worked with the Australian Conservation Foundation as a lobbyist at federal government level preparing press releases: 'It was at the time when ACF and VFF/NFF were working together, brokering an approach to land degradation problems, out of which the Landcare program developed. It all followed a major report prepared by ACII P/L; *A Review of Land Degradation in Australia* which assessed at that time that \$600 million was needed to begin to address the problems'.

In addition to various roles over this whole period Ed remained involved in managing farm properties in the Mansfield area, originally as a nut farmer at Mirimbah, utilising a pumping right from the Delatite River where he put into practice his growing mission to promote revegetation of the bare hills of the region with native species. He has also operated a business offering consultancy services in the design of tree plantations and property planning over the same period and currently operates a nursery at Merrijig. From the 1960s to the present, Ed's working life and community involvement has spanned the major milestones in responses to land degradation and conservation.

### Pooling resources in the Upper Catchment

Another catchment based project that networked a consortium of landcare groups was the Upper Goulburn Catchment Project which commenced in 1994. The project area comprised a catchment of approximately 50,000ha which produced up to 50% of the certified grass seed grown in Victoria, 75% of fish farms and extensive farm forestry, beef farming, as well as being the second largest potato growing region in the State. It was decided, despite enthusiasm for the project, to restrict Stage 1 to only four adjoining groups – Ancona, Home Creek, Merton and Molesworth.

The need was overwhelming for existing landcare groups to pool their resources, planning and efforts into achieving a more coordinated and effective approach to land and water management in the region.<sup>58</sup>

The project was viewed as a unique opportunity to coordinate activities and resources between landcare groups, the Upper Goulburn Waterway Authority, DNRE, local government and environmental interests groups, 'to revegetate the barren hills of the area'. Nineteenth and early twentieth century photos show clearly the extent to which the upper catchment has been cleared of its original vegetation cover.<sup>59</sup> A letter dating from the 1940s, or early 1950s reads, 'send all workers to Three Sisters we'll be ringbarking all the trees... ..<sup>60</sup> Stage 1 of the catchment project, included detailed mapping of vegetation types, land tenure, hydrology and contours of the catchment. A wide-ranging survey of landcare members provided data on trees/understorey, pasture improvement, weeds and pests, stream erosion and formed

the basis to identify priorities and develop projects as part of a long term catchment strategy plan.

The critical importance of the upper catchment to maintenance of water quality for a range of Goulburn water users downstream, and in turn the Murray, was the starting point for the strategy. It was also a key to potential funding and sponsorship. Achievement of project objectives, such as extensive tree planting, pasture improvement, extension of flora and fauna corridors and effective broad scale pest and weed control required

considerable resourcing. An initial planning estimate of on ground rehabilitation works

is indicative and it was hoped to attract corporate funding.

Tree Planting	500,000
Pest & weed control	12,500 days
Erosion control structures	10
Fencing – creek banks; recharge areas	340km
Pastures – steep hill country; recharge & sheet erosion	6000ha





Stage 2 of the project extended to the wider groups of the Upper Goulburn region and included, Kinglake, Strath Creek, Yellow Creek/ Dairy Creek, East Killingworth, Yea, UT Creek, Delatite, Bonnie Doon, and a new group in Alexandra, a growth which Terry Hubbard, current president of the Network, attributes to the work of the landcare coordinators in the area.

When I first joined the Upper Catchment Network, it was a time when coordinators had been appointed; there was a negative attitude to Facilitators/Coordinators coming into “community landcare”. I forced the issue, emphasized the different roles of volunteers and the best use of coordinators. At the time it was a giant barrier for a lot of people. But if you could pin one great advance for landcare in the Upper Goulburn it would be the advent of coordinators.<sup>61</sup>

In September 2002 the Network reported on a review of the network model for landcare in the Upper Goulburn region recommending that membership be open to all groups above the King Parrot Creek catchment and be managed by a Committee of Management comprising one delegate from each group. The need to retain a strong sense of community, and a sense of place was emphasised. Organisationally, leadership and succession planning were critical factors in success for the network. Benefits of network membership were seen as:

- ~ Access to coordinator support
- ~ Facilitated access to government funding
- ~ Reduced administrative load
- ~ Shared information and best practice

- ~ Ability to participate in regional priority setting
- ~ Relating to a broader community of interest<sup>62</sup>

A more recent review has seen a redevelopment and revaluing of the role of the Network, to that of remotivating landcare in the area to lift membership, ‘to get some new enthusiasm’. It was agreed that the Network would operate as the interface between small groups and government and would develop publications for the member groups. The Network Executive attends ordinary landcare meetings and has centralised the process of funding. ‘We audited the Network last year and came through with flying colours’.<sup>63</sup> The forward plans for the Upper Goulburn Catchment Network include addressing broad issues such as climate change and the Network has sourced \$10,000 to employ a coordinator for the Murrindindi Climate Change Network which is developing a website. The intention is that the Network become ‘more political’, take an advocacy stance on important environmental questions and stress to the CMA, the role it can play in supporting landcare and the form of support services most effective in the Upper Goulburn region. There are also plans to work cooperatively with the Mid Goulburn Broken area to coordinate community effort and share examples of successful projects. The aim now, ‘to involve a wider community of people of very high calibre; communities are now very receptive because of drought and climate change; we need to capitalise on all that’.<sup>64</sup>



### Goulburn Murray Landcare Network...

... a voluntary, community run forum, was formally incorporated in March 1995. It is one of the first coordinative Landcare groupings in Australia and the first network in the Goulburn Broken Catchment with initially twenty-one member groups. GMLN covers approximately 3000 square kilometres in the Shepparton Irrigation Region. Its origins lie in the work that Geoff McFarlane, funded under the National Landcare Program, undertook to develop and extend Landcare and Watertable Watch in the SIR, in the early 1990s. John Laing, current President of GMLN, and founding member of Dhurringile and District Landcare Group recalled how the network evolved: 'In the very early days, Geoff visited Dhurringile to talk about test wells and he enrolled a number of other Landcare groups in the SIR. Ultimately we called a meeting to discuss how to coordinate the mapping and monitoring of results and it was proposed to form a network. After that many of us spent many nights working out how to do it.' From those beginnings the aim became to facilitate the planning and coordination of fund raising and create a forum for information exchange.

The Watertable Watch program was established in 1995 after the group received funding from the William Buckland Philanthropic Trust enabling community members to be paid to read over 1000 testwells on a monthly basis in their individual Landcare group areas. The information collated and maps produced over the last eight years, have become a valuable NRM resource for the region. As the network evolved so did the role and possible projects. 'Getting funding for things from government in the early days was a struggle. The money from the Buckland foundation was critical – it was a couple of hundred kilometres to drive around the test wells. In the end we got creative and said we would employ contractors. We got

NHT funds for that'. In addition to contracting field work, GMLN employed Ann Roberts to coordinate the writing of funding submissions, thus lifting an onerous and complex task from individual Landcare Groups.

In 1998 a partnership project between Goulburn Murray Water, Goulburn Valley Water, Department of Natural Resources and Environment [now DPI] and the GMLN was funded to raise water quality awareness and encourage best management practices for nutrient runoff in the region. 'Drainwatch evolved out of a slow process of resources coming from agencies and matching them with community volunteer contributions ... the uses of the data produced by these programs continues to be a big issue', commented John Laing, 'we get the cooperation in preventing nutrient rich water leaving properties, Landcare is generally very well received. The program continues our longstanding partnership and has been strengthened by the recent addition of education and monitoring in urban as well as rural areas'.

GMLN has come to play an important role in employing project and coordination staff across the catchment. This responsibility has grown as, 'extension staff have been sucked out of the Departments. The Network now employs all the weed rural extension people in the catchment for example'. The function has evolved slowly and opportunistically, in response to many issues. In particular in recent years has been the need to improve the operational context for a number of Landcare support staff. John Laing observed that at the time, GMLN had been considered as a potential employing auspice, 'people felt lost, pay rates varied unreasonably, the CMA didn't want to become the employer, and as it would generate management fees for the Network, the Exec decided to take it on. We are the "employer" on paper', he noted of the unique arrangement, but went on to comment, 'the career structure for Landcare support people is woeful given their knowledge and experience'. The 2005 Annual Report listed twenty-one people as employed by the Network and thirty-one Landcare groups in the SIR as affiliated: 'Community groups are joining up because of the growing demand on them to attend meetings'.

Between 1999 and 2005 the Local Area Planning process has been a most significant project between the DNRE/DPI, GBCMA

and GMLN. Comprehensive Natural Resource Management plans, based on wide consultation between a number of local Landcare groups, have been developed in eight subcatchments across the SIR - Cornella, Nanneella and District, Wyuna, Dhurringile and District, Nathalia and District, Bunbartha/Kaarimba/Zeerust, Muckatah/Katamatite/Naringaningalook and Invergordon. This development has lifted priority setting and planning of onground works above the very local to the more effective regional level. Karen Brisbane, Landcare Facilitator and Office Manager GMLN, since 2000, commented; 'The landscape in the SIR is very changed; Landcare in the region is past the era of rabbits and trees, and is now looking at soil health, surface drainage, sustainable agriculture, what vegetation and grassland there is needs preserving. LAP projects were based on subcatchment water flows and where groups were initiated, LAPs are the next stage of development'.

In 2005 GMLN celebrated ten years of providing network services to Landcare groups in the region – coordinating onground activities, publicity and communications, resources and assistance for fundraising have been 'vital in maintaining groups' momentum'. GMLN produces regular community newsletters and has organised many training opportunities to assist groups with their own communications and local community action. The role played by GMLN over more than a decade has made possible the growth of Landcare projects and the maintenance of effective community infrastructure across SIR. Regional projects such as Drainwatch, Watertable Watch, Local Area Planning, Group Support/Community Capacity Building, RiverConnect, and Community Education all employ a facilitator as first point of contact and project manager. Each year the Network has organised special Bus Trips to take Landcare members to sites of environmental and sustainable farming interest around Victoria – events which have proved very popular. The 2005 Annual Report highlighted that the primary aim of the Network has been 'to make sure Landcare Groups receive assistance and support' and that there are no barriers to accessing the services they need. GMLN has developed a very effective model of information and service brokerage – a remarkable and enduring accomplishment considering the entirely voluntary nature of the Executive.

### A pioneering landcare service network

A significant outcome of the project to develop landcare in the SIR was the formation of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network, established in 1994 – one of the first landcare network organisations in Australia. The networking/coordination aspect of the project became dominant as it came to be critical to the further development of landcare in the SIR. John Laing, President of GMLN described the creation of the network from a community perspective. ‘As Watertable Watch started, the question was how to coordinate monitoring, test results and maps. At one meeting we discussed forming a network and many nights were spent at Julia Carpenter’s [SIR Landcare Facilitator], working out what to do.’<sup>65</sup>

The idea of GMLN also evolved from a growing need to address better ways of applying for funds and distributing them, and later from the realization that it was more effective to employ people to work on projects. ‘We lost people over that – some wanted to stay “volunteer”’.<sup>66</sup> One of the earliest sources of funds for GMLN was the William Buckland Foundation, which provided \$60,000 that enabled payment to Test Well monitors and the production of a monthly graph that was distributed to 800 farms over several years. Over 1000 bores were read regularly for a period of eight years. The Foundation subsequently made a further \$25,000 available: ‘That money created a whole lot of things happening in GMLN, it was very supportive.’<sup>67</sup> John Laing reflected: ‘Over many years we’ve had many workshops about funding, in them you learn which are the “warm fuzzy” words of the moment; you

have to learn to use the right terminology to get the funds’.<sup>68</sup>

An important function now played by GMLN is to act as the formal employer body for almost all of the landcare support positions in the catchment. [See Appendix D: Landcare Facilitators /Coordinators Employment & Operating Arrangements]

Currently GMLN administers twenty LCSS and project staff positions:

- ~ River Connect

- ~ Storm water
- ~ Waterwatch
- ~ Drain monitoring
- ~ Weeds Rural Extension
- ~ Community Capacity Building
- ~ Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare [3 Facilitators]
- ~ Upper Goulburn Landcare [4 Coordinators; 1 project position]
- ~ SIR Landcare [2 Coordinators]

The Network auspice has been used as a mechanism to maintain flexible employment arrangements: ‘The CMA doesn’t wish to employ people and has nurtured a range of “community locations” as landcare has grown’, commented Karen Brisbane Project Support Coordinator. A result being that GMLN experiences significant demands in advertising, recruitment, contract development and MOUs and is responsible for all legal matters of employment and OH&S.<sup>69</sup>



**A discussion forum network**

The steering committee of the South West Goulburn Landcare network meets as a committee of collective interest but not with any formal jurisdiction. A major function of the steering committee is to act as the management leadership and reporting body for the South West Goulburn Landcare Coordinator position. Aspects of the SWG grouping demonstrate some of the organisational evolution that has taken place

in landcare – the Dabyminga Catchment Cooperative was formed from two landcare groups, Tallarook LCG [1995] and Reedy Creek [2001] whose area covers the catchment of two creeks which are geographically contiguous. One group in the network has undertaken few if any on-ground projects over the last 4-5 years but continues to contribute knowledge and expertise to the forum, in what has been described as ‘An active form of recess’.<sup>70</sup>

South West Goulburn Landcare network is not a registered legal entity. Funding applications submitted for projects and the coordinators position are submitted formally through Sunday Creek Sugarloaf Subcatchment Inc. (which is the formal network alignment between Glenaroua, Sunday Creek Dry Creek, Willowmavin and Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare groups) and the Dabyminga Catchment Cooperative, though priorities are discussed in this forum. A role played by the

forum is, like most networks, that of mediating between landcare groups and the various agencies involved in the catchment. ‘CMAs are output oriented – weed, salinity, erosion etc, DPI is similar but is also more oriented to community capacity building; DSE is really an administration level for the state and commonwealth governments. The community though, is really concerned about what Landcare can do for the local area – dealing with significant problems in the local area’.<sup>71</sup>





**Craig Tuhan...**

... grew up on the family dairy farm at Stanhope and after training as an accountant came back in 1989 and started a program of planting trees on the property. He recalled: 'A neighbour had done a lot of planting between Girgarre and Stanhope on the McColl Road; that

got me started'. Soon after he became involved with Girgarre Stanhope Landcare Group and in 1991 became secretary. There has followed an enduring contribution to the community through landcare activities over two decades. Craig worked as a tree planting contractor for ten years around the Girgarre Stanhope area and in a voluntary capacity organised numerous planting days, assisted with the establishment of plantations in Kialla, Echuca and Torrumbarry and was part of a team that planted a corridor between Stanhope and Rushworth. An important aspect of his involvement has been the careful preparation for planting, so critical to success and hours of follow up watering with his own equipment.

The initial motivation to establish a landcare group in the district was concern about salinity and the high watertables. From the outset Craig has seen the importance of education. Since 1990, on a voluntary basis, he has conducted regular field trips for Stanhope Primary School to the Girgarre Stanhope Evaporation Basin, to explain salinity and demonstrate irrigation best practices. The topography of the area makes drainage a big issue. Craig commented: 'A few years ago they put in the Timmering Depression Line and are now completing the Stanhope Depression Line. But, when somebody mentions salinity these days I get a surprise – it's been dry for a very long time – all the funding from State and National Governments has changed. It [salinity] is not a priority at the moment.'

As a long term participant in landcare Craig has felt that with the changed economic and social climate in the area, the landcare model may now not be as appropriate as in

the earliest years – generational change and a squeeze on farm profitability has made it more difficult to expect local groups to volunteer the time and effort required. 'Things have changed. There are fewer dairy farmers around these days'. Many of the early landcare volunteers worked on the formation of the salinity strategy for the area; now there are fewer volunteers. Landcare needs to be supported to move through demographic and structural changes. Craig noted that: 'One of the main funding areas now is community capability building – there is a need to support landcare, provide funding and other information especially through networks'.

Since its inception in 1994, Craig has been a very active supporter of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network. 'There was a need to form a network that could be more effective over a bigger area, coordinate projects and be more efficient. It was an important change, over time the network has been very valuable'. Since the mid 1990s GMLN has a long list of project and ongoing program achievements. The annual bus trips and field days have been a popular feature. Craig has been on the Executive Committee continuously, as Chairperson, for three terms, or Treasurer, a position he still holds. He has been an active on a number of committees, in particular has taken significant responsibility for management of the Local Area Planning Project for the Shepparton Irrigation Region. Craig commented: 'As the drought continues to tighten its grip on the countryside it should be remembered and noted that these farmers are managing the land. Who will do it otherwise? So strategies need to be implemented for this stewardship to continue'. As treasurer of GMLN he is responsible for a significant budget and administrative role in that most Landcare Facilitators and Coordinators for the Goulburn Broken catchment are employed under the auspices of the Network.

In addition to participating in a number of landcare forums and conferences since the mid 1990s, Craig has played an important role for GMLN assisting with the Goulburn Broken Landcare Forums for 2001 and 2003 and was a key participant

in the formation of the GB Community Landcare Support Strategy developed over 2004. 'GMLN has an important role as a service provider to landcare and landcare support staff. We've had an ability to attract funds for our own needs – for example we are able to pay a modest meeting fee to our Executive – it is important to provide support to staff and volunteers. Most of them are working part-time and often from home. The Local Area Plan implementation staff are a case in point – they all work one day a week'. Craig made a strong point about the value of the network in maintaining continuous and accurate records. 'Information management is generally not good in landcare. The advantage of the network being around a long time is that we have built up a good organisational memory'.

Craig has received a number of awards in recognition for his long voluntary service to landcare. At the 2007 National Landcare Programme awards he received a high commendation in the Individual Landcarer Award.



### Support, communication and statewide employment standards

The Victorian Landcare Network is an association for landcare professionals established in 1997 with 200 members. While this is a statewide organisation, it plays a significant role through LCSS in the catchment. The formation of the VLN was facilitated by the Victorian Farmers Federation [VFF], to address the isolated and often uncontexted working conditions of many LCSS. It covers all voluntary or paid landcare workers and aims to improve communication and standards of employment and project management

statewide, by campaigning for 'greater recognition of employed landcare positions as professional positions'.<sup>72</sup> The network ensures information transfer and resource sharing between LCSS and community representatives and government agencies. The VLN is managed by a voluntary committee and Brenan Wotherspoon of the VFF acts as the VLN Administrative Officer; a crucial resource that maintains a state-wide data base of LCSS and 'holds the network together'.<sup>73</sup> [This continues a role VFF has played for landcare over an extended period]. The VLN meets bi-monthly and runs a statewide conference each year. A charter has recently been developed.

The Network operates through a series of portfolios:

- ~ Advocacy [employment and work conditions]
- ~ Professional development [developing a booklet with DSE]
- ~ OH&S [development of PT I & II of an OH&S document]
- ~ International Landcare Conference [2006]
- ~ Partnerships [VFF, DSE, NLP]
- ~ Promotions [Marketing, posters, badging]

### The strength of the fabric?

A quiet disclaimer should be made in relation to the growth of the organisational structure of landcare as outlined in this section. The reality of the organisational/administrative infrastructure of landcare as it has evolved across the region is that many groups and networks have characteristics which could be accurately described as organisationally tenuous. Typically groups have a meeting location, usually the local school or community/CFA hall, which they have often rejuvenated or rebuilt as a group project. But they have no



'home' base or office location. As has been noted earlier the storage and maintenance of ongoing records is uncertain; preservation of a permanent organisational memory has not been a priority, or a reasonable possibility for most groups, nor has it been a designated responsibility.<sup>74</sup> Many have observed: 'Landcare is not that sort of organisation'. The community, volunteer base to landcare has meant that ongoing organisational capability, if it is considered at all, falls to the responsibility of LCSS. Many Facilitators/ Coordinators funded on annual contracts, often part-time, have limited resources

to provide the leadership to ensure skills, systems, plans, records etc, are in place, improved and repeatable; elements indispensable to sound organisational capability. The scale of organisational resources in many instances matches neither the expectations of governments, nor the volume of funds which have been channeled through them over two decades. Network structures have to some extent been utilized as 'shell companies' to outsource contract employment, both to maintain the perceived 'community' nature of employment and to maintain the 'lean' staffing budgets of mainstream agencies.

**Ageing membership, onerous responsibilities, volunteer fatigue: Goulburn Broken Community Landcare Support Strategy 2005**

A major plank of the 2002 Second Generation Landcare Taskforce Action Plan was the recommendation that each Catchment Management Authority develop a 5-year regional Landcare Support Strategy 'to provide individuals and communities with direct access to regional policy and decision making'; regional plans to be presented to the Minister for Environment and Conservation for consideration.<sup>75</sup> The consultation undertaken

for the development of the Community Landcare Support Strategy in the Goulburn Broken CMA, April/May 2004, identified serious threats to the 'fabric' of landcare, similar to those discovered by the Charles Sturt University study, 'Landcare Twenty Years On'.<sup>76</sup> Ageing and decreasing membership, lack of succession planning, overcommitted members, lack of administrative skills, onerous expectations and reporting requirements, reduced and inflexible funding, were critical threats to the continued capacity of the community to meet the natural resource management targets of the catchment.<sup>77</sup>



The project assessed the provision of, and delivery models employed, in supporting community landcare. It also reviewed the major demographic, economic, environmental and social trends that would alter the profile and capacities of catchment communities. The review showed that 92 Landcare Groups and 7 Landcare Networks with a total membership

of 3750, and 8 Local Area Planning Groups, were serviced by 18.9 FTE staff including the Regional Landcare Coordinator [11.3 SIRIC; 3.0 MGBIC; 4.6 UGIC]. A number of critical gaps were identified. Some landcare groups received no support and the services delivered to those who did was considered limited and ineffective as increasing demands

from government for administration diverted resources from project coordination and community support/development. There was no benchmark for conditions of employment for LCSS across the catchment and job contexts varied extremely [as was found in the 2005 VLN survey]. The review also found that strategic community capacity building,

community development and communication services were inadequate and without increased levels of funding not likely to be improved. However these gaps in service delivery were described in the 2005 report as falling outside the scope of the regional strategy:

The need to ensure continued funding for landcare Coordinators and Facilitators and LAP Implementation Officers was one of the major issues raised during the consultation. It is recognised that within the catchment these positions are vital to maintaining the support for Landcare. Currently funding can only be secured from the State and Australian governments on an annual basis, which leads to periods of uncertainty for the people employed and the groups they support.<sup>78</sup>

Stage 1 & 2 drafts were issued for public consultation purposes and the responses incorporated into the final draft of the strategy, which was presented to the GBCMA Board on the 3 September 2004. The Action Plan outlined for 2005-2010 was published in October 2004. Within the scope of issues that were deemed to fall within the responsibility of regional management priorities to promote Landcare locally and ...

- ~ expand the social dimension of landcare
- ~ recognise volunteers
- ~ raise the professional standing and development of LCSS
- ~ develop communication strategies for each IC region
- ~ broaden landcare interrelationships with other stakeholders.



### Discover, synthesize, dream, design ...

In addition to regional reviews, there have been regular statewide reviews of landcare. The Victorian Action Plan [VAP] for Second Generation Landcare [SGL] has a 10 year span – developed in 2002 it extends to 2012. The Plan ‘represents the blueprint for Landcare support and coordination in Victoria’.<sup>79</sup> The State Landcare Team, recommended by the Task Force at the conclusion of the Decade of Landcare, consists of a State Landcare Coordinator employed by DSE, and ten Regional Landcare Coordinators, funded by the state government and employed within CMAs. This team is responsible for implementing the 10-year plan. In 2005 a review was initiated to evaluate and report

on the first 4 years of the strategy.

An innovative, highly participatory methodology was employed, to design the next phase of the action plan.<sup>80</sup> Groups developed ‘Before and After’ maps of the each region, pre and post the establishment of the State Landcare Team and the employment of Regional Coordinators. This data was used to select via workshops the ‘best match to Action Plan objectives’ [Synthesize], on which groups developed ‘possibility statements’; these were prioritised by groups to identify what the action Plan could achieve in the next phase. A second workshop day conducted with the State Landcare Support Team finalized a list of recommendations [Design].

### Images of regional coordination

Powerful descriptors of the dynamics in differing geographic and organisational settings are provided by schematic maps which compare the situation in 2000 and 2005 in each CMA. Four samples are presented in the report the comments are by workshop participants:<sup>81</sup>

#### **Regional Example 1**

Landcare works differently in this region ... it is less populated. People are active in Landcare groups but don’t go on loads of working bees ... they tend to work on their own properties, properties are larger ... when they do get together they do really big jobs. [2000]

The CMA are now closer – the RLC has helped this happen. He set up a Landcare advisory committee to provide strategic advice. Before then the farming community didn’t fully understand the CMA. [2005]

The RLC needs to see Landcare broadly and understand it is not just about trees. They also need to be looking at future changes in land use. [2005]

#### **Regional Example 2**

Landcare groups were on their own, unless they made lots of noise. Lots of groups didn’t understand how the funding worked. There was too much paperwork. [2000]

Now we have so many funding applications to do. There are more complicated and you have to apply for certain things with each bucket – it’s ‘silo-ed’ funding. The process needs to be simplified. People are tired – the drought has brought some groups together, but others have floundered. [2005]

There have been too many changes in staff ... all that work the first RLC put in; it all fell in a heap. [2005]

The new position is called the ‘Community Liaison Officer. The position was downgraded ... they should pay them more: it’s a very responsible position. Now it’s a bloody mess – all the connections have gone. The glue has gone. [2005]

#### **Regional Example 3**

A major thing that has happened recently is that facilitators came into the CMA. The Board did this at a risk – to support the long term employment of coordinators



and facilitators. The RLC pushed it and made it happen ... there was a lot of fear at first ... the MOU was signed with trepidation between the network employment committees and the CMA – but it's been OK ... there is more security for us now. [2005]

The RLC has really brought the team of LLCFs together – now we sit and plan the RCIP bids – we used to compete with each other. He is also an important link between the community and the CEO of the CMA. [2005]

### **Regional Example 4**

In 2000 there was a funding gap – there were no facilitators for two years ... there was a lot of administration and there were group dynamic problems. The level of works increased and projects got more complicated – you began to need one person just to do the funding. [2000]

I don't think the CMA is the right place for a facilitator to be employed – nor the RLC. Landcare is not about agency – it's about community. [2005]

At the regional level, the local coordinators and facilitators now get together and now we all know each other – we didn't before. It's more cohesive now ... you have a contact with knowledge. He liaises with Top Crop and Victorian Farmers Federation. [2005]

One improvement might be if there was a Landcare steering committee overseeing the facilitators. [2005]

The VAPSGE Evaluation findings confirmed some of the abiding issues that have emerged in the stories and developments over twenty years of landcare in the Goulburn Broken. The

review found that since the Action Plan and its implementation structure had been launched in 2002, services to Landcare had been more effectively coordinated. Improvements were notable under the leadership and advocacy of Regional Landcare Coordinators [RLC]. RLCs were found to be consistently effective in six out of ten regions. Community engagement has gained growing acceptance as a key mechanism through which to achieve the targets in Regional Catchment Strategies, and 8 of the 10 RLCs have taken on additional roles in promoting community engagement initiatives in their CMA regions.

The report cited evidence that the State Landcare Team had contributed to increased support to landcare volunteers through systemic support to LLCFs, reinforcing the assumption that 'by building social capital more natural resource management outcomes will be achieved'. It acknowledges that the contribution is indirect and achieved through relationship building, knowledge sharing, skill development, empowerment and healthy organisational processes. Important other evidence of progress included:

- ~ *The Being Investor Ready Toolkit*
- ~ Landcare Support Persons in Victoria: Employment Framework and companion toolkit
- ~ Victorian Landcare Gateway website
- ~ State Landcare Forums
- ~ OH&S Guidelines

Areas for improvement included two regions where the RLC position was seen to have been largely ineffective due to the culture and limited effectiveness of the CMA. The relationship between the Victorian Landcare Network and the State Team





required clarification and strengthening and a broader range of new stakeholders across agencies and industry generally should be engaged. Some LLCFs still lacked contact with CMAs through the RLC, particularly when employed directly by a landcare group or network. Views on aspects of the RLC roles were polarised, particularly in regard to the nature of the management and reporting relationships between the RLC and local landcare teams. A common concern was that any form of direct line management could impinge on 'community ownership' of Landcare. The review concluded that the RLC position description needs careful review.

A detailed series of recommendations were developed through a workshop process based on presentation of key findings. Notable among these was the recommendation that a comprehensive program logic be developed around the SGL program to complement the capacity building objectives of the VAPSGL and to increase the strategic alignment between the elements of the Action Plan. A second series of recommendations sought the establishment of a 'robust and user friendly information systems to manage monitoring and evaluation data'. Further innovative social research was advocated to profile communities and measure community capacity. Regional Landcare Support Strategies to be reviewed mid-term to comprehensively capture impacts, achievements and 'unexpected outcomes'.

A structured professional development agenda was proposed for RLC roles in the context of long term implementation of the Action Plan. Community engagement was seen as an important area for further action. It was recommended that RLCs build an advocacy

role across all regional NRM groups and that a comprehensive communications strategy be developed that would 'clarify the domain in which the team operates and the goals and objectives of VAPSGL'. An important series of recommendations related to building broader partnerships across government agencies, industry and with academic institutions. A Reference Group was proposed to oversee the next phase of the implementation of VAPSGL, with representation from the CMA CEOs group, The Victorian Catchment Management Council, high level DSE management and community representatives.

### Conclusion

The International Landcare Conference in Melbourne, October 2006 was very well attended from Australia and by overseas visitors. Key topics included climate change, environmental and economic change and landcare issues past and present. A GBCMA Board member who attended the conference commented: 'It was agreed by all that if Landcare wasn't in existence we would have to invent it. Members are the key and landcare fills an important social role in many areas'.<sup>82</sup>

In their report to the Australian Government in 2006 on the status of Landcare Groups in Victoria after twenty years, the authors stressed: 'It is important to remember that Landcare is a means to an end, not an end in itself. However, the underlying NRM context remains unchanged since 1998 and governments will continue to rely heavily on the efforts and investments of private landholders to address NRM issues and protect key assets'.<sup>83</sup> This regional history of the landcare program has confirmed again and

again the prevalence of this either/or thinking, on-ground works or social capital, in the context of the landcare program.

There has been limited recognition of the fundamental underpinning of social development and community organisation that constitutes the extended volunteer effort in many rural programs such as CFA, SES, sport and recreation, and Landcare. The first recommendation of the VAPSGLE Evaluation in 2006 was to 'Develop a comprehensive program logic ... to complement the capacity building objectives of the Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare'.<sup>84</sup> There are complex issues involved in maintaining an energised community, and increasing community level capacity to deal with both the challenges of land and waterway rehabilitation and the pursuit of sustainable land management practice. In isolation, the public interest imperative to account for public funds can develop a dynamic that often runs counter to the community engagement objectives that are fundamentally necessary for Landcare.

These paradoxes, and the leadership and complex governance required to achieve consensus on their resolution, have been hallmarks of landcare at all stages. Perhaps as this history has demonstrated, landcare is fundamentally community action and regionalism at work. State and national support, will be more important than solutions. Landcare remains nevertheless one of the most significant community based programs in a nation which depends for its functioning on volunteers.







## Appendix A

### Machinery of Government Changes - Agency Titles

Based on Public Records Office Victoria data – <http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/>

#### FUNCTION

#### *Agriculture [created in 1872]*

Date	Agency Title
1872 – 1985	Department of <b>Agriculture</b>
1985 – 1995	Department of <b>Agriculture and Rural Affairs</b>
1995 – 1996	Department of <b>Agriculture, Minerals and Energy</b>
1996 – 2002	Department of <b>Natural Resources and the Environment</b>
2002 – cont	Department of <b>Primary Industries</b> [abolition of DNRE following reelection of the Bracks Labor Government and est. of DPI and DSE ] currently reports to the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Energy and Resources

#### *Conservation*

1973 – 1983	<b>Ministry for Conservation</b> intended to coordinate, under provisions of the Ministry of Conservation Act 1972, the Soil Conservation Authority [SCA], Land Conservation Council [LCC], Environment Protection Authority [EPA], National Parks Service [NPS] and Fisheries and Wildlife.
1983 - 1990	In 1983 a Minister for <b>Conservation, Forests and Lands</b> [CF&L] was appointed to co-ordinate the administration of all matters relating to the management and use of public lands and to better co-ordinate these responsibilities with conservation requirements. CF&L was established as successor to the Department of State Forests, the Department of Crown Lands and Survey, the Soil Conservation Authority, Fisheries and Wildlife Division, National Parks Service and the Ministry for Conservation.  Responsibility for survey and mapping, crown lands administration, the Royal Botanic Gardens and Herbarium was transferred to the new Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands while responsibility for the Port Phillip Authority and the Coastal Management and Co-ordination Committee was transferred to the Minister for Planning and Environment. Responsibility for the Rural Finance Commission and Soldier Settlement was transferred to the Minister for Agriculture.

1990 – 1992	Department of <b>Conservation and Environment</b>
1992 – 1996	Department of <b>Conservation and Natural Resources</b>
1996 – 2002	Department of <b>Natural Resources and Environment</b> – established following significant machinery of government changes after the re-election of the Kennet government in April 1996. DNRE was organized into seven divisions – Catchment Management; Forests Service; Land Victoria; Parks, Flora and Fauna; Minerals and Petroleum; Primary Industries; Water – and reported to both the Minister for Agriculture and Resources and the Minister for Conservation and Land Management.  In 2002 following the reelection of the Bracks government DNRE was renamed the Department of Sustainability and Environment [DSE] and a new department, Department of Primary Industries [DPI] established with responsibility for primary production and resources.
2002 – cont	Department of <b>Sustainability and Environment</b>
	<b>Ministers for Conservation 1949 -1961</b>
1949 - 1950	H. E. Bolte, Minister for Water Supply
1950 - 1952	R. K. Brose, Minister for Water Supply
1952 - 1955	J. H. Smith, Minister for Lands
1955 - 1961	H. E. Bolte, Premier
1956 - 1961	A. J. Fraser, Assistant Minister
	<b>Planning and Environment</b>
1983 - 1990	Ministry for <b>Planning and Environment</b> – under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 a more coordinated approach to statutory and strategic planning was established. The State Conservation Strategy 1986 gained statutory force through this act as did a number of environment issues and monitoring and reporting on the state of the environment and preparation of State of the Environment reports and the work of the Commissioner for the Environment 1986 – 1992.
1990 -	Department of <b>Planning and Urban Growth</b>

## Appendix A

### Water Resources

1865 – 1909 **Victorian Water Supply Department** early provision of water supplies for rural Victoria – a mixture of local initiative and government action. The earliest reticulated supplies were developed in Bendigo (1858-1859). A Royal Commission on Water supply 1884-1885 was established because of growing dissatisfaction with water supply and the growing needs of agriculture. Alfred Deakin was President and Stuart Murray Secretary. Based on its report the VWSD was restructured and the Irrigation Act 1886 was enacted.

1906 – 1984 The **State Rivers and Water Supply Commission** was established by the Water act 1905, which vested overall responsibility for conservation and distribution of Victoria’s rural water supplies for irrigation, industrial and urban purposes. The Victorian Water Supply Department’s responsibilities relating to irrigation trusts, water rights and operations of the Board of Land and Works passed to the Commission. The main responsibilities included:

- Advice on rural water resources and management to the Minister, landowners and client groups
- Surveying, gauging and reporting on water resources
- Investigation and construction of water supply
- Oversight of local water authorities
- Flood plain management
- River improvement and conservation
- Utilisation and conservation of groundwater
- Licensing of diversion of surface and groundwater

Between 1913-1933 the commission was responsible for Settlement Schemes (Irrigable Land).

1984 – 1990 **Department of Water Resources** was established under the Water (Central Management Restructuring) Act 1984 as the central management agency for the State’s water resources, following a review of Victoria’s non-metropolitan water industry by the Public Bodies Review Committee. It addressed the geographical and functional fragmentation of the water industry and the need to develop an integrated system of water management and water legislation.

1984 – 1992 **Rural Water Commission** a successor organisation to the SRWSC with the function to operate and maintain most of the State’s water supply system which included storages and watercourses.

1992 - 1995

Water (Rural Water Corporation) Act 1992 abolished RWC and established the **Rural Water Corporation** and 5 Regional Management Boards, Gippsland, Southern, Wimmera-Mallee, Sunraysia and Goulburn-Murray Water.; from 1994 these became Rural Water Authorities providing for irrigation, stock and domestic and wholesale water supply.

On 1 July 1994 five Rural Water Authorities were created from the former regions of the Rural Water Corporation: These Authorities had responsibilities relating only to retailing of rural water supplies. Responsibilities for headworks were retained by the RWC, and floodplain management was transferred to the (then) Department of Natural Resources. By Sept. 1995 Rural Water Corporation was abolished. In 1995 two of these Rural Water Authorities (Gippsland and Southern) were amalgamated.

1995 –

On 1 July 1995 **Goulburn-Murray Water** assumed full responsibility for management of the State headworks within in its region and was appointed as Victoria’s Construction Authority for Murray-Darling Basin Commission works.

## Appendix B

### Victorian Premiers 1955 – 2006

Source: Victorian Parliament website

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/>

Name	Party	Appointed	Term ended	Days in Office
Sir Henry Edward <b>Bolte</b>	LC	7 June 1955	23 August 1972	6288
Rupert James <b>Hamer</b>	LIB	23 August 1972	5 June 1981	3209
Lindsay Hamilton <b>Thompson</b>	LIB	5 June 1981	8 April 1982	308
John <b>Cain</b>	LAB	8 April 1982	10 August 1990	3047
Joan Elizabeth <b>Kirner</b>	LAB	10 August 1990	6 October 1992	789
Jeffrey Gibb <b>Kennett</b>	LNC	6 October 1992	20 October 1999	2571
Stephen Phillip <b>Bracks</b>	LAB	20 October 1999	27 July 2007	2841
John <b>Brumby</b>	LAB	30 July 2007		

## Appendix C – Landcare Facilitators/Coordinators Employment & Operating Arrangements

<i>Goulburn</i>	<i>Broken</i>	<i>Landcare Coordinators</i>	<i>and Facilitators</i>	<i>Employment/Operating</i>	<i>Arrangements</i>	
<b>Sub-Region</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Employing Agency#</b>	<b>Reporting Auspice</b>	<b>Operational Location</b>	<b>Time in position [Yrs]</b>
<b><i>Upper Goulburn</i></b>	Geoff Boyes	Mansfield Shire	Goulburn Murray Landcare Landcare Coordinator	Upper Goulburn Catchment Network [GMLN]	CMA Office Yea Collective	
	Janet Hagen	Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative Coordinator	Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative	Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative	Home office	16.0
	Bridget Clarke	Murrindindi Landcare Coordinator	GMLN	Upper Goulburn Catchment Collective	CMA Office Yea	
	Francis Jeon-Ellis	South West Goulburn Landcare Coordinator	GMLN	South West Goulburn Steering Group	DPI Broadford	1.0
	Bertram Lobert	Upper Goulburn Catchment Network Landcare Coordinator	No employment contract Project funds via GMLN	Upper Goulburn Catchment Collective	Home office	6.0
<b><i>Mid Goulburn</i></b>	Rhiannon Apted	Western Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare Coordinator	GMLN	Mid Goulburn Steering Group	Shire of Seymour	1.0
	Trevor Verlin	Eastern Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare Coordinator	GMLN	Mid Goulburn Steering Group	DPI Broadford	2.5
	Rosie Sheather	Central Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare Coordinator	GMLN	Mid Goulburn Steering Group	UniMelb Dookie Campus	.5
<b><i>Irrigation Region</i></b>	Karen Brisbane	GMLN Landcare Facilitator	GMLN	GMLN Executive Grp	GMLN Office, Shepparton	6.0
	Rhonda Day	Campaspe Shire Landcare Coordinator	GMLN	GMLN Executive Grp	Shire of Campaspe	
	Julie Engstrom	LAP Implementation Officer	DPI	DPI Farm Team	DPI Tatura	
	John Read	Shepp East LC Support Officer	DPI	DPI Cmnty Support Program	DPI Tatura	
	Melly Pandher	Multicultural Facilitator	DPI	DPI Cultural Diversity Program	DPI Tatura	
	Rachael Spokes	Community Facilitator	DPI	DPI Cmnty Support Program	Not in posn [Aug 07]	
	Rebecca Lukies	LAP Implementation Officer	DPI	DPI Farm Team	DPI Tatura	
	Terry Batey	Community Education Officer	DPI	DPI	DPI Tatura	

# Encompasses banking/finance, project funds, OHS/Insurance. Employment contracts, project MOUs, recruitment.

## Appendix D – Landcare Facilitators/Coordinators and designated Groups

Sub-Region	Name	Title	Landcare Groups Supported
<b>Upper Goulburn</b>	Geoff Boyes	Mansfield Shire Landcare Coordinator	Delatite; Howqua Valley; Ancona Valley; Merton; Bonnie Doon; [Ford Creek in recess]
	Janet Hagen	Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative Coordinator	Whiteheads Creek; Upper Hughes Creek; Hughes Creek; Highlands
	Bridget Clarke	Murrindindi Landcare Coordinator	Home Ck/Spring Ck; [Molesworth]; [E. Killingworth]; Yea River; Yellow Ck/Dairy Ck; Strath Ck; Kinglake; UT Ck;
	Francis Jeon-Ellis	SW Goulburn Landcare Coordinator	Willowmavin; Sunday Ck/Dry Ck; Glenaroua; Dabyminga; Nulla Vale Pyalong
	Bertram Lobert	Upper Goulburn Catchment Group Landcare Coordinator	Upper Goulburn Catchment Group Executive
<b>Mid Goulburn</b>	Rhiannon Apted	Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare Facilitator	Waranga; Balmattum Sheans Ck; Burnt Ck; Creightons Ck;; Gooram Valley; Euroa Emt Grp; Longwood East; Nagambie, Strathbogie Tablelands; Granite Creeks Project
	Trevor Verlin	*Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare Facilitator	Sheep Pen Creek; Goomalibee; Warrenbayne Boho; Molliyulah Tatong; Swanpool; Upper Broken River; O’Deas Rd; Benalla & District Environment Group
	Rosie Sheather	* Mid Goulburn Broken Landcare Facilitator	Dookie; Sth Yarrowonga; Peechelba/Wilby/Boomahnoomoonah; Warby Ranges; [Devonish Goorambat & Burramine Tungamah in recess]
<b>Irrigation Region</b>	Karen Brisbane	Goulburn Murray Landcare Network Facilitator	Undera; Kialla Nth; Goulburn Valley Environment Group; Yarroweyah Watertable Mngmt Grp; Koonoomoo; Kotupna; Dhurringile; Shepparton Mooroopna Urban
	Rhonda Day	Campaspe Shire Landcare Coordinator	Wyuna; Kyabram; Lockington; Echuca Urban; Campaspe West; Koyuga-Kanyapella; Echuca West; Girgarre Stanhope; Wharparilla West
	Julie Engstrom	LAP Implementation Officer	Nanneella Timmering; Corop Action Grp; Wyuna; Kyabram
	John Read	Shepp East LC Support Officer	East Shepparton
	Melly Pandher	Multicultural Facilitator	
	Rachael Spokes	Community Facilitator	General Landcare; LAP development & community engagement [Not in posn Aug 2007]
	Rebecca Lukies	LAP Implementation Officer	Nathalia Tree Grp; Broken Ck Imprvmt Grp; Superb Parrot; Picola; Bunbartha Kaarimba; Harston; Tatura Urban; Merrigum
	Terry Batey	Community Education Officer	
	Lucy Breen	Community Liaison Officer	Not in posn [Aug 2007]

## Appendix E

### Landcare history project - Interviews

#### **GBCMA**

Bill O'Kane	CEO GBCMA
Katie Brown	GB Regional LC Coordinator [to 2006]
Megan McFarlane	Business Development Manager GBCMA
Lilian Parker	Executive Officer Mid & Upper Goulburn IC GBCMA
Ken Sampson	Executive Officer SIRIC GBCMA
Casey Damen	NRM Coordinator GBCMA
Rod McLennan	Consultant GBCMA
John Pettigrew	Director GBCMA Board
Ann Roberts	APR Environmental
Russell Wealands	Executive Officer Upper Goulburn [retired] GBCMA

#### **Implementation Cttees**

Peter Gibson	Chair SIRIC
Chris Doyle	Chair UGIC
David Dore	Chair MGBIC
Sally Simson	Past Chair MGBIC

#### **Landcare & Community**

Fred King	Dookie LMG
Pam Robinson	Warrenbayne LPG
Trevor Ennels	Muckatah LCG
Lesley Dalziel	Whiteheads Creek LCG
Elyse Kelly	Sunday Creek Dry Creek LCG
Jennifer O'Brien	Delatite LCG
Kerrie Purcell	Delatite LCG
Ed Adamson	Delatite LCG
Esther Costar	Goulburn Valley Environment Group
John Laing	Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
Jock Wallis	Whiteheads Creek LCG
Bev Day	Merton LCG
John Thompson	Whiteheads Creek LCG/UGIC
Paul Fleming	Pres. Glenaroua LMG

Terry Hubbard	Chair UG Catchment Network
Heather Wood	Ancona Valley LCG
Don Paterson	Nulla Vale Pyalong West LCG
Geoff Zoch	Nulla Vale Pyalong West LCG
Craig Tuhan	Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
Hubert Miller	Worrough, Trawool
David Laurie	Dabyminga Catchment Cooperative

#### **LC Coordinator/Facilitator**

Geoff Boyes	UG LC Coordinator
Francis Jeon-Ellis	SWG LC Coordinator
Karen Brisbane	Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
Trevor Verlin	LC Facilitator Mid Goulburn Broken
Sarah Challis	LC Facilitator Mid Goulburn Broken
Bertram Lobert	UG Catchment Network
Janet Hagen	Hughes Creek Catchment collaborative
Tom Croft	NE Regional Landcare Coordinator

#### **DSE**

Pauline Clancy	DSE Dir Planning & Performance
Jane Liefman	DSE Statewide LC Coordinator [to Jan 2007]

#### **DPI**

Bruce Radford	DPI Broadford
Peter Mitchell	DPI Broadford
Bruce Cummings	DPI Tatura Research Centre
Cate Culley	DPI Frankston
Rachael Spokes	DPI Tatura
Helen Murdoch	DPI Tatura
Geoff McFarlane	DPI [Retired]

## Appendix F

### Landcare Groups Goulburn Broken Catchment: Assessed Nos and Years of formation

[Approximate figures based on contemporary assessments and Group records]

1986-88	13	[Goulburn Dryland Salinity Management Plan – 11 Dryland Plus 2 SIR LC Grps]
1989	17	[CF&L Evaluation report]
1990-93	44	[Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group, Integrated Catchment Management Seminar Nov 1993]
1994	52	[SPPAC Annual Report 1993-94]
1996	98	[Landcare Survey DNRE 1996 – GB catchment approx. 11.4% of Vic LCGs. Know Your Catchments, Vic 1997]
1999	126	[GBCMA CEO Report, Nagambie Landcare Forum]
2005	92	[GBCMA Landcare Support Strategy]
2006	90	[GBCMA 2005/2006 Landcare Report Card – returns from ~ 70% of groups; 5 Grps reported to be in recess]

### Landcare Groups in Victoria 1985 - 2004

[National Surveys, Curtis et al 1994 & 1996]

1985	15
1986	25
1987	45
1988	75
1989	115
1990	155
1991	229
1992	319
1993	300
1994	675
1995	700
1996	785
1998	890
2004	721

## Appendix G

### Landcare Networks Goulburn Broken Catchment 2007

[Data provided by GB Regional Landcare Coordinator]

#### *Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee*

- > **Goulburn Murray Landcare Network** (Karen Brisbane – 58321133)  
All of the Landcare groups of the SIR

#### *Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee*

- > **Mid Goulburn Broken Catchment Landcare Network** (Doug James - 57652376)  
(Previously Broken River Catchment Landcare Network)  
Includes all Landcare Groups of the Mid Goulburn Broken, including Granite Creeks
- > **Granite Creeks Landcare Network** (Neil Devanny – 57952849)  
Balmattum/Sheans Creek LCG; Burnt Creek LCG; Creighton Creek LCG; Gooram Valley LCG; Longwood East LCG; Strathbogie Tablelands LCG

#### *Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee*

- > **Upper Goulburn Landcare Network** (Terry Hubbard - 57801489)  
Cerberus Creek LCG; East Killingworth LCG; Eildon Township LCG; Home Creek/Spring Creek LCG; Kinglake LCG; Molesworth LCG; Strath Creek LCG; UT Valley LCG; Yea River Catchment LCG; Yellow Creek/Dairy Creek LCG; Ancona Valley LCG; Bonnie Doon LCG; Howqua Valley LCG; Merton LCG
- > **Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative (Mike Kaponica - 57904235)**  
Highlands LCG; Hughes Creek LCG; Upper Hughes Creek LCG; Whiteheads Creek LCG
- > **South West Goulburn Landcare Network** (Francis Jeon-Ellis – 0409515630)  
Informal discussion forum incorporating the two networks below
- > **Dabyminga Catchment Cooperative** (David Laurie - 57849286)  
Reedy Creek LCG; Tallarook LCG
- > **Sunday Creek Sugarloaf Sub Catchments Network Inc.** (Marg Hatton 57821478)  
Glenaroua LCG; Nulla Vale Pyalong West LCG; Sunday Creek Dry Creek LCG; Willowmavin LCG

[Nagambie could be described as a network having taken over groups in recess (Molka Miepole LCG) and incorporated them into their own area]

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ALC</b>	Australian Landcare Council	<b>NFF</b>	National Farmers Federation
<b>ASV</b>	Acclimatisation Society of Victoria	<b>NHT</b>	Natural Heritage Trust
<b>AVRMA</b>	Association of River Management Authorities	<b>NLP</b>	National Landcare Plan
<b>CaLP/CALP</b>	Catchment and Land Protection Act	<b>NRM</b>	Natural Resource Management
<b>CF&amp;L</b>	Conservation Forests and Lands	<b>NSCP</b>	National Soil Conservation Program
<b>CMA</b>	Catchment Management Authority	<b>RCD</b>	Rabbit Calciivirus Disease
<b>CSIRO</b>	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	<b>RIT</b>	River Improvement Trust
<b>DCE</b>	Department of Conservation and Environment	<b>RLC</b>	Regional Landcare Coordinator
<b>DCNR</b>	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources	<b>RLP</b>	Regional Landcare Plan
<b>DNRE</b>	Department of Natural Resources and Environment	<b>RWC</b>	Rural Water Commission
<b>DPI</b>	Department of Primary Industry	<b>SCA</b>	Soil Conservation Authority
<b>DSE</b>	Department of Sustainability and Environment	<b>SEC</b>	State Electricity Commission
<b>DURD</b>	Department of Urban and Regional Development	<b>SIR</b>	Shepparton Irrigation Region
<b>ENSO</b>	El Nino Southern Oscillation Index	<b>SIRIC</b>	Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation committee
<b>FCV</b>	Forests Commission of Victoria	<b>SIRLWSMP</b>	Shepparton Irrigation Region Land Water Salinity Management Plan
<b>FGVAP</b>	Farm Gate Value of Agricultural Production	<b>SOE</b>	State Owned Enterprise
<b>FTE</b>	Full Time Equivalent	<b>SPPAC</b>	Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council
<b>LAP</b>	Local Area Plan	<b>SRWSC</b>	State Rivers and Water Supply Commission
<b>LCG</b>	Landcare Group	<b>UGIC</b>	Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee
<b>LCSS</b>	Landcare Support Staff	<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Program
<b>LLCF</b>	Local Landcare Coordinator and Facilitator	<b>VAPSGL</b>	Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare
<b>LPIS</b>	Land Protection Incentive Scheme	<b>VCMC</b>	Victorian Catchment Management Council
<b>MDBC</b>	Murray Darling Basin Commission	<b>VFF</b>	Victorian Farmers Federation
<b>MGBIC</b>	Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee	<b>VLN</b>	Victorian Landcare Network
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding	<b>VNWDB</b>	Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board

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