

**Landcare  
in Victoria**  
Rob Youl (Ed)

A blurb here about the book, its editor, its origin, its contributors, its history and anything you like to fill up the space here on the backcover. About 60 to 120 words maybe.

One popular way of doing the blurb is a para or two about the book and then a author blurb at the boottom. We also have to decide what goes on the spine.



# Landcare in Victoria

# **Landcare in Victoria**

How Landcare helped people  
government and business  
work together in Victoria

**A collection edited by Rob Youl**

Dedicated to Joan Kirner and  
the late Heather Mitchell,  
who launched Landcare  
on 25 November 1986

Landcare in Victoria

Rob Youl  
113 Nelson Road  
South Melbourne Vic 3205



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This is a carbon-neutral publication. For every copy of this book we sell, one  
dollar will go to a Victorian Landcare sequestration project.

And way beyond that to pioneering community Landcare groups and the  
thousands of Victorians and numerous supporters elsewhere whose ingenuity,  
energy, flexibility, technical skills, endurance, vision and tolerance have  
created and sustained the Landcare movement, and whose legacy will be a  
better, happier community and a restored environment.

# CONTENTS

Foreword <i>Andrew Campbell</i>	7
Ethics of Landcare <i>Father Charles Rue</i>	11
Environmental timelines for Victoria <i>David Cummings</i>	13
Rougher timelines <i>Rob Youl</i>	21
The road to Landcare: one view <i>Rob Chaffe</i>	25
Soil Conservation - a good basis for Landcare <i>Horrie Poussard</i>	30
Eppalock - a success story <i>David Sanders</i>	37
Setting the stage for Landcare <i>David Elvery</i>	39
Reflections on three landcare experiences <i>John Jack</i>	42
Initiatives of the Garden State Committee <i>Alan Thatcher</i>	47
Focus on Farm Trees Conference 1980 and its impacts <i>Peter Greig</i>	49
The Forests Commission and farm trees <i>Peter Langley</i>	52
Bairnsdale Farm Trees Group <i>Moray and Rosemary Douglas</i>	53
Notes on salinity <i>Phil Dyson</i>	55
Salinity and groundwater <i>Phillip Macumber</i>	57
Albury-Wodonga - great urban forestry <i>Susan Campbell</i>	58
Looking after roadsides <i>Ian Cowl</i>	61
Pre-Landcare <i>Rob Youl</i>	65
The making of LandCare in Victoria <i>Horrie Poussard</i>	111
Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group <i>Angus Howell</i>	121
Forests Commission nurseries <i>Tony Manderson, Bill Middleton and Hans Kosmer</i>	123
NRM and local government <i>Pam Robinson</i>	126
Landcare – it’s not just about the land <i>Nan Oates</i>	130
Farm Advance and Landcare <i>Ted Gretgrix</i>	135
The Landcare experience is everywhere <i>Pam Robinson</i>	138
Recollections of Project Hindmarsh <i>Darryl Argall</i>	143
VNPA and Project Hindmarsh <i>John Stirling</i>	147
Education for whole farm planning <i>Margaret Jansen</i>	149
Landcare in the IT era <i>Peter Jamieson</i>	151
Landcare in review <i>Patrick Francis</i>	153
A family and Landcare <i>Tom and Sue Loughridge</i>	158
Taking Landcare to the world <i>Victoria Mack, Sue Marriott and Mary Johnson</i>	160
From a Landcarer’s memory bank <i>Alex Arbuthnot</i>	164
Mount Hope <i>David Millsom</i>	165
Regional Landcare Plans <i>Graydon Findlay and David Cummings</i>	167
IFFA <i>Tony Faithfull</i>	169
Two decades of Landcare <i>Rob Youl</i>	171
Catchment song <i>Fay White</i>	189
Editorial team	191
Contributors	192

An explanation: we use the word ‘landcare’ (small ‘l’) as a succinct, community-friendly term for holistic land and water (catchment) resource management. ‘Capital L’ Landcare covers the broad community movement and its many initiatives, programs and implications.

With so little time available, we are very aware that not all of our material has been totally substantiated. However, we believed that we had to start to chronicle Landcare’s story, and hoped that this modest book might lead to deeper and broader studies, compiled in a more analytical milieu.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Foreword

## Andrew Campbell

History is often written by people who weren't there, those who did not personally make it happen. Such histories often overflow with facts and detailed chronologies, establishing a veneer of objectivity through detachment, moderation and systematic reference to primary sources. This is not such a history. This Landcare celebration wears its heart on its sleeve, presenting an eclectic kaleidoscope of personal vignettes, each offering a different window on a remarkable phenomenon.

This tells the Landcare story, or rather many Landcare stories, from the perspectives of people whose personal efforts made it happen. They are people who have made a difference – a difference to their communities, a difference to the countryside and a difference to Australia in the late twentieth century.

Landcare is a distinctively Australian phenomenon – at once a movement, an organisation, a philosophy, a government initiative, an approach to land management. Landcare is based around voluntary neighbourhood groups who work together to plan and put into action practical ideas for looking after their land, water and biodiversity, and for fixing some of the problems that have emerged over the last century or so. Landcare is also about partnerships: partnerships between the community and government; between city and country; between farmers and greenies; between companies and voluntary groups; between young and old; between professional farmers and lifestyle farmers.

Landcare has changed social norms in rural Australia over the last twenty years, altering community notions of what it means to be a 'good farmer.' Landcare has enlarged the common ground between farmers and conservationists. Across this vast ancient continent, Landcare has within a generation built thousands of platforms for involving the community in working out ways of using the land more wisely, and putting them into practice.

In the early days of Landcare, it was without parallel internationally. For most countries, the notion of the main conservation and farm lobby groups joining forces and linking with the government at the national level to support voluntary grassroots environmental activism on farms and public lands remains an exotic, far-fetched concept. Yet in Australia this remarkable for-

mula has worked beyond the wildest imagination of its founders, and is now expanding internationally.

It is said that success has many fathers, and failure is an orphan. If that is true, then Landcare must be a roaring success, because many people across the country are proud to claim some credit for its genesis. A good number of those people get a mention in this book, particularly the Victorians.

Rob Youl and his Victorian colleagues have compiled a Landcare celebration that is unabashedly and proudly Victorian in its focus, and all the richer for it. Victoria has strong and legitimate claims to have invented Landcare. That the name originated in Victoria is not in dispute. From the early 1980s however, parallel evolution in several other states across Australia saw emerging landholder groups working on land degradation problems in partnership with government, that were in effect Landcare groups by other names.

But that's missing the point. This book does not pretend to be comprehensive and national in its treatment of Landcare. It is a richly Victorian tapestry of people, events and organisations that led to the birth and development of Landcare. For me, it raises the tantalising possibility of similarly detailed recollections from the people who developed Landcare in other jurisdictions, and indeed nationally.

Landcare is inherently decentralised, so by definition it has many histories – far too many to gather in one volume. This reader brings to life the many individual contributions, the countless serendipities, the many acts of leadership that created the Victorian seedbed for a unique movement and allowed it to flourish.

Serendipitous alignment of the planets saw Joan Kirner, a former president of the statewide association of primary school mothers' clubs, as the relevant Victorian Minister when Heather Mitchell was president of the Victorian Farmers' Federation; a politically potent meeting of minds who shared a faith in community-based action. This serendipity was mirrored by the improbable partnership between Rick Farley of the National Farmers' Federation and Phillip Toyne of the Australian Conservation Foundation. These and other leaders were prepared to back a new approach to tackle land and water degradation, an approach based around genuine community engagement and community ownership of both problems and solutions.

Without casting any aspersions on these important figureheads, they did not dream up Landcare on their own. Good policy invariably is founded on careful analysis, and usually involves dedicated policy-makers working over many months to refine, test and polish ideas, often through several iterations between departments, ministers and their offices, and key stakeholders. The

genesis of Landcare in Victoria (via Country Care, Farm Care, Total Land Care, Land Care and LandCare) was a classic case of just such a policy process, with solid foundations in serious analysis by officers of the former Soil Conservation Authority of their catchment protection activities over many years.

Horrie Poussard was the senior policy officer within the then Department of Conservation Forests and Lands in the mid 1980s, who played a key role in drafting the initial policy package. Horrie's chapter offers a forensic insight into the policy development process that underpinned Landcare. In an age where senior public officials (at least those fronting sundry inquiries) often appear to be afflicted with amnesia, to have kept no notes, or never to have been told anything germane to their positions, it is reassuring that there remain people like Horrie who have meticulously recorded and filed minutiae such as the minutes of Land Protection Division branch managers' meetings from May 1986. Horrie's shed and/or study must be a lot better organised than mine...

Sue Marriott, Victoria Mack and Mary Johnson have all worked in Landcare over many years in a mix of voluntary, semi-paid and professional roles, always enmeshed in the community aspects of Landcare that are its spine, and always seeking to strengthen it and the people involved. All from the land, they have together and separately been involved in innovative capacity building work around Landcare, within Australia and overseas, long before that term had any currency. They bring an essential landholder and community perspective to this work. A Landcare reader written and edited just by public servants could not do the subject justice.

That brings me finally to managing editor Rob Youl. While technically Rob was a public servant for several decades, it is difficult to imagine anyone less fitting the Sir Humphrey (or Bernard) image. Rob is one of those people for whom the phrase 'they broke the mould' was coined. 'Unique' doesn't do him justice. Forester, agroforester, army reservist, historian, impresario, chef, bon vivant, bush poet and balladist, Rob Youl has been one of the unsung heroes of Landcare for well over twenty years. Rob is the best networker I've ever encountered. He is genuinely interested in people. He can strike up a conversation with anyone, anywhere, anytime, find something in common, and have them smiling and instantly at ease. He is an idiosyncratic and effervescent cross-pollinator, well read, delightfully and divertingly eclectic, and generous with his time, contacts and extensive expertise. Rob has an abiding love for the Australian bush, a deep knowledge of its timbers and its ecology, and great respect for those who live on and work with the land.

Rob Youl was a natural for Landcare. While no doubt he would have

made a substantial contribution within an old style technocentric, hierarchical, unidisciplinary state agency, Rob has thrived in the less structured Landcare era, in which institutional boundaries are far more porous and a diversity of people and expertise is valued.

I have known Rob, his fellow editors and many of the individual contributors to this reader for more than twenty years. They represent an ideal mix of landholder, community leader and policy maker perspectives to tell the Victorian Landcare story. They have taken on an ambitious project with typical verve and directness. They have rightly identified the need to celebrate twenty years of Landcare, and the need to document its development from a community perspective, with a focus on the people who made it happen. They have done justice to that goal.

Some might argue that the editors could have been more ruthless, however its anecdotal and occasionally rambling nature is a key to its charm. There are many gems of insight and wisdom in the detail presented here. It is a timely reminder of the importance of honouring history, of recording its lessons, and of sharing them widely.

Through the ages, humans have learned through story telling. This book fits comfortably in that rich tradition. I hope it inspires people from other states and nationally to document their own stories.

Anyone interested in Landcare, or more broadly in changing the world, will find inspiration and encouragement in this charming and valuable book.

## Ethics of Landcare

### Father Charles Rue

As a child growing up in Canowindra, NSW I'd hear old farmers say, 'Look after the land, and the land will look after you!' As a member of the Junior Farmers, then as a Catholic priest and environmentalist, working here and overseas in South Korea and Jamaica, the depth of that wisdom has remained with me.

Australian farmers would not think of themselves as philosophers or ethical thinkers, but they have their ideas nurtured in the solitude of work and having to make decisions midst the complexities of running a farm and raising a family. Their direct experience of the land makes them as thoughtful as the likes of Aldo Leopold with his famous *Almanac*. When Landcare was floated, many farmers responded to its philosophy and ethics with understanding and passion.

Ethics and morality are often associated with religion. Country towns have substantial church buildings and dignified small ones dot the countryside, evidence to the sway Christianity held among farming communities. Preaching said that the land was good and a gift of God, to be used for people's benefit. However, this last message was a two-edged sword. Earning a living often gave way to exploiting the land. Farmers raced to make it more productive and to become as rich as their city cousins. The treadmill ran faster from the 1960s when commodity prices fell. The land itself became a victim along with the decreasing number of farmers struggling with debt. Bankers did not have 'Care for the Earth' in their bottom line. Churches, Protestant and Catholic alike, were challenged to rethink some of their preaching.

In the tradition of Elyne Mitchell, who drew from the Book of Job the title of her 1945 book *Speak To The Earth And It Will Teach You*, Landcare members saw fit to gather and pray at St Michaels Church, Collins Street, Melbourne on Sunday 2 March 1997, invited there by the Rev Dr Francis Macnab to offer inter-religious prayers, including a Turkish litany from Cengiz Erol, an irrigation advisor from the Goulburn Valley. I had the privilege of leading a meditation with these words:

*Imagine if Earth were only a metre across, floating above a field somewhere. People would come from everywhere to marvel at it – the unmoving brown and shimmering green patches, the pools of water, the bumps and holes, the thin layer of gas surrounding it, the creatures walking on it and swimming in the pools. People would love it and defend it with their lives because they would somehow know that their very life would be nothing without it.*

Scientific information in Australian agriculture, like church preaching, has also been a two-edged sword. On one hand the science of ecology in particular has revealed the complexities of water, soil, plants, insects and animals that are awe-inspiring. Matt Herring from Albury has led farmers to marvel at the diversity of small animals surviving on their farms. This new found science-based respect for land sets a strong foundation for ethics and motivates action in groups like Landcare.

On the other hand, some science-based new technologies that have been promoted, coupled with the drive for greater economic returns, have led to disasters both for farmers and the land they work. The latest push to embrace transgenic technologies needs rigorous analysis. Ethicists ask: who wants these technologies and who benefits? What will be its consequences for nature, producer and consumer? Who is doing the research?

Landcare embodies an ethic of wholeness that combines several admirable elements – care for the land, earning a dignified living from farming, and being part of a human community now, while looking to future generations. It invites farmers to look beyond their fencelines to a catchment with a united ecological system. It invites town and city communities to combine their efforts in a common task and rediscover the fun of shared life. My colleague Father Brian Gore and I had joy-filled community days planting trees with the Powlett Project. It exemplified a practical way to renew life on the land and in communities.

*Look after the land, and the land will look after you.*

## Environmental timelines for Victoria

### David Cummings<sup>1</sup>

- 1917 – River Murray Commission formed
- 1924 – Better Farming Train – first trip to Gippsland
- 1925 – River Murray Commission requesting Victoria to prevent destruction of forests in Hume catchment to reduce sedimentation in reservoir
- 1930 – Irrigation-induced salinity well recognised
- 1935 – *Soil conservation* enters the lexicon; the US sets up its Soil Conservation Service
- 1939 – Four-week Erosion Control Symposium run by Victorian Institute of Surveyors, Institution of Engineers and Institute of Agriculture Science
- 1940 – Victorian Soil Conservation Board (SCB) established; Hanslow Cup competition inaugurated. Eight Regional Soil Conservation Advisory Committees set up under *Soil Conservation Act*, each comprising three local farmers, Agriculture and Lands Department representatives and Chairman of SCB
- 1943 – First soil conservation field day held at Avenel on property of DH Lawrence
- 1944 – First state conference of Regional Soil Conservation Advisory Committees
- 1945 – Intensification of use of subterranean clover and superphosphate for pasture development across Victoria
  - Recognition of dryland salinity on southern end of Colbinabbin range
  - Catchment management approach to land utilisation and management widely debated before Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act
- 1949 – Realisation in catchment management of need to deal with causes, not getting distracted by effects
  - First River Improvement Trusts and Land Drainage Trusts set up
  - Land Utilisation Advisory Committee formed to recommend on use and alienation of public land
- 1950 – First commercial eucalypt plantations – Gippsland
  - Soil Conservation Authority (SCA) formed
  - Land systems surveys start
- 1951 – First formal whole farm plans, followed by co-operative farm planning schemes in 1952
- 1958 – First broad appraisal of dryland salting
- 1960 – Eppalock Catchment Project started (ten-year plan) because government was building Eppalock reservoir in an eroding catchment. Pasture improvement and rabbit control were key elements in reducing erosion.

- Distinguished between 'productive' (to the farmer) and 'non-productive' works (such as gully structures), as part of recognising need for proper cost-sharing; considered outstanding success with three-fold increase in agricultural productivity, on top of sedimentation control
- Start of SCA land management incentives, supplying seeding money for improved land management practices
- 1962 – SCA Group Conservation Area projects commence
- 1964 – Dandenong Valley Authority formed, primarily as a flood mitigation coordination authority, with powers to control urban land development. First authority moving towards 'complete catchment' approach
- 1965 – Australian Conservation Foundation established
- 1969 – Little Desert utilisation dispute
- 1970 – First Australian Soil Conservation Conference
- 1973 – Soil and Water Conservation Loan Scheme administered by SCA and Rural Finance Commission, providing low interest (5 percent) loans to farmers to develop soil conservation and farm water supplies; linked with farm planning/subdivision fencing on land class boundaries
- 1975 – *Environmental weed* concept applied in government (KTRI) publication on boneseed
- 1976 – Laser levelling/grading and electronic support systems for irrigation lands available: increased productivity and reduced costs but some disadvantages for local watercourses – runoff often increased, with surface salt leaching to watercourse
- 1977 – Garden State era starts. Term *Garden State* first used in official publications in the 1925 *Victoria: The speedway to rural prosperity - Handbook for intending settlers*. But in 1970s it was employed to recognise Victoria as well managed - the most 'ecologically' productive Australian state
- Garden State Committee (GSC) established – a consultative body bringing groups together to use plants to improve landscapes. It set up activities that intensified the community's interest in revegetation projects: Project Tree Cover; Focus on Farm Trees conference; Potter Farmland Plan, initiation of Farm Tree Groups and coordination of the National Tree Program. In 1989 it was subsumed into Greening Australia Victoria
- 1978 – *Victorian Conservation Trust Act* amended to enable covenanting to protect significant areas of natural bush on private property
- Project Branchout established in Maryborough
- 1980 – Interest in direct seeding of eucalypts takes off; direct seeding had possibly been used with sugar gums as far back as the 1880s, but article in *Landscape Australia* renewed interest, because landowners were looking for cheaper and better ways of establishing large numbers of trees and shrubs
- 1981 – Four Farm Tree Groups started by Garden State Committee and Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association (later Victorian Farmers Federation - VFF)
- Land for Wildlife program setup by Fisheries and Wildlife Department –

- by 2005 nearly 6000 landowners involved
  - United Nations Association Australia declares 1982-83 Year of the Tree, which leads to the foundation of Greening Australia in NSW in 1983, and a Commonwealth initiative, the National Tree Program (NTP)
  - *Trunkline* newsletter first published by Ed Adamson, VFF farm trees coordinator
- 1983 – *State of the Rivers* report released
- √
- 1983 – Ash Wednesday fires across southern Victoria
- 1983 – State agencies for soil conservation linked with pest plant and pest animal control and farm tree growing to become the Land Protection Service (LPS), within the new Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands
- 1984 – Department of Water Resources and Rural Water Commission formed; Regional Drainage and Stream Management Task Force report recommends setting up catchment-based river management authorities
- 1985 – The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Salinity (established in 1982) produced *Salt of the Earth: Final Report on the Causes, Effects and Control of Land and River Salinity in Victoria* (1984) with fifty major recommendations. This became the community-driven Victorian Salinity Program – with interdepartmental (coordinated) budget, overseen by the Salinity Bureau. Led to the production of nineteen salinity management plans
- Potter Farmland Plan starts around Hamilton
  - Community Salinity Grants launched
  - First LandCare group launched at Winjallock near St Arnaud by Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation, and Heather Mitchell, President of VFF. Initial allocation of \$200 000 for grants under LandCare program, mainly for group activities
  - Salt Force News first published; runs 12 years before merging with Victorian Landcare
  - Timber Industry Strategy released
  - Greening Australia Victoria established, becoming branch of Greening Australia Limited, and an incorporated association with a board of directors on 18 June 1991
  - Better Rivers and Catchments report
  - Land Protection Incentive Scheme (LPIS) introduced, incorporating SCA incentives and TGAS
  - Go Green Program initiated with urban revegetation programs funded by Victorian government
- 1988 – State Conservation Strategy (Protecting the Environment) first state-wide conservation strategy in Australia
- Victorian Private Forestry Council established to oversee implementation of Private Forestry Strategy
  - Salt Action – Joint Action released as Victoria's salinity strategy
  - Greenhouse issues publicised

- Integrated catchment management now a common phrase
- National Workshop on Integrated Catchment Management held in Melbourne May 1988
- Catchment Co-ordinating Groups proposed by Standing Committee on Rivers and Catchments. A few formed including Mid Goulburn, Mid Gippsland, Lal Lal and Upper Snowy Interstate
- Satellite images supply the first reliable information on the extent of clearing in Victoria; *Forest cover changes in Victoria* showed that the 88 percent tree cover in 1869 had been reduced to 35 percent in 1987
- First State Landcare conference held Bendigo; enthusiastic response; first opportunity to assess LandCare acceptance and impacts; Federal Resources Minister Senator Peter Cook present and formally accepted invitation to extend LandCare to the national scene
- Brian Garrett produces first Victorian public manual on property planning – *Whole Farm Planning: principles and options*
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act passed
- 1989 – Tree Project established to encourage urban volunteers to propagate trees for rural properties (1.3 million trees produced over the next 15 years)
- One Billion Trees Program launched; managed by Greening Australia 1989-97
- Tree Victoria program starts; in 10 years of operation it funded 1237 projects planting some three million trees
- Landcare Australia Limited incorporated in Sydney
- Clearing controls introduced across Victoria – built into the planning system. Before controls, clearing estimated at 13 000 ha/year; reduced to 2500 ha/year
- Greening Australia Victoria incorporated; by 2004, GAV had supported the establishment of about 20 million plants, covering an area of more than 10 000 ha, and had protected or enhanced some 15 000 ha of existing native vegetation
- National Landcare Program starts, following lobbying by ACF and NFF. Amalgamation of former National Soil Conservation Program (NSCP) and former Federal Water Resources Assistance Program (FWRAP), along with community components of Save The Bush and One Billion Trees programs administered by Australian Nature Conservation Agency and the NRM Strategy for the Murray-Darling Basin, administered by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC)
- Significant increase in algal blooms in Victorian waters; algal bloom first recorded 1928 Maroondah, but rare until 1980s. Blooms even more numerous in 1990s
- 1990 – *LandCare* moving towards *Landcare*
- Decade of Landcare commences; derived from joint submission by NFF and ACF to Commonwealth in 1989 recognising that our land and water resources are precious and must be carefully managed. The goal: ensure Australia's agricultural and pastoral lands are used within their capabili-

- ty by the year 2000, and sustainably from then on
- 1990 – Alcoa's commercial sponsorship for revegetation, in conjunction with its Portland operations, commences in western Victoria with Treeline (revegetation of disused railways) and a general revegetation assistance scheme for regional groups and projects
- Alcoa also supports Portland seedbank; several of these have sprung up because of the demand for indigenous seed for revegetation
- Farm Advance launched
- 1991 – Water trading commences in Victoria
- First Australian Landcare Conference; five national soil conservation conferences had been held since 1971- the sixth was transformed into the first national Landcare conference
- Private forestry profile raised with demonstrations, regional plantation committees and regional agroforestry networks. Land capability database for private forestry prepared. Statewide planning amendment passed to support timber production on private land. Led to Forestry Rights Act 1996. Recognised environmental benefits from commercial activities
- 1992 – Wimmera River Catchment Coordinating Group's draft strategy led to the Wimmera River Integrated Catchment Management Strategy
- Victoria's Decade of Landcare Plan released; recognised Landcare as Victoria's major focus for achieving sustainable land management, locking-in catchment goals with Landcare movement. Twenty-eight specific actions listed – in retrospect, ambitious. Key ones were: prepare Regional Landcare Action Plans; promote farm planning; set up State Landcare Committee to oversee implementation
- State Landcare Committee established – role taken over by Catchment and Land Protection Council 1995
- Rural Water Corporation – successor to Rural Water Commission; nine regions consolidated into five; corporatisation of internal business units and consultancies
- Break-of-slope plantings under way in Warrenbayne area testing hypothesis from saline groundwater studies that plantations located in key topographic positions will impact on discharge of salt
- Salinity Bureau transferred from Department of Premier and Cabinet to Department of Food and Agriculture, so that Minister of Food and Agriculture is responsible for Salinity Program and the Minister for Conservation and Environment oversees Landcare Program
- Rural Adjustment Scheme operates
- Glenthompson Catchment Group established – seven Landcare groups coming together
- Waterwatch established – community groups active in water quality monitoring. 800 Waterwatch groups in Victoria by year 2000
- 1993 – Woody Yaloak Catchment Group formed following plan developed by Cam Nicholson, funded under Greening Australia's *Catchments of Green* program; program focussing on trees, pastures, rabbits and erosion;

- Alcoa announces it will support Woody Yaloak Catchment Project
- Sustainable Agriculture Strategy – Department of Agriculture seeking to integrate resource management with farm business development
- Over 20 000 landholders participated in property management planning (PMP) courses
- Victorian Plantations Corporation formed
- 1994 – Farm\$mart launched; PMP-related initiative associated with new approach to ‘drought’ preparedness and management
- *Catchment and Land Protection Act* 1994 sets up Catchment Management Framework: statewide council and ten regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards responsible (in conjunction with government) for producing Regional Catchment Strategies. These build on extensive planning already underway for Landcare, salinity, soil conservation, pest management and water quality and provide strategic direction
- Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council (VCLPC) established
- Ten Catchment and Land Protection Boards established - soon restructured to have stronger overseeing role to better implement Regional Catchment Strategies
- Good Neighbour Program commenced – campaigns against weeds, rabbits, foxes and wild dogs on public/private land boundaries
- *LandCare* definitely *Landcare*
- 1995 – Further water sector reform: separation of commercial and public-good functions. Task of supplying water for irrigation given to four separate businesses: Wimmera-Mallee; Sunraysia; Goulburn-Murray; and Gippsland and Southern (eventually becoming Southern)
- MEYcheck cropping extension program rolled into Topcrop, national initiative to improve water-use efficiency
- 1996 – Accidental release of rabbit calicivirus in SA; virus spreads into Victoria, affecting drier regions
- Victorian Landcare magazine – first edition on the tenth anniversary of Landcare; amalgamation and refocussing of Trunkline and Salt Force News; jointly published by NRE, VFF and Alcoa Australia
- State Landcare Conference at Ballarat University October
- Project Platypus launched at Stawell with medium-term financial commitment from Rio Tinto
- Forestry Rights Act 1996
- Habitat corridor projects come of age; term biolink emerges
- Parks Victoria formed
- Regional Coastal Boards established
- State of the Environment Report (first national-level document of its kind)
- National Heritage Trust established following partial sale of Telstra; designed to help restore and conserve Australia’s environment and natural resources through Landcare, Bushcare, Rivercare and Coastcare Programs
- 1997 – Completion of first version of all Regional Catchment Strategies (RCSs)

- Victorian Catchment Management Council formed (VCMC) – replaces VCLPC
- Regional Catchment Management Authorities supplant CLP Boards, except for Port Phillip and Western Port CLPB. Waterway Management Authorities absorbed into CMAs, which have three components: CMA Board – directly responsible for development of strategic directions for regional land and water management – conduits for local community input, oversee development and implementation of programs
- Commonwealth-State agreement ratified to treble total area of plantations in Australia by 2020 by fostering expansion of private forestry – contained in *Plantations for Australia: the 2020 Vision*. Leads to *Private Forestry in Victoria: Strategy towards 2020*
- 1998 – Victorian Farm Management Awards initiated by VCMC reinstating traditional competitions and introducing new ones. Harold Hanslow Award for sustainable land management, John F Hughes Award for outstanding group work in pest plant and animal work, Jack Gilmore Award for outstanding individual or group activity in water management and Sidney Plowman Travel Study Award to departmental staff making notable contributions to reducing land degradation
- Severe East Gippsland floods
- Victorian Catchment Management Conference held at Shepparton and Mooroopna
- Greenfleet program launched by Peter Brock
- Household catchment-management tariffs introduced by coalition government and subsequently removed by the incoming Labour administration
- 1999 – Victorian Greenhouse Action Statement *Replanting Victoria 2020*
- 2000 – First International Landcare Conference, Melbourne
- Willow-reduction programs becoming popular in southern Victoria – being replaced with indigenous riparian vegetation
- Concept of ecosystem services emerges
- Pivot irrigators proliferate; blue gum plantations expand, especially in south-west Victoria
- Triple Bottom Line becomes common parlance
- Snowy River ‘rescue’ package formulated; \$375 million committed over ten years to restore 2 percent of average natural flows (212 GL). Bush Tender program launched
- FarmBis program replaces Farm\$mart for Property Management Planning and other training
- 2001 – Review of roadside management and conservation in Victoria
- 2002 – Grow West landscape change project gets underway around Bacchus Marsh, a problem-rich area with serrated tussock, rabbits, erosion, salinity and nutrient run-off
- Roadside Conservation Advisory Committee wound up
- Environmental Water Reserve concept becomes part of Victoria’s water

- management system; increasing awareness that river and groundwater systems require a reserve allocation of water to maintain their health
- Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth policy released
- Land Stewardship Project commences
- With the still growing demand for local provenance plants, native seed orchards expand to satisfy market for seed without decimating remnants
- 2003 – Glenelg Hopkins RCS is first integrated natural resource management plan in Australia to be accredited by both state and Commonwealth governments
- Concept of environmental flows well enunciated in the River Health Strategy
- 2004 – Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority formed – negotiations proceed with Melbourne Water
- 2005 – Commonwealth Games greenhouse program sees 460 hectares planted across Victoria, sequestering some 110 000 hectares of carbon dioxide equivalent
- 2006 – Melbourne Water extends its river management activities to the Maribyrnong and Werribee basins
- Twentieth anniversary of Landcare. International Landcare Conference, Melbourne

<sup>1</sup> Chronology based on the Catchment Management Almanac of the Victorian Catchment Management Council (2005) (See <http://www.vcmc.vic.gov.au>)

## Rougher timelines

### Rob Youl

#### 1970s

- \* Australian Forest Development Institute forms in Sydney – North Coast poplars and radiata pine main focus
- \* Phil Macumber, Geoff Jenkin and others do research on Victorian salinity; Ernest Jackson publicises the problems
- \* Farm Forestry Loan Scheme, Victoria (started 1967) is popular for mainstream forestry systems for private landowners and it strengthens AFDI in Victoria
- \* Garden State Committee, Victoria with its Project Treecover: Dick Hamer, John Jack, Kevin Heinze and stronger links with Victorian farmers
- \* Victorian branch, Institute of Foresters of Australia's campaign on tree decline
- \* Community salinity campaign, Maryborough, Victoria includes churches; Terry and Fay White important contributors
- \* Project Branchout – centred on Bendigo
- \* Everett report leads to Private Forestry Division, Tasmania
- \* Geoff and Mary Wilsons' influential annual tree magazines – NZ inspired – plus Geoff edits *Australian Forest Grower*

#### 1980-84

- \* Focus on Farm Trees conference, Melbourne 1980 – Nan Oates, Peter Langley, Rob Davidson, Peter Grieg
- \* Leads to Tree Growing Assistance Scheme (TGAS), Victoria
- \* ATCV forms post-conference (much later, changes name to CVA)
- \* United Nations Association Year of the Tree –
- \* Nursery industry in NSW creates Greening Australia
- \* John French promotes urban forestry
- \* New England community recognises tree decline as regional problem
- \* Salinity campaign develops state-wide in Victoria through Salinity Bureau
- \* Commercial activities increase on Tasmanian farms – blackwood, shining gum
- \* CSIRO agroforestry research workers collaborate with several states
- \* Interest in indigenous species grows
- \* ITCI flourishes under Geoff Wilson
- \* Literature emerges – Nan Oates, Geoff Wilson, Brian Roberts

- \* Experiments in direct seeding on farms in Victoria (Richard Weatherly, David Debenham), SA, WA
- \* Rainforest restoration/re-creation movement grows in northern NSW
- \* First pine growers' marketing co-operative in north east Victoria
- \* Black Range-Dundas Corridor Group, Victoria in 1984 links two major public land blocks
- \* Another pioneer: Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group, Benalla area
- \* Victorian departments integrate; other states follow, usually at some distance
- \* WA develops its LCDC system, and work starts on the massive salinity problems in the wheatbelt

## 1985-89

- \* Potter Farmland Plan in Hamilton in 1985 promotes whole-farm approach to soil and water conservation
- \* Landcare introduced in Victoria in 1986 by Joan Kirner and Heather Mitchell with public servants Bob Edgar, Horrie Poussard, Dennis Cahill and Bob Campbell
- \* Paulownia boom
- \* More literature: Richard Moore, Jackie Venning, Rowan Reid, Geoff Wilson, Andrew Campbell, Roland Breckwoldt, Rob Davidson, Denis Saunders, Campbell *et al* with *Victoria Felix*
- \* First local indigenous nurseries trade
- \* NZ farm forestry exchanges; Neil Barr, Harry Bunn, Leith Knowles, Jeff Tombleson, Ian Barton, John and Ann Mackay
- \* Alcoa invests generously in Landcare in WA and Victoria
- \* Murray-Darling Basin recognised as a big national problem
- \* *Catchment management* emerges as a philosophy
- \* Interest grows in urban forestry
- \* First state Landcare conferences
- \* River management techniques change – willows fall out of favour
- \* Rowan Reid starts demonstration farm in Victoria's Otway Ranges
- \* Tree growing projects initially fenceline or paddock-based, then become more property-oriented, then neighbours start working closely together, until then unheard of, the term *corridors* emerges
- \* Roadsides, streams, rail lines, stock routes, all public land, now seen as revegetation opportunities
- \* Change from 'river improvement' to 'river management'
- \* Government re-organisation (*sic*) commences – and hasn't stopped
- \* Victoria's salinity campaign sets new standards in community-friendliness
- \* Probably the first regional plan emerges, from Victoria's Wimmera catchment

spearheaded by Barry Clugston. Hundreds have been launched since then!!! – three more in the Wimmera for the same general region

## 1990-95

- \* One Billion Trees (Hawke/Richardson) — undoubtedly it met its goals
- \* Greening Australia builds its national infrastructure
- \* Landcare now nationwide, through ACF/NFF alliance, with NLF and NLP
- \* National conferences on direct seeding and catchment management by Greening Australia
- \* Several direct seeders on the market
- \* Projects start to become catchment-scale
- \* NLF Andrew Campbell tells us that every part of the continent has severe landcare problems but Landcare-type groups are forming
- \* The terms *greenhouse* and *sustainability* emerge
- \* Count shows more than 1000 Landcare groups in NSW
- \* New authors include Andrew Campbell, Greg Siepen, Steve Burke, Ted Lefroy, Val Brown, Steve Davidson, Brian Garrett
- \* Foundations laid for Vision 2020 – trebling Australia's plantation estate
- \* State-level private forestry councils form
- \* Blue gum plantings accelerate, especially in WA, SA and south eastern Victoria – with shining gum common in Tasmania
- \* Murray Darling Basin Commission committed to community consultation; mounts many excellent education campaigns
- \* Landcare Australia starts to raise funds from corporate sector for community projects
- \* First Landcare cultural events
- \* Angry Anderson Challenge – goal one million trees along the Murray in a week – achieved
- \* Arid zone activities increase – quandongs, dates, effluent use, cypress pine, sandalwood
- \* Landcare networks form – more efficient, can afford co-ordinators
- \* Regional revegetation guides to indigenous trees and shrubs proliferate

## 1996-2005

- \* AFDI becomes AFG, aligned with NAFI; Regional farm forestry networks across Australia
- \* Blue gum industry waxes and wanes
- \* In WA wheatbelt, Landcare on a multi-regional scale
- \* Some 100 indigenous nurseries in Victoria alone
- \* Powlett Project in Victoria – 1200 scouts plant 56 000 trees one weekend covering 56 hectares

- \* Olympic Landcare campaign runs for three years nationally
- \* International Landcare Conference, Melbourne 2000
- \* Private Forestry Tasmania consolidates
- \* National Action Plan launched to combat salinity
- \* Firewood supplies emerge as major problem for south eastern cities
- \* Coastcare movement grows
- \* Bush tucker industry develops
- \* Alcoa recognised for its leadership in corporate involvement in community action
- \* 5-6000 landcare-type groups nationally (there are over 180 landcare networks, each of 5-30 groups, in NSW and Victoria alone)
- \* Landcare now in NZ, RSA, the Philippines, Iceland and perhaps soon in the US
- \* Regional catchment management bodies in all states; viral epidemics of strategies and plans
- \* Landcare Australia's tally reaches \$150 million cash, in-kind and added value
- \* Concept of *landscape change* emerges, with conferences, CSIRO Heartlands project, WA Wheatbelt activities, Woody Yaloak, Project Platypus, Hindmarsh Biolinks. The emergence of eTree is important: partnership between Computershare, Landcare Australia and networks across the country; program total 1400 hectares of new bushland and wetland in thirty months (SA Lower Murray networks, Albury to Holbrook - 800 hectares established, Grow West, and so on across Australia, with a small NZ project)

## The road to Landcare: one view

### Rob Chaffe

In the 1890s and early 1900s land management changed in Australia with droughts and wars in Africa and Europe. Although many subsistence farms were wiped out and larger holdings had significant problems because of labour shortages, the newly developed internal combustion engine helped mechanise farm practices. Moreover engineers brought water in quantity to many rural communities, further changing agriculture.

Australia had to resettle returned soldiers (soldier settlement projects – marginal land, minimum skills, small allotments), and help feed war-ravaged countries. European refugees came to Australia, only to encounter the depression years of the 1930s. Rabbits had taken over much of the country; there were more dry seasons; weeds and dust storms abounded – and bush-fires such as Black Friday in 1939 burnt vast areas.

Amidst this land abuse, E Sherbon Hills published *Physiography of Victoria* describing the geology and geomorphology of Victoria. Moreover, a new discipline had emerged: agricultural science, dealing with plants, animals and fertilisers and new ways of using the land. At the same time the US Mid West and Great Plains were beset by wind erosion, and deep gullies cut through Southern cotton fields.

In Victoria the community response was 'first deal with the erosion;' horse teams cleared wind-blown soil from Mallee channels. A State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC) employee, Harold Hanslow, initiated an annual competition to encourage landholders to stop the soil moving in the first place, not just dealing with the problem but changing land management. Across the Pacific, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) started to help landholders improve their farming systems. They called it 'agricultural extension' – professionals promoting better land use, often through the land-grant universities, with groups of farmers, including young rural people in the 4H movement (US young farmers), through financial incentives, training, better communications and group psychology. Government was now taking a major role in improving land use.

In Victoria in the 1940s, the work of Hanslow and others led to formation of the Soil Conservation Board and then the Soil Conservation Authority

(SCA) in 1950, charged under its enabling Act with:

*prevention and mitigation of soil erosion, the promotion of soil conservation, the determination of matter relevant to the utilisation of Crown lands, in such a manner as will tend towards the attainment of the objects aforesaid; the promotion of efficiency in the use and development by landholders of water resources available to them.*

In essence, the state would work cooperatively with landholders. All works and assistance would be through the landholder to the land – loosely defined as soil, water and all the things contained within.

Frank Gibbons and Geoff Downes, two CSIRO researchers, joined the SCA and devised an assessment process they called Land Systems, which combined landscape features (soil, parent material, slope, aspect, altitude, plants and animals) to delineate land units with similar characteristics, not as component parts but as living/dynamic ecosystems. This work led to processes for determining the capability of the land systems to sustain particular urban and rural land uses.

Therefore during the 1940s and 1950s, with government interested in better land management, a scientific system evolved for looking at the land and determining its fundamental capabilities, and there was an organisation, the SCA, dedicated to the ideal of land conservation through cooperative – community and private – management. The SCA recruited people from many walks of life, but sought from them practicality and enthusiasm for working cooperatively. Research plots were soon established on all types of land, with landholders and managers being recruited as volunteer helpers.

Work was needed across Victoria due to past bad (or ignorant!) management – gullies, drifting sand, sheet and tunnel erosion – and salinity was showing up. The staff needed specialised training in soil and water conservation and erosion control. This internal program ran over three years in different locations across the state and results governed promotion. Staff members were expected to become part of the community, involved in sport, schools, church groups and service clubs, gaining trust and respect to help bring change. The field reporting process always began with an assessment of the land management skills of the land manager. Any recommendation would be tailor-made to the land manager's capacity and the land's capability.

With soil conservation still an emerging *science* there was no right or wrong way, so SCA officers tried many things, and listened to the land managers' ideas too, for the latter took most of the risk. However, with expensive

engineering works, or on sites of high community interest, the government made significant financial contributions, necessitating a formal agreement setting out responsibility for construction and maintenance.

The SCA worked through six Regions, divided into several Districts, each with an elected Soil Conservation Advisory Committee, intended especially to develop and sustain cooperation between landholder and government. A major annual regional feature was the Hanslow Cup competition, which acknowledged outstanding contributions to erosion control. Other criteria included stocking rates, fodder conservation, subdivision, land-class fencing, waterway protection, woodlots, native species conservation, enterprise selection, risk management – fire, flood and drought – and sustainability. Entry was voluntary and officers from other SCA Regions did the judging. Hundreds of landholders might turn up to a field day on the winning property, especially in the Mallee. Many shires also awarded prizes. In the 1970s a water conservation prize was added.

This meant that locally across Victoria there were government-community networks actively working together to conserve the land, with government officers part of the community – as honour boards of office-bearers in local halls often testified – yet still the face of government.

In the mid 1950s the SCA published *The Westgate Story*, a small booklet describing the whole-farm planning process on a property near Great Western. It set out for the first time principles of integrated planning and sustainable farm management, and encouraged District staff to help develop and implement many more of these plans.

In the 1960s, the SCA led total catchment projects at Eppalock and Puckapunyal military training area, as well as on several areas of Crown land. Group Conservation Projects followed, and other catchment-based projects on freehold land, set up by consensus with local landholders: if two or more landholders voted against the project it would not go ahead. With each project, detailed plans set out works and various levels of responsibility; but SCA staff sometimes needed considerable drive and direction to achieve goals. Meanwhile, some landholders said: *If you do the work, you own the work.*

Maintenance of government-funded and constructed works became a major issue. It's intriguing that these works were often designed and built on a five- to ten-year planning horizon; that is, they should have completed their useful task and been obsolete in a very short time. However, there are structures and earthen banks built in the 1950s to these criteria that still function well today, sometimes without any maintenance. Ironically, catchment and land management has changed so much that newcomers often ask 'What's this doing here?'

This led the SCA to seek ways of developing more cooperative and inter-dependent relationships, so that landholders were committed to sustainable land use and to actively manage all works long after the erosion-control phase was over. Several programs built on field experience, as well as academic studies of extension processes, to develop training aids and tools called *extension principles and practice*. A major inspiration was the new science of adult learning, promoted by Malcolm Knowles in *The adult learner, a neglected species*, first published in 1973. Also helpful were overseas tours by SCA officers, post-graduate studies, focused research and contact with FAO, so that the SCA ensured that world's best practice and thinking were applied to its extension programs. John McKinlay's *The Farming Game* came out of this, a board game enabling people to explore the complexity of sustainable land management, and associated decision-making.

In the 1970s, we also sought ways of sustaining and developing the extension model, helping government take a more strategic role, ensuring that, as the early adopters' success became generally known, there was enough capacity to sustain the resulting demand for help and advice. Bryan O'Brien, Darrel Brewin and others worked to enhance landholders' sense of responsibility for land management.

The 1970s were very wet, and many erosion control structures failed, which led to a complete revision of design criteria. Although the failures themselves were generally not significant, they reduced confidence in some circles. During this period the Commonwealth launched a major national study into land degradation across the nation; the final encyclopaedic report, tabled in the House in Canberra in 1984, generated unanimous support for action. This crystallised as the National Soil Conservation Program (NSCP), a massive injection of resources to Australian land management.

But this was also a time of growing distrust of the Green Revolution of the 1960s and agricultural advice from government. One of the reasons had been the agricultural departments' major push for farmers to move from sheep to cattle. This was good for the land as cattle grazed less intensely than sheep, but they needed a lot more feed and water. The almost instant change to cattle led to a major crash in cattle prices in the late 1970s – not that wool was much better, as markets dried up and unsold bales jammed the Wool Board's stores. Agriculture, especially grazing, was under great stress – there was almost no money to invest in works not directly linked to survival, and many graziers operating close to large urban areas, or in scenic regions, found irresistible the opportunity to sell out profitably to affluent urban buyers.

Into this environment came the push for more on-ground activity, supported by the NSCP. Many SCA staff began to devise different ways of doing business to meet both the demand for more action and the changing ownership patterns. The new owners brought enthusiasm but little or no experience in land management, especially compared with the previous owners, who had sometimes been there for generations.

This was also a period of political challenge in Victoria, with the first Labour government for many years bringing numerous changes to the public service, which became less independent, more of an agent of the governing party. As the structures changed, so did the relationship with the community, and new legislation was mooted to shift responsibility from agencies, as had been the SCAs style, to land owners, thus completely changing the role of government.

The idea of Landcare emerged, of landowners working together to care for their land, sustained and supported by the group/community, and more distant from direct influence of government.

To state the obvious, the rest is history. Reflecting on the era from the 1930s to say 1986, we see that Landcare was based on world's best practice, was virtually a world first and employed world-class science. It also created a large and diverse body of people now seen as leaders in sustainable development and effective community engagement, and an organisation totally committed to training and new learning.

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.

## Soil conservation – a good basis for Landcare

### Horrie Poussard

Landcare is part of an evolving approach to better soil, water and vegetation management, under way in Victoria over many years, leading to more sustainable outcomes in agriculture, recreation and nature. The quality of these basic building blocks of life – soil, water, air and vegetation – has been seriously degraded in many areas by humans acting in less than sustainable ways during and before European settlement. These degrading processes are usually linked, and Landcare differs from earlier land improvement programs by often tackling several problems in a combined and coordinated way.

### Soil conservation<sup>1</sup>

John Robertson followed the Hentys from Tasmania to Portland in the 1840s, selecting *Wando Vale*, Casterton; his letters indicate the rapid decline in soil stability under the influence of hard-hoofed sheep and cattle on land that had been adapted over millions of years to soft-footed marsupials. Initially the grass was abundant:

*...lovely dark green pasture – all eatable, nothing had trod the grass before...*<sup>2</sup>

But as early as 1844 he noticed changes, and by 1853:

*The long deep-rooted grasses that held our strong clay hills together had died out, the ground is exposed to the sun and it has cracked in all directions. The clay hills are slipping in all directions, also the sides of precipitous creeks, long slips taking trees and all with them.*<sup>3</sup>

He further recounted that every little gully had become a deep rut and the Wannon country had become difficult to ride over, with ruts ten-foot-deep and just as wide. These extended for miles over land that a few years before had been covered with tussocky grass, which provided protection to the natural depressions. Moreover some of the springs were saline. Apparently these are the first Victorian records of gully erosion and salinity.

Besides grazing pressure, other factors contributed to the spread of water

erosion. Early settlers naturally applied European farming practices, developed over many generations and well suited to the softer northern climate and deeper soils. Sheep preferred short sweet grasses; in Australia, the natural tussocky species were not so attractive over summer. Burning the dry standing grasses to encourage new short green shoots in autumn was common – and also practised by Aboriginal groups everywhere. However the fires, which sometimes got out of control and burnt extensive forest areas, and the sharp hooves of sheep and cattle, left the thin topsoil vulnerable to erosion from heavy autumn and winter rains, as did the advent of rabbits, from a release at Winchelsea in 1859.

Wind erosion in Victoria has a similar history; the Mallee lands were cleared following the progressive development of railways and water channels from the 1890s. The arid landscapes had been well protected by native vegetation, but as clearing, cropping and grazing extended, the sandy soils started to ‘blow.’ GT Thompson notes:

*By 1920 wind erosion had become a serious problem, particularly in drought years. Carried by the wind, Mallee soils caused storms of red rain to become common over Melbourne. The red dust went even further afield, so that red snow fell on the Australian Alps, and even across the Tasman in New Zealand. The costs of clearing sand from the Mallee water channels increased year by year.*

Despite this long history of soil degradation, it took many years of campaigning to establish a government agency to concentrate on rectifying erosion.

### Soil Conservation Board

The Soil Conservation Board (SCB), set up under the *Soil Conservation Act* 1940, and comprising a full-time chairman, HG Strom, and five part-time members representing the water, lands, agriculture and mines departments, plus a farmer representative, M. Mulquiny, was detailed to:

- prevent and minimise soil erosion
- promote soil conservation
- use land in such a manner to conserve natural resources

The Board’s tiny clerical staff had a minute budget, and relied on officers from other departments for research and advice to farmers; and it was wartime. Strom, a civil engineer, initially emphasised structures to repair existing erosion along roads, channels, stream banks and gullies. However

Maisie Fawcett, a botany lecturer at Melbourne University started some agronomic research with an ecological survey of the Hume catchment, and subsequently encouraged Omeo farmers to introduce improved pastures to reverse severe sheet and gully erosion. Cropland was eroding in many undulating areas, and the first contour furrows and contour banks were formed at Dookie Agricultural College in 1942 – an excellent demonstration for students and visiting farmers. Moreover articles in the *School Paper* on soil erosion were subsequently consolidated into *The Story of Soil*, a booklet distributed to schools for the next thirty years.

The *Soil Conservation Act* also set up Regional Advisory Committees, comprising three farmers and Lands and Agriculture representatives. The SCB Chairman chaired each of the eight committees formed in 1941, forerunners of Land Protection Regional Advisory Committees in the 1980s and regional Landcare networks in the 2000s, and the first opportunity for landholders to contribute significantly to soil conservation policies and programs.

Seeing the annual scale and cost of clearing wind-blown sand from the Mallee channel system, Harold Hanslow, the farmer representative on the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, decided to try to reduce erosion throughout Victoria. The notion of farmer field days and demonstrations is long-standing. Impressed by a soil conservation competition for farmers run by a NSW shire, he initiated a similar one in the Mallee. No one offered a prize, so he presented a magnificent silver cup for the first competition in 1940, a trophy still in use for regional Landcare awards. Hanslow presented a second cup for the Goulburn catchment; again it's still in use.

The SCB held its first official soil conservation field day in 1943 on Hughes Creek near Avenel. Local farmer DH Lawrence (not the author!) had over the previous three years dug by hand (!) about 80 km of contour furrows protecting about 100 hectares of sloping granitic grassland. Because he believed that tractors and fuel were needed for the war effort, he decided to rely on his own resources.

In 1943 the Save the Forests Campaign, later to become the Natural Resources Conservation League (NRCL), began, with the SCB an active participant. This link between trees and soil conservation was to stretch to the present day, when we see revegetation with native species as a vital element of soil conservation and Landcare.

In 1944 the Regional Advisory Committees had their first conference: policy, procedures, schools education, ecology, soil conservation practices, material aid to farmers for soil conservation works, and the impact of pest plants and animals all featured. Afterwards regional committees focused more energetically on local issues. Soil conservation programs developed

greater sophistication over the years with a steady input of agronomic, soil and land-use research and experience; and increased understanding of extension techniques encouraged more interest in the concept of group action.

From the beginning, the SCB regarded the catchment as the basic unit in water erosion control, which brought into play private farmland and public land, managed for forestry, grazing, water production and recreation. This holistic view of land management differed from that of most farmers of the era, and the Agriculture Department which sought mainly to help individual farmers increase production.

### Soil Conservation Authority

The need for stable land use and management across the whole landscape resulted in the inauguration of the Soil Conservation Authority (SCA) in 1950 under the *Soil Conservation and Land Utilization Act 1949*. The Conservation Minister, Henry Bolte, said:

*...we could not have made a bigger mess of the soil of the country if its destruction had been carried out under supervision. For every farmer who is husbanding his land under existing conditions, ten others are neglecting to do so, merely because they do not know how to approach erosion problems. I trust that the new Authority will undertake an intensive educational program.*

At this time, a separate Soil Conservation Service was established in NSW, and a Soil Conservation Section established in the SA Department of Agriculture; other states followed.

Over the next decade significant changes occurred in the SCA's approach to encourage farmers to repair soil erosion. Initially focus was on individual sites, but increasingly the farm as a whole was being considered and whole-farm planning (for soil conservation measures) was being implemented from Ararat and Charlton in central Victoria to Bairnsdale in Gippsland. Surveys delineated soils, vegetation, erosion and land-use history across a property. Farmers were encouraged to look anew at the entire property and implement, if necessary, major changes to land use, relocating fencelines to conform to land classes, undertaking various works and installing control structures.

Building on this process, SCA staff saw that adjoining properties should be linked within a catchment where soil erosion had spread. Many farmers

battled constantly to deal with neighbouring untreated eroding land, which threatened their good work. Safe disposal of excess water often required extensive graded waterways through several properties to the main creek bed or drainage line. This need for community cooperation to work on a broader scale was one of the building blocks of Landcare thirty years later.

In 1959 the Victorian government approved plans for Eppalock reservoir on the Campaspe River near Bendigo. Farmers in the catchment had been concerned with the impact of soil erosion on productivity; now it threatened the reservoir itself through extensive siltation. The SCA started an intensive program of land and water protection, emphasising prevention of soil movement as much as repair of existing erosion. Recognising the long-term nature of the erosion and the obvious public benefits, farmers were fully reimbursed for 'non-productive works,' such as gully control structures and silt traps on their properties.

At the same time, farmers got partial grants to reduce some of the *causes* of sheet and gully erosion, such as excess runoff from sloping land by re-fencing to land class boundaries, pasture improvement, tree planting, contour sowing, ripping and banking. The first year saw about 2000 hectares of steep land sown to improved pasture, 50 erosion control structures built, thirty kilometres of fencing erected and 18 000 trees planted.

Twenty five years after the start of the Eppalock Project, Deane Runge, Chief Soil Conservation Officer with SCA, said:

*Perhaps the biggest feature of the project was not the amount of work done, but the cooperation between farmers, local government and the soil conservationists involved. Without this cooperation, the project might never have been completed.*<sup>4</sup>

This experience, which underlined the value of groups, along with the earlier whole-farm planning, stimulated changes to the legislation to allow the SCA to set up its highly successful Group Conservation Area (GCA) program. It was catchment/sub-catchment based and identified the soil conservation issues both within project areas and downstream. Over the next twenty years, about 150 GCAs were planned and implemented, in an effort to address the conflict between the actions (or inaction) of individual farmers, with the broader benefits to the farming community and downstream stakeholders achieved by good soil conservation practices. Darrell Brewin wrote:

*Conflict between individual farmers and society arises when the individual desires to maximise his personal satisfaction in a manner contrary to the benefits of society as a whole... The efforts of one individual farmer may be laid waste by the effects of erosion or high runoff from a neighbouring farm. A safe coordinated water disposal system for a whole catchment area is the cheaper and more effective base on which to build a conservation program to control water erosion.*<sup>5</sup>

Group conservation areas were planned technically by professional officers to repair existing erosion and to manage runoff to minimise future erosion. Various 'structures' – such as waterways, concrete chutes, contour banks – required engineering and surveying skills, and were the prerogative of the officer involved. To that extent, planning was primarily by the SCA officer, with little active participation by the farmers in the group. Farmers were naturally more interested in those practices – sowing improved pastures, fertilising and so on – that increased production.

By the mid 1970s, poor seasons, low commodity prices and different priorities for limited farm funds were bearing on many proposals for new GCAs. Group Conservation Projects (GCPs) were developed, following the same planning approaches but allowing farmers to complete works at their own pace. A Soil and Water Conservation Loan scheme, run through the Rural Finance Commission, provided low interest (five percent) loans, mostly to develop farm water systems, including troughs and reticulation, necessary after subdivisional fencing programs along land-class boundaries. The first such loan, solely for soil conservation works, was to the Winjallock farmer, from whose property Landcare was launched in 1986.

The SCA invested time and resources to train staff in extension principles and practices, helping officers deal with changing farm management and social developments in rural communities. Understanding these communities, and decision-making processes and advisory techniques, prepared SCA officers for what turned out to be future dramatic shifts in government–community interaction. Moreover, farm planning was promoted increasingly as the basis of good management, although it focused mainly on soil conservation. However this inevitably was linked with pasture improvement, stock management, water supplies, some habitat development (windbreaks, wetlands) and financial planning.

## Amalgamation

In 1982-85, the incoming Labour government folded the SCA into a new Department of Conservation Forests and Lands (CFL). The election platform had included integrating the existing major public land management authorities. By this time, the SCA was providing research, advisory and some regulatory services to public land managers, even though it expended much of its resources on private land. The SCA Melbourne staff was further amalgamated with the Vermin and Noxious Weed Destruction Board and the Forests Commission's extension group, becoming a policy, programming and research division of CFL, known as the Land Protection Service (LPS). SCA field staff members were allotted as appropriate to the eighteen regions.

The Land Protection Incentive Scheme (LPIS) emerged in 1984, replacing the earlier soil conservation grants program and grants given for farm tree growing by the Forests Commission. The authority for the program remained the older soil conservation and forests legislation, so LPIS could only be directed towards individual landholders – but this conflicted with the growing movement to form community-based groups to address a range of issues, including farm tree, salinity and general land improvement groups.

The amalgamation did stimulate integrated ideas, a more holistic approach to land management, and effective support for a new program launched in 1986 – Landcare.

- <sup>1</sup> Much of the historical information on soil conservation has been taken from GT Thompson's book *A Brief History of Soil Conservation in Victoria 1834-1961*. (1979) Soil Conservation Authority, Victoria
- <sup>2</sup> John Robertson (1853) *Letter to the Governor of Victoria*, taken from Letters from Victorian Pioneers. 1983 Currey O'Neil
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>4</sup> From the supplement *Eppalock 25* published by the McIvor Times, October 1985
- <sup>5</sup> Darrell Brewin (1980) *Farmers perceptions of soil conservation programs and soil conservation practices* SCA. Summary of the findings of a thesis for M Agric Science (Melbourne)

## Eppalock – a success story

### David Sanders

When construction started on Eppalock in 1960, sediment from the seriously eroded 2000 square kilometre catchment threatened the dam's effective life. The Victorian Government allocated \$100 000 annually – a considerable amount then – for conservation works over ten years. So began Australia's first large-scale catchment conservation scheme. I was lucky enough, as a very young field officer, to help plan and develop the project during its first five years.

By the mid 1970s our objectives had been largely met. The most severely eroded section (860 square kilometres) had been treated, only one-sixth of the previously estimated sediment was reaching the reservoir, the overgrazed native grasslands had been largely replaced by improved pastures, production had increased threefold on many farms and a more stable form of land use had been introduced. An independent economic assessment proved the project was a sound community investment. Net present value (1975) of the \$2.9 million total investment by landholders and government showed an internal rate of return of 25 percent and a benefit-cost ratio of 2.0.

Briefly, the success of the project was due to:

- *Timeframe and assured funding*: This was the first time in Australia that long-term funding had been assured for a large-scale conservation project. The ten-year timeframe, subsequently extended, allowed long-term planning, systematic development of techniques suited to the local environment, adequate training of staff and time to develop trust and a very strong working relationship with the farming community
- *Farmer involvement*: Farmers were fully involved in both planning and implementation
- *Approach to cost-sharing*: Those farming the land in the 1960s could not be held responsible for over a century of misuse. Therefore the state would pay for what we called *non-productive works*, such as gully control measures, but farmers had to contribute to *productive* measures, such as pasture improvement, which were likely to more than pay for themselves
- *Technology*: New pasture improvement techniques helped greatly, but

would not have been so quickly or widely adopted without the advice and subsidies the project provided. Other conservation techniques were tested and adapted to local conditions

- *Project organization, administration and staffing:* We established a simple system of command and clearly defined staff responsibilities. A close relationship developed with cooperating government organisations, making available a wider range of expertise

Altogether, Eppalock was an outstanding success: a large area of badly eroded land was conserved and stabilised, farmer incomes improved, conservation technology was refined and numerous staff members were trained. Probably more importantly, we developed a new approach to working with landholders, which was subsequently refined and played a big part in the eventual birth of Landcare. For me, it was very stimulating and a perfect foundation for a career with FAO over the next thirty years as an international adviser to governments on soil conservation.

## Setting the stage for Landcare

### David Elvery

In the 1920s, the lack of cars limited attendance at Department of Agriculture research station field days – outlying on-farm research trials helped some. From 1924-35, the Better Farming Train took departmental *experts* from Melbourne and research stations to farming districts. Appropriate exhibits and even demonstration animals emphasised the need for change and advancement. Besides farming themes, there were baby, family health, cooking and sewing lectures. (Carrie Tiffany's award-winning book, *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living*, is set within this institution.)

Generally farmers in the 1940s and 50s were loath to 'jump fences' – farming practices and new management initiatives were private matters. Slowly things changed.

From the late 1940s-1950s, the SCB and SCA provided decentralised advisory services and encouraged farmers to share experiences and new management systems. Hanslow Cup field days attracted crowds of 200-500, and sometimes led to massive uptake of new initiatives – for example, the Barbery family's use of barrel medic at Woomelang widened crop rotations, and the Lindners' success with lucerne on deep sands. Both ideas were rapidly assimilated and put into practice by many central Mallee farmers. The SCA started assisting single farm operators with advice, surveys, design and supervision of works programs. By the late 1950s it was encouraging neighbours, and sometimes shire councils, to participate in Cooperative Soil Conservation Projects – for example at Buckrabunyule, Goorambat and Shelbourne – exactly the approach that Ernest 'Watershed' Jackson was then promoting.

By the 1960s, several SCA Districts were developing farm plans for selected properties as a staff development and extension exercise – such as *Westgate* at Great Western, John Edwards' land at Axe Creek, and Arthur Tranter's operation at Toolleen. Special Demonstration Areas were set up – for example, patches of severe tunnel erosion at Avenel and Redcastle were selected to show that badly degraded areas could be successfully treated. Highly eroded abandoned Mallee blocks at Underbool and Piangil West were rehabilitated through sharefarming agreements with landowners, who eventually purchased the allotments.

Land classification – based on erosion hazard – was essential during all farm visits, farm planning and larger projects, helped greatly by the SCA research division's land studies and maps, usually based on large catchments. In the Mallee many farmers discussed land systems as a matter of course. In the 1960s, the SCA moved progressively from activities involving several farms to much larger projects. Eppalock was an Australian first; its 300 landholders, served by an SCA team up to six strong, with a specialist works crew of around eight men, quickly learned to 'jump fences' to compare pastures and other soil conservation developments on neighbouring properties. Agriculture Department specialists such as Bruce Crouch (pastures), Ben McConchie (sheep and wool) and Rex Newman and Max Fielder (pasture and fertiliser trials) were conspicuously helpful.

The reluctance of some farmers to maintain government-built works slightly marred Eppalock's success. Subsequent legislation on Group Conservation Areas (GCAs – usually based on catchments) stipulated formal meetings and agreements to more closely involve farmers in planning, approvals and execution, to try to get greater 'ownership' and therefore a fuller commitment to maintenance.

In the 1970s Puckapunyal Military Range was wearing thin and sending silt into the Goulburn. Another major, multi-departmental project, led by SCA, ran over two decades to rehabilitate this extensive and biodiverse stretch of country, which runs from Seymour-Tooborac to Mitchellton-Greytown.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the SCAs Dr Jeff Jenkin, Phil Dyson and colleagues gradually determined the causes and extent of Victoria's huge dry-land salinity problem. Catchment strategies and action plans could then be developed to try to overcome local and regional problems, especially through NSCP-funded 'best-bet' programs working with local communities, such as Burkes Flat, Warrenbayne-Boho, Gatum and Knowsley.

The SCAs Conservation Cropping programs, usually run jointly with regional Agriculture Department staff and farmers using NSCP funds, also helped set the stage for Landcare. Costly stubble mulching equipment was purchased at first, then conventional scarifiers and combine seeders were successfully modified. SCA officers involved included Bryan O'Brien, Alistair Stirling, Fred Shea, Peter Berg, Rob Sonogan, John Cooke and Harm Van Rees; on the Agriculture side were John Griffiths of Walpeup and Benalla's John Avery.

I will end with some personal comments about the Landcare era. I believe scientifically based backup and extension support are necessary for success-

ful farmer-led organisations, and that they have waned in some regions over the last twenty years.

There has been plenty of planning in Landcare, but I think it could have been done more professionally – with early development of a strategy, followed by seasonally flexible annual action plans for each Landcare group. There should have been a greater commitment to reporting, monitoring and auditing project results and expenditure.

Finally, has too much responsibility for administering and supervising Landcare groups been passed to CMAs? And have some DSE/DPI Regions absolved themselves of responsibility for technical and extension support of Landcare? The CMAs' prime responsibility should be developing policies, strategies and funding programs for Landcare, in close collaboration with DSE/DPI technical staffs.

## Reflections on three landcare experiences

### John Jack

Many individuals influenced my way of thinking or supported me or both: James Ewart, Ted Semmens, Karl Ferguson, Jim Westcott, Jim Willis, Alf Lawrence and Alan Parkinson. And there were bodies such as the Forest Research Branch, CSIRO Forest Products, UK Countryside Commission and USDA and Forest Service, with their philosophies of research support, multiple-use forestry and creating nursery systems.

### On the Indi

Relating to Landcare, an inspiration for me was the very active Murray Catchment Branch (MCB) of the Institute of Foresters Australia. Its dynamic secretary in 1960, Bob Newman, the SEC's forester at Bogong; was a competent speaker, committed to multiple-use forestry and had a wide range of government and business contacts. I was president, and, at the time, the FCV's District Forester at Beechworth, especially engaged in improving tree planting technology and practice in Australia and New Zealand. Roy Free, NSWFC Tumut, led the foresters from across the border. The branch had a strong cohort of young well trained foresters from both states, who were working in rural and regional communities and open to new ideas on living in harmony with the land.

However, our membership grew from twenty-five to 260 in two years because we took in associates, people interested in forestry, which helped our reserves, but also demanded comprehensive, flexible and democratic branch governance, and that we attracted good speakers from both the technical and political sectors. Our meetings taught me procedure and practice, and how to be at ease with politicians, senior officials and farmers.

Federal MP David Fairbairn, with the Director-General of the Commonwealth Forestry and Timber Bureau, used the MCB meetings to raise public awareness and stimulate the Commonwealth government to lend development funds to the states. This led to tens of thousands of hectares of softwood plantations being established over a ten-fifteen-year period. We organised field activities in both states in rural and urban locations. They included demonstrations, research reviews, talks and tours on land conser-

vation, soils, catchment management, rural buildings, fencing, shelter planting advice from local landowners, and contact with local government, farmers, numerous other politicians and people like Vern Lawrence of the Murray Valley Development League.

The MCB provided a platform for forestry to promote offsetting softwood imports through plantation extension in Australia by government and the private sector. Moreover, the Narrandera forests nursery, stimulated by MCB discussions, started to advise landowners on tree growing.

I learnt a great deal from the MCB: listen carefully to both enthusiasts and detractors; involve regional, state and national decision makers as speakers; and keep it simple to minimise media distortion. Field days must run to time and the information issued must not overwhelm the attendees. One should set aside a specific time at any activity to ensure people meet each other and exchange knowledge and experiences, especially with new arrivals.

### The Garden State

The Victorian Premier, Rupert Hamer, visited New Jersey, USA in (I think) 1975; it also called itself *The Garden State*, to its enhancement and advantage. Hamer decided to form a Garden State Committee (GSC) here to establish a similar iconic status; he expected that this would bring increased environmental awareness, jobs, improved lifestyles and economic migration. His senior public servant, Ken Green, saw the GSC as being expert, comprehensive and responsive to government thinking, but able to point the state in new directions to stimulate innovative thinking and activities. I was to chair the new group. I had in mind how to guide the committee, what sort of documentation we would need, and how to ensure openness, co-ordination and follow-up of opportunities. Two people who helped me then were Geoff Downes, who had both Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and wide Australian experience, and retired forestry friend, Karl Ferguson, who'd been part of the Save the Forests campaign.

We set out to bring together competing interests. We discussed landscaping roads and roadsides with local government; private gardens; the Herald Art Show; an Open Gardens Scheme; historic gardens; gardens and plant propagation for therapy and rehabilitation; and, of course, trees on farms. The key players were the Country Roads Board, Heritage Victoria, the SEC, Brian Joyce (representing the garden clubs), Professors Carrick Chambers and George Seddon, Kevin Heinze, (ABC TV's much loved garden presenter), Frank Keenan (who ran the City of Melbourne public gardens), Peter Langley of the Forests Commission, Miles Bourke of the VFGA (later the VFF); and the

executive officers, Alan Thatcher for most of the time, and Neil Watson.

Flowing from our meetings over several years were numerous community, corporate and private landscape initiatives; an awards program; Project Treecover; the national conference, *Focus on Farm Trees*; the Potter Farmland Plan (PFP); and eventually the formation in 1987 of Greening Australia Victoria. And I contend, the farm tree groups we set up after the conference, and the early rapid progress on the PLP, helped shape the Landcare proposal taken to Joan Kirner in 1986.

I learnt many things from the GSC. For a start, 'it's horses for courses!' I remember a Footscray Housing Commission resident saying; 'We don't want any of those fancy landscaped gardens; we just want an open area to keep the kids out from under our feet and from knocking down the washing!' Again to involve decision-makers, we kept meetings short enough so senior executives could attend. However, perhaps we didn't do enough to pass on our experience to newcomers. Certainly, there was a broad spectrum of interest in *gardening*, from recreation to production; landscapes to backyards and community gardens, and a great depth of talent in Victoria, amongst individuals and organisations. People's deep need to 'keep in touch with nature' is expressed in many different ways, which provides great opportunities. Moreover, healthy competition between the various sectors of the community brings creativity and action.

### Potter Farmland Plan (PFP)

A concept developed within the GSC that we should provide examples of best environmental practice in farm management. Several examples existed already, but were not very accessible, nor were they particularly suited for extending activities to adjoining properties. I knew that the landowners had to 'own' any works and activities we fostered, and the Premier strongly agreed. Geoff Downes insisted too that whatever we did had to make economic sense. Pat Feilman, Executive Secretary of the Ian Potter Foundation, knew what arguments would make sense to Sir Ian and the Foundation members. Peter Mathews, an experienced social consultant and commercial protea grower, had helped many communities cope with new ideas and manage programs. Carrick Chambers, a top botanist, was also good at helping entrenched individuals and authorities accept new ideas, and had drafted many financial proposals to granting bodies.

The fifteen or so PFP farmers, whose properties were re-planned, reorganised and revegetated, both drew upon the GSC and contributed greatly to the dramatic changes that soon emerged. Andrew Campbell and his team,

backed by many volunteers, were responsible for planning and organising local support services. We attracted global interest, drew hundreds of visitors from across Australia, and encouraged agricultural and veterinary colleges to re-jig their farm planning courses to incorporate ecological values.

From my Potter days I learnt that optimising the visual impact makes good sales sense; many farmers wanted only to plant their driveways or along their front fence. We should have encouraged this more as a lead-in to the ecological/whole-of-farm approach instead of only encouraging the converted. However, overall there was a great interest in the use of trees for landscaping in rural areas. We should have secured at least two farms by covenant; one was covenanted, but not by PFP. It was very difficult to get grantees to take 'ownership' of complex activities if all of the interactions were not understood.

Time is very short for most farmers and satisfactory labour is difficult to hire, so compelling arguments are required to help deliver the long-term benefits of ecological values. I also found most farm advisers lacking in ecological training. Farm planning was well received, but had to be flexible enough to respond to market and seasonal conditions.

### General thoughts

It was clear from our MCB and GSC discussions and interactions that there was a strong public demand for production activities (transport, wood production, agriculture) and recreational aspects (housing, gardening, touring) to be accommodated in a more holistic, sustainable and economic fashion than currently. Sadly it took the land-focused organisations a long time to recognise this. While the lessons may have been learnt at the project level, they have not been embedded in policy. Even today governments attempt to control land clearing by legislation rather than offering landowners economically sustainable alternatives. Likewise local governments seek to maintain streetscapes and rural landscapes by regulating what landowners can do with the vegetation on their properties, rather than encouraging innovative holistic sustainable alternatives.

There was a dearth of theoretical and practical knowledge of catchment hydrology, and therefore the ability to site activities for optimum farm and community benefit. New CSIRO computerised planning tools may address this to some degree. Finally, it is difficult to achieve co-operative decision-making except through face-to-face meetings, but these can be time-consuming and require high-quality administrative back-up.

Given today's proliferation of web access (conversation panes, blogs,

wikis, metaverses *et al*), it is easy but still time-consuming to keep in touch with Landcare developments locally, nationally and internationally; more effective project registration particularly at the latter two levels would assist. Committed and skilled individuals still have a vital role to play. Mechanisms for passing on specialist skills need attention. Opportunity-cost analysis, although somewhat out of favour these days, can often clarify the what, where and extent of potential Landcare projects. There has been a shortage of financial instruments for not-for-profits; this is now changing and could provide opportunities for a new wave of entrepreneurs and new ways of thinking.

## Initiatives of the Garden State Committee

### Alan Thatcher

In retrospect, at least two of the Garden State Committee's environmental initiatives contributed to modern Landcare thinking.

### Project Treecover

In 1978 the Garden State Committee (GSC) launched Project Treecover to encourage farmers to restore trees and associated vegetation to their land as an everyday farming activity. Our first step was to demonstrate the practicability of re-establishing trees, so we undertook several demonstration plantings in lower rainfall areas. We tried to get sites that were highly visible from main roads, used standard forestry techniques and we erected appropriate signs. Farmers readily made land available, and eventually there were Project Treecover demonstrations at: Joel Joel near Stawell (1979); Bald Hill near Wedderburn (1979); Caniambo near Benalla (1980); Red Bluff, Coleraine (1981); Colbinabbin (1982); Mystic Park (1984); and Wickliffe (1984). Forests Commission and SCA staff members did most of the fieldwork.

### Farm tree groups

In 1979 the GSC approached the main Victorian farm-sector representative, the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association (VFGA, later VFF), to discuss tree planting and management on private land. At the same time the GSC was helping organise the first national Focus on Farm Trees conference for 1980, which clearly identified the need for local-level action to address tree decline, but also recognised that different localities had different site conditions and land use, and so required different approaches to revegetation and other measures to tackle land degradation. In some cases, a farm-by-farm approach might be necessary.

In 1981 the GSC and VFGA set up four farm tree groups to look at trees as an integral part of farm management, foster sound decision-making through interaction between farmers and regional government officers, and generate technical information on land degradation, revegetation practices and productive agriculture. Each group was chaired by a farmer and com-

prised mostly landowners; government officers gave technical support – agriculture, soil conservation, wildlife and forestry; and councils provided meeting rooms.

Pilot groups were: Southern Mallee Farm Trees Group, Wycheproof; Glenelg Farm Trees Group, Hamilton; Campaspe Valley Farm Trees Group, Rochester; and Bairnsdale Farm Trees Group. Many new groups formed after that, and in 1984 the VFGA took over, appointing Ed Adamson to coordinate the program across Victoria.

## Focus on Farm Trees Conference 1980 and its impacts

**Peter Greig**

### Tree decline in rural Victoria 1979

In 1979, President John Jack was looking for a focal issue for the Victorian division of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA). John Wright suggested the theme: decline of remnant trees in Victoria's rural landscapes. I convened a sub-committee comprising Peter Langley, Barrie Dexter and Bill Middleton, which organised a seminar for foresters; the speakers included Professor Carrick Chambers of Melbourne University Botany School, and Bill Middleton, who had long been agitating against the loss of the Wimmera's red gums. They and other speakers confirmed that the issue was real, in need of urgent action and that foresters could contribute their skills to the cause.

Land clearing was still under way as well, although tax concessions were being reviewed, and clearing regulations had been foreshadowed. Dr Glen Kile, Peter Greig, Jim Edgar and Barrie Dexter compiled a booklet titled *Tree decline in rural Victoria*, which the IFA published. It included a pair of maps that were subsequently reproduced widely, even in Hansard Victoria, comparing the extent of tree cover before European settlement with the remnants in 1979. It was a compelling – if not really surprising – picture.

### Focus on Farm Trees Conference 1980

In 1980, Dewar Goode (National Trust) and Lily Schmidt (Blackburn Tree Preservation Society) were preparing a conservation theme for the third national *Focus* conference. They talked to several co-organisers, including me. I suggested that as the IFA's *Tree Decline in Rural Victoria* project had received a warm and wide welcome, perhaps *Trees on farms* could be a useful theme, particularly as there would be opportunities for action, and wide support – unlike some contemporary conservation issues that tended towards controversy.

The organising committee expanded to include representatives of all

organisations that might have an interest in the topic. They agreed early that inclusiveness and unity were paramount: the task required cooperation, not competition or conflict. Looking back after a quarter of a century, I reflect that this was – and still is – good policy in our sector. An eclectic combination of sponsors was assembled, further demonstrating the topic's wide appeal. Many of those organisations have expired, but their functions persist, and so does the spirit that evoked their generosity to the cause.

At that time, Premier Dick Hamer had already badged Victoria as the *Garden State*, and had established an interdepartmental Garden State Committee, chaired by his Deputy Secretary, John Jack. The Premier became patron of the conference, and warmly opened it – under difficult circumstances, because the sound and light technician was AWOL. David Hill from the organizing committee came to the rescue with a field amplifier, and a torch! The Premier proceeded apparently unperturbed, though his Deputy Secretary was not! Being a national conference, several interstate speakers gave papers, including Harry Butler of television fame, and Sir Otto Frankel of CSIRO. Geoff Downes and Geoff Mosley were prominent Victorian contributors. The papers all make interesting reading, even today.

Importantly, roughly half of the three-day conference was given over to workshops designed to extract practical ways to build momentum, many of which did just that, as time showed. Reading now through the published proceedings, lead-edited so competently by Nan Oates, I am struck by how useful it was to make a comprehensive record of the event, and how much good sense was spoken by both formal speakers and workshop participants. Presciently, the proceedings included a complete list of delegates, many of whom were already prominent in the field – like Ernie Jackson; John Fenton; Richard Weatherly; Rod Bird; and Tim Cox; or who later became big contributors to the cause – like Geoff Wescott, Peter Langley, and George Wright.

Looking back, it is apparent that this conference made the most of an idea whose time had come, and it left a cultural legacy that now embraces Landcare (and other 'care' organizations) as well as catchment management, all of which have made a mark by converting problems into solutions. Just as importantly, I now see that the cooperative and inclusive spirit of that first Focus on Farm Trees conference continues in the rapid spread of Landcare and integrated catchment management throughout Victoria and the rest of Australia, and overseas.

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#### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Ed Adamson	Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria
Stuart Bill	State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, Victoria
Tim Cox	Australian Farm Tree Regeneration Committee
Geoff Douglas	Council of Adult Education, Victoria
John Faragher	Australian Institute of Agricultural Science
Dewar Goode	National Trust of Australia Victoria)
Peter Greig	Institute of Foresters of Australia (Victorian Division)
David Hill	Soil Conservation Authority, Victoria
Peter Langley	Forests Commission Victoria
Ian Norman	Department of Agriculture, Victoria
Alan Reid	Australian Conservation Foundation
Jim Saunders	Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association
Val Saveneh	Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria
Lily Schmidt	Focus Movement
Alan Thatcher	Victorian Garden State Committee
Andrew Thornley	Town and Country Planning Board, Victoria
Geoff Wescott	Conservation Council of Victoria
George Wright	Ministry for Conservation, Victoria

#### SPONSORS

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#### SPEAKERS

FE Batini *Darling Range Study Group, WA*; MJ Bourke *Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association*; Harry Butler *Naturalist*; Prof TC Chambers *University of Melbourne*; Dr MF Day *CSIRO Division of Forest Research*; Dr RL Davidson *CSIRO Armidale*; Dr RG Downes *Ministry for Conservation, Victoria*; Sir Otto Frankel *CSIRO Division of Plant Industry*; JS Gilmore *Soil Conservation Authority*; Dr RJ Grose *Forests Commission Victoria*; Dr JG Mosley *Australian Conservation Foundation*; PM Myers *Rural Press Group*; AJ Reid *Gould League of Victoria*

## The Forests Commission and farm trees

### Peter Langley

The Forests Commission nominated me to represent it on the Garden State Committee. At the first meetings, the committee concentrated on metropolitan parks, the Yarra and environs and urban streetscapes. Nobody seemed to identify with the countryside as such, rural tree decline or land degradation. Over time and numerous discussions with John Jack, Alan Thatcher and Stuart Margetts, and even chats with Dick Hamer, agenda items took a more statewide character – ultimately leading to Project Tree Cover, the farm trees conference, rural town parks and open gardens across Victoria.

When the Forests Extension Branch was re-organised in the late 1970s, early frustrations related to administrative problems associated with the Farm Forestry Loan Scheme and the legal implications of dealing with solicitors, accountants, tax dodgers and the like. Many wanted to 'give them the money!' but the ultra-conservative commissioners wouldn't budge. On a US trip around 1980, Chairman Alan Threader was exposed to Forest Improvement Programs in various states. These provided grants and advice to landowners to grow trees – timber plantations to alleviate land degradation such as erosion and salinity, to shelter stock and crops and to increase amenity. This led to my study tour of the US, which the Commission strongly supported, and the legislative and regulatory changes to the *Forests Act* that set up the Tree Growing Assistance Scheme.

There was a tremendous response – hundreds of landowners had been waiting for something like this! Unfortunately the commissioners chose to deal with each application separately and the initial paper work was horrendous. In time scheduling made life easier. Anyone who helped administer TGAS during those first three years would be so pleased now when driving around the countryside to see so many healthy plantings and treed hillsides dating from that era.

## Bairnsdale Farm Trees Group

### Moray and Rosemary Douglas

The idea of farm tree groups came from the *Focus on Farm Trees* conference held in Melbourne in 1980. The Garden State Committee encouraged our group and three others to form across Victoria. Its chairman, John Jack, convened a meeting on 19 June 1981 at Bairnsdale Shire offices of interested farmers, and departmental and municipal representatives. A group formed that day comprised of farmers, with departmental representatives nominated as advisers. The aim was to have a majority of farmers, a farmer as chairman, and a departmental representative as secretary/treasurer.

The first farmers were Cr Rex Reilly (chairman), Neville Prouse Brown, Dennis Paine, George Stewart, Don Sargood and Colin Murray. Departmental officers present were Frank Garden (SCA) appointed secretary/treasurer, and Malcolm Lee (Department of Agriculture), Moray Douglas (Forests Commission) and Alan Jones (Fisheries and Wildlife Division). The municipal representative was Bairnsdale Shire Engineer, John Hopkins. BFTG was very active over the next three-four years, holding over twenty meetings and running many activities.

To let farmers know about the group, the first field day was held on 15 November 1981. Some 80 people attended and after viewing static displays including the NRCL caravan, they boarded buses to view four properties where various aspects of farm tree planting could be observed. The bareness of much of the landscape and the need for trees was pointed out, and a field-day booklet included a questionnaire aimed at finding out participants' attitudes to trees on farms, and how to encourage more planting.

A district tree resource study was undertaken, using air photographs and ground inspections, to define the least treed areas. BFTG forwarded a submission to the Forests Commission requesting an investigation into the causes of dieback, suggesting that the subject could be a useful study for a PhD student. No action resulted. On 29 May 1982 about 70 people took part in a half-day walk around a farm. The day was cold and blustery and the benefits provided by the property's many shelterbelts were obvious.

The *Shire of Bairnsdale Farm Trees Awards* program ran for three years, followed by field days on winning properties to show farmers what could be

done. A separate competition ran for the best homestead plantings; in 1984 60 people were attracted to the winning property. BFTG assisted farmers from the least treed areas to get grants for establishing shelterbelts. A seminar on farm trees, in conjunction with the McMillan Rural Studies Centre, was popular.

The group helped develop a Red Gum Plains Revegetation Strategy, and with Bairnsdale Shire, obtained CEP funding for a program of raising and planting trees and shrubs along roads and unused road reserves. A nursery at the shire depot produced some 75 000 trees for the project, which John Hopkins managed very well. Newspaper articles and interviews with ABC rural reporters helped publicise the various projects.

After 1984, the restructured department greatly reduced its support and BFTG eventually disbanded. However the group well justified its existence. The farmer representatives were enthusiastic and the departmental officers provided a lot of expertise and administrative backup. An enduring legacy was the number of farmers who were inspired to start planting. At least one is still doing so today, twenty-five years later.

## Notes on salinity

### Phil Dyson

Although it was still regarded as an emerging problem, dryland salinity was reasonably widespread by the late 1940s and early 1950s. RG Downes noted it then, for example, in a soil survey that included the Caniambo hills in the Broken River catchment in North East Victoria. I have images from 1950 or so showing the SCA conducting field research to ameliorate saline soils in various locations. And old SCA files for the Kamarooka area north of Bendigo document very well the onset of dryland salinity in the northern foothills of the Great Divide in the mid 1950s. Some of these are on a webpage I've developed and continue to manage for the Northern United Forestry Group – scroll down to *Historical references*: <http://www.nufg.org.au/Kamarooka%20Project.htm>

Frank Cope (SCA) published the first significant survey of dryland salinity in 1958. It estimated the area affected, though the ranges were fairly broad. The problem was seen largely as a soil conservation issue until the early 1970s. Saline soils loaded up with sodium were very dispersive when exposed to rainfall, so there was a strong correlation between salinity and soil erosion. The SCA put the dryland salinity issue on the agenda in 1973 when it set up the Northern Slopes Land Deterioration Project, led from its Bendigo office by Dr Jeff Jenkin. By the mid to late 1970s most regional SCA officers throughout the state were spending at least part of their time attempting to understand and manage salinity issues.

It is important to appreciate that the profile of dryland salinity also grew as knowledge of the landscape-groundwater interactions expanded. Many people, including Phil Macumber and Charles Lawrence, contributed through detailed (certainly by today's standards) work in establishing the hydrogeological framework for salinity management.

The largest expansion of dryland salinity occurred from the early 1950s to the late 1970s, correlated in many instances, but not all, with years of above average rainfall. The campaign against dryland salinity found its feet in the early-mid 1980s with the development of the State Salinity Program, and by the latter 1980s salinity management became one of the key challenges for the emerging Landcare movement. The most intense effort came in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the development of management plans and strategies for each of the regions impacted by salinity.

## To summarise

- The dryland problem was still emerging but fairly widespread by the mid 1940s through to the 1950s
- In the early days it was regarded as a soil conservation issue
- Frank Cope completed the first survey in 1958
- The SCA Northern Slopes Land Deterioration Project led by Jeff Jenkin brought many of the issues to the attention of dryland farming communities
- The dryland salinity issue attained much greater attention in the early to mid 1980s with the development of the Salinity Program, and a little later, Landcare
- These efforts throughout the 1970s and 1980s culminated in the development of salinity management strategies and plans in the late 1980s and early 1990s

## Salinity and groundwater

### Phillip Macumber

The appreciation that salinity was a groundwater problem first surfaced in the early 1970s, with the construction of deep bores down the Loddon Valley (1967-76). From this we recognised that the Calivil Formation was the down-basin continuation of the Deep Leads carrying water beyond the highlands across the plain (Macumber, 1972). Moreover, the Parilla Sand was a marine incursion into the Kerang region, creating a permeability barrier to down-basin groundwater flow leading to a groundwater-discharge landscape in the Kerang region – for example, Kerang Lakes and Barr Creek (Macumber, 1969).

The presence of a regional discharge zone in the Loddon Valley could only be substantiated after the concept of recharge/discharge zones had been verified and published, mainly by the Canadians (Toth, Freeze *et al* in the late 1960s). I recognised that this was also the pattern for the Loddon Plain, where downstream of Calivil in the regional discharge zone everything was saline. Groundwater levels rose rapidly after the 1973-75 wet period, and the hinge line between recharge and discharge moved upstream twenty kilometres. In the newly established areas of the discharge zone, previously dry streams started flowing groundwater – such as Bears Lagoon and Pompapeil Creek.

The concept of groundwater instability became a conviction when an examination of the Campaspe Valley groundwater record showed that water levels had been rising since 1900 (Macumber, 1976) at rates of about 0.25 metres a year and we could accept land clearing/accelerated recharge as the cause. By equating a discharge zone – regional and local – and the concept of an unstable equilibrium in the landscape with generally rising water tables, the relationship between groundwater and salinity was widely accepted by the mid 1970s.

There's a whole history here, much of which appears in my book: *Interactions between groundwater and surface water systems in northern Victoria*, published by DCE in 1990.

## Albury-Wodonga – great urban forestry

### Susan Campbell

Albury-Wodonga straddles the River Murray on the Victoria-New South Wales border some 300 kilometres north east of Melbourne. The region was mooted as a growth centre in 1972, with the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation (AWDC) legally commissioned in 1974. As one of two decentralised growth centres, originally to take up to 300 000 public servants, it became the spearhead for regional development in Australia, and land purchase began immediately, eventually totaling 25 000 hectares, around but not within the cities of Albury and Wodonga.

The area had been settled by the early 1840s, with sheep and cattle grazing predominant, which led to extensive clearing, so that along the Murray and Kiewa Rivers only about 12 percent of land bought by the AWDC carried natural vegetation of any significance. The early challenge for the AWDC's landscape architects was to preserve the quality of country living whilst the planners were developing a large thriving city. The AWDC regarded the ecology and water quality of the river as extremely important, and soon set up the Peter Till Laboratory to study the aquatic life of the river, and detect changes made by the accelerated urban development in the catchment. A pilot project to irrigate a number of different species of trees with effluent was established on the floodplain. The surrounding forested hills also had a very significant part to play in the development of the new city.

The AWDC set out to be a trendsetter in urban development by preserving and enhancing the surrounding environment. Landscape creation and urban forestry were designed and implemented before any subdivision took place, aiming at a *City In The Country*. In 1976 the AWDC opened its own nursery, an important and necessary decision given the large number of plants required in a short time. It also meant plants were grown and hardened off in the area in which they were to be used, good access for landscape contractors, and a choice of local species available not only to the AWDC, but also to farmers, local councils and the public. Until then, it was difficult to obtain native plants in any number and impossible to source plants grown from local seed; some seed lots on sale were collected from overseas plantations!

The provision of public open space and the development of an urban

forest to include all housing developments and industrial land were paramount. Generally the natural vegetation comprised dry sclerophyll forest on the upper and southern aspects, merging with woodland on the lower slopes and elevated flats. The dry sclerophyll overstorey is mainly red stringybark, with an understorey of *Acacia*, *Pultenea* and *Grevillea* species. The woodland overstorey is mainly red box, yellow box and Blakely's red gum, with a sparse understorey of acacias, hop bush and grasses. The fertile river flats were extensively cleared and grazed, so retained only small areas of river red gum, with very little of the original understorey of shrubs, grasses and rushes.

Prior to any decisions about future landscape development, there were several studies, including a landscape resource study, an ecological study and landscape concept plans, which were combined as a Forward Tree Planting and Regeneration Master Plan. For each area to be developed, there was an inventory of existing trees, shrubs and grasses, showing species, size, condition, and suitability to be incorporated into plans for the future of that site. To this end a tree preservation order was placed over the whole development area – no trees over a certain size were to be removed without a permit. The general rule was to use native plant material for all revegetation of hills and flood plains.

Areas for urban development and revegetation were identified by planners, and district plans drawn up to identify open-space 'spines' that were to be planted as environmental corridors, remaining public open space for all time. They provided walking, riding and cycle trails for the future population, at the same time meeting the needs of wildlife by forming a continuous link between the hills through the urban development onto the flood plain beyond. Urban planting was undertaken using a small number of exotic species, together with a wide variety of native and indigenous plant material.

Species chosen were selected on the basis of their adaptability to local conditions, and their ease of maintenance; over the years a comprehensive list of suitable species built up. On individual sites, generally a small number of plant species was used. Our aim was to produce small pockets or corridors of easily grown, low-maintenance forest type plantings, which would grow well and become a low-cost asset to the neighborhood. Most of the plants used were propagated at the AWDC nursery. Overplanting was intentional; future planned thinning could provide space for new houses, give a more natural look to the neighborhood and even provide firewood.

All large-scale planting programs were done after public tender, the successful contractor being responsible for fencing, vermin control, deep ripping, planting and consolidation, including the survival of all plants, for

thirteen weeks after planting. If by then all works were satisfactory, the AWDC took over. Tree guards were seldom used; it was cheaper to erect rabbit proof fences, which also facilitated maintenance.

Over the years the AWDC planted over 2 500 000 trees and shrubs, and sold or gave away many more. The benefits included the provision of a more attractive environment, not only in new housing estates, but also along road corridors and in large industrial areas suitably planted with screening vegetation well before any development took place. The Corporation provided trees and shrubs to all new landholders, schools and industrial developers; this way it could have some influence over the plant species in each suburb. It also took a leading role in revegetation and erosion control along the Murray and Kiewa Rivers, setting an excellent example to other developers, Landcare groups, river trusts and the public.

Looking back twenty to thirty years later, the concept of *Greening of The Growth Centre* has been a success. The Corporation has demonstrated what can be achieved with forward thinking, good planning and strict controls, and citizens realise the benefits of having well established vegetation throughout their urban areas. Many newer residents have no idea that the hills, drainage lines and flood plain were actually planted, their appearance is so natural. We hope that the foresight of the AWDC landscape architects and planners will encourage future governments and developers to place such great importance on protecting the environment.

## Looking after roadsides

### Ian Cowdell

During the early 1970s, there was a growing concern about the condition of vegetation on road verges, unused roads and streamside reserves. This was a logical progression from the earlier and more widespread public agitation about the conservation status of native bushland generally, for example, the Little Desert.

On Saturday 16 November 1974, a *Forum on Roadsides and Conservation* was held at Burnley College, Melbourne. Sponsored by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), the Natural Resources Conservation League (NRCL), the Conservation Council of Victoria (CCV) and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), the forum included papers on planning policies, road design and management and roadside flora. Finally this resolution was passed:

*That the sponsoring organisations establish a joint working group to consider and promote the environmental matters raised at this forum and bring them to the attention of the Victorian and Australian Governments and other appropriate authorities.*

Accordingly, the VNPA, whose then president, Dr Malcolm Calder, had chaired the forum, called a meeting of the working group on 24 February 1975. The committee operated initially with the chairman taking minutes and the chairman's organisation providing typing and mailing facilities, so the position was rotated. Early chairmen after Dr Calder were: Reg Johnson, then Director of CCV; Dewar Goode, representing the TCPA; Geoff Edwards of Crown Land Management, Lands Department; Ed Adamson, NRCL; Colin Hutchinson, National Parks Service; Ian Cowdell, Ministry for Conservation; and Charles Anderson, Fisheries and Wildlife Division.

These arrangements continued until 1978 when the Roadsides Conservation Committee (RCC) realised that the committee could do little but survive from meeting to meeting. Proposed activities, such as field days, policy formulation and roadside awards, were tending to 'wither on the vine.' At this time, Ed Adamson was chairman, and he approached the NRCL, which made a small grant from late 1978 to pay an executive officer to work

one day each week at the League's offices, with NRCL providing typing, mailing and telephone facilities. On 17 November 1978, the new Executive Officer, Kerry Willis, attended her first meeting of the RCC – the beginning of ten years of fine service by Kerry.

During this period, the RCC saw itself as having two major roles: providing liaison between its members, and generating awareness of roadsides as an issue. In 1976, *Services provided by Roadsides* was published, detailing the major values of roadsides and forming a basis upon which the RCC could examine its future. Eventually it aimed to create an awareness of roadside values in general and to promote the conservation of those values relating to the natural environment with particular emphasis on flora and fauna. It listed its objectives as:

- The preservation and restoration of indigenous vegetation communities on roadsides
- The preservation of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna that occur on roadsides
- The maintenance and enhancement of habitat and corridor requirements for indigenous fauna
- The achievement of a high landscape quality on roadsides
- The prevention of land degradation on roadsides

An early activity was preparing a manual on roadsides conservation, a concept promoted by Geoff Edwards around 1975 into which he put much effort. Projects included a pilot field day in the Shire of Buninyong in 1977, submissions to several inquiries, including Sir Esler Barber's investigation of the February 1977 bush and grass fires in western Victoria and the preparation of articles for publication in *Victoria's Resources* and *Memo*, the journal of the Local Government Engineers' Association.

Now, with an executive officer, it was able to begin a program of field days, generally twice a year, on various topics throughout Victoria; the first was held in Walpeup Shire in June 1979. The RCC also began policy development, for which there had long been a need, on fire protection, roadside hazards and tree clearance, utilities, pest plants and animals, revegetation, droving of stock and herbicide use. Roadside Environment Awards were initiated in 1980 and ran throughout the 1980s, contributing significantly to the growing awareness of roadsides conservation.

Early in 1981, Ed Adamson, an original member and a great contributor, resigned from the NRCL and RCC and Ian Cowdell was elected chairman. The NRCL could no longer fund the executive officer either. In September the

Committee effectively ceased to exist. Fortunately, after much uncertainty and many negotiations, on 16 November the Minister announced that the RCC had been granted \$10 000. At the same time, the Ministry advised that it would provide office accommodation and typing, telephone and other administrative support for the RCC and its executive officer. The RCC was subsequently reconvened and Kerry Willis recommenced work on 2 December 1981, now housed in the Ministry for Conservation and with administrative services provided by the Environment Protection Authority. The RCC met again on 15 December.

Members soon perceived that fire prevention and suppression were vital issues in the management of roadsides. Jim Barber of the Country Fire Authority was invited to become a member of the RCC early in 1975. In 1979, Ian Thomas and myself, both Conservation Ministry officers, looked at numerous examples of roadside fire prevention works in the field, met various experts on the subject and drafted *Guidelines on Fire Prevention*. In December 1979, the RCC sought comments; there were delays so the RCC decided to bring things to a head by calling for a vote. In response, two members tried to veto the guidelines at the August 1981 meeting, thus breaking a long-standing amicable relationship within the RCC. One of these bodies had already provided some informal comment and had indicated no opposition; the other, whose usual representative was on temporary leave from the RCC, had not responded. In the event, the title and some of the text were amended. The other members, who were anxious to see the guidelines released, called for a vote. A further opportunity for comment was provided and the RCC released the guidelines in late 1982.

In October 1978, the RCC had discussed the possibility of making a submission on the Environment Effects Statement on the proposed Euroa by-pass. It was agreed, after much discussion, 'that the Committee will not become involved in particular issues of the nature of the Euroa by-pass, but rather will deal with the philosophy of conservation of roadsides and its dissemination, i.e. principles, not specific issues.' In 1981, the Committee made a comment on another Environment Effects Statement, involving a proposal by a municipality to upgrade a local road with significant roadside vegetation. It had presumably forgotten its 1978 decision. The Local Government Engineers Association, a long-standing member of the Committee, expressed concern at this action, and after debate, the RCC reaffirmed its 1978 position. These three low points, the lack of funds and the two internal debates, all occurred at the RCC's August 1981 meeting.

What was the outcome of this trauma? Did the Committee fall apart? No,

the RCC became stronger! Attendance at meetings was good and remained so. Ian Cowdell resigned as chairman in 1986, after five and half years. Ken McArthur of the Local Government Engineers Association, was elected the new chairman.

In the following several years the Minister for Conservation clearly recognised the RCC's role; the Minister for Transport helped with funds, as did two other departments; the executive officer was employed full-time; Edna Walling's classic *The Australian Roadside*, was republished as *Country Roads: The Australian Roadside*. An assessment method for quantifying the conservation value of roadside verges, was developed, based on work by Christian Grieves and David Lloyd (later Go Green manager) and the government approved the concept of a Roadsides Conservation Plan for Victoria. The State Electricity Commission agreed that roadsides given a high conservation rating might be eligible for special consideration regarding tree clearing around power lines. The Country Fire Authority's positive relationship continued with the RCC, as part of the Authority's commitment to community participation in fire prevention planning. The Victorian Government adopted the *State Conservation Strategy*, which included consideration of various means of protecting roadside and other remnant vegetation.

This brings us to the late 1980s. After Kerry Willis left in 1988, executive officers included Nan Oates, Ann Dennis, Trevor Ritchie, David Fairbridge, Ron Greaves and finally Andrew Straker, all dedicated and productive. Their good work should be recorded and recognised. Somehow, the RCC was wound up in 1999. However, in September 2006 the VNPA urged its members to write to the government seeking the re-establishment of the RCC.

## Pre-Landcare

### Rob Youl

As a schoolboy, forester and public servant, here are my recollections, impressions and reconstructions of the period from the 1950s to 1986, the year Landcare started. I attempt to outline government land management operations, some of the existing community environmental bodies, and the way government and the community drew closer as enthusiasm grew for a better environment, and opportunities for collaboration presented themselves in the mid-late 1970s and early-mid 1980s.

### Blending

Perhaps it is simplistic, but I believe that the story of community environmental action in Victoria parallels the evolution of the land-oriented Victorian government departments, in that both sectors have gradually developed a more integrated approach to resource management. If it is simplistic, then the other factor is politics, which largely has been beyond my apolitical and bipartisan arena of community-government-business initiatives; other commentators must delve into the political world. In any case, through Landcare, the catchment management system and many other departmental programs, the community works much more closely with government these days towards environmental progress. I believe this story should be told, even if as here, in outline form.

Before the Cain government's election in mid 1982, and particularly during the four decades after World War II, the departments were very competent but specialised, independent, compartmentalised, territorial and more or less uni-disciplinary. In several cases, men who had commanded medium and large formations during World War II, also made their mark as strong-minded leaders in civil society during the first two or three post-war decades – in other words, their military experience influenced their professional style. Ken Green was perhaps the best example. (Of course, even in the early 1950s many older public servants had served in World War I.)

## Proud traditions of public service

Until the advent of Labour government in April 1982, and for about a year after, at which point massive changes were wrought to all land management departments, the State Forests Department, always known as the Forests Commission (FCV) after its governing triumvirate, which had formed in 1918, managed all Crown forests and plantations, as well as fires on public land and nearby farming country (the 'marginal mile'), and operated several nurseries. Of Victoria's pine plantations in the late seventies, some 110 000 hectares were state-owned, with almost the same area in private, generally industrial, hands.

There were seven regional forest divisions, each with a divisional and assistant divisional forester, and, in the early 1960s, over 50 districts, run by district foresters, usually with teams of assistants, overseers, foremen and gangers, but occasional rationalisations finally reduced this number to about 45. This structure, which worked well, had been introduced by the autocratic Alf Lawrence in 1958, before which time the plantations and the hardwood operations ran separately across the state, and in one or two cases I believe, certainly at Mirboo North, the two arms were housed in different although nearby offices, but shared depots. Throughout the FCV, to maintain full capacity to fight fires, employees mostly took annual leave from April-November.

For a century the entity latterly known as the Department of Crown Lands and Survey (DCLS) had surveyed, mapped and alienated public land for farming and urban purposes. Under its aegis during its last three decades were the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board (VNWDB) (1959-83), whose inspectors and works crews played a practical role across the state in controlling weeds, rabbits, foxes and wild dogs, backed up by Keith Turnbull Research Institute (KTRI); the Royal Botanic Gardens and National Herbarium; and from the mid 1970s a Crown Land Management Branch.

The latter innovation was required, and should have been established long before, because across Victoria during the late 1800s the department's surveyors had reserved thousands of small and not-so-small parcels of land for stone, timber, water, gravel and sand production, mining, recreation, travelling stock, scenic beauty, cemeteries, rubbish tips, night soil depots, showgrounds, agricultural colleges, schools, streamside and lakeside protection and other public purposes. Many still carried indigenous vegetation. In my experience there is one belt where allotments had been alienated rather earlier – from say 1835-1865 – and in a less forward-thinking manner. This is the land stretching from just north and west of Melbourne across the

basalt plains to say Hamilton and the Dundas Tablelands. Here there are far fewer reserves and often properties run to the middle of streams.

The Department of Agriculture serviced all branches of farming, and even home gardening, and had quarantine and regulatory responsibilities, including involvement in produce markets. It maintained research farms at Ellinbank, Scoresby, Werribee, Hamilton, Horsham, Walpeup, Tatura, Kyabram, Rutherglen, Myrtleford and Tostaree and veterinary and other laboratories. Moreover it ran Dookie, Longerenong, Glenormiston and Burnley agricultural and horticultural colleges and McMillan Rural Studies Centre at Warragul.

Geological mapping, minerals, underground water, quarrying and energy were the province of the Department of Minerals and Energy – the former Mines Department – Bass Strait had been producing gas and oil for a decade – although, naturally, the State Electricity Commission (SEC) was heavily involved with brown coal mining in the Latrobe Valley. The SEC also managed forests and other land as buffers around the Yallourn and Morwell operations, and forests in the upper Kiewa and Royston-Rubicon, associated with its hydro-electric generators. (Along with the Gas and Fuel Corporation, the SEC dominated energy production and supply.)

From 1905, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC) had built dams, channels and holding basins to supply irrigation, industrial, domestic and stock water across rural Victoria. It was also involved with supervising local water and sewerage authorities and river management, through the interestingly named 'river improvement trusts' as well as drainage trusts in swampy districts like Strathdownie – both of which were, in retrospect, largely devoted to engineering works to quickly shift excess water elsewhere. The Dandenong Valley Authority (DVA), set up in 1963, was the first to officially take a whole-of-catchment approach.

The exception to SRWSC water management was around most of the metropolis, which was the fiefdom of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW). Pat Condina told me that the DVA worked fairly independently of the MMBW and pioneered many new ideas in flood mitigation. The MMBW also planned Melbourne's growth and green wedges, built the first freeways, and managed forests – several extensive generally unlogged mountain catchments, all but one, Wallaby Creek, in the Yarra basin. The Town and Country Planning Board oversaw provincial, regional and municipal planning outside Melbourne. The Country Roads Board built and maintained major roads and probably from the late fifties started to actively manage roadsides for conservation values – for instance, aerial spraying of the

Princes Highway west of Bairnsdale to control leaf-eating insects, as well as encouraging local tree planting along highways.

Since 1950 the Soil Conservation Authority (SCA) had advised farmers across Victoria on soil management, including erosion control, salinity and farm dams. It ran works crews for projects; and had an emerging role in helping reduce soil loss during major mining and outer-urban and rural construction developments. It also drafted management plans for numerous catchments supplying water to provincial cities and towns, and was well advanced in mapping and publishing in bound format, descriptions of Victoria's land systems. These were hybrid but rational, very useful and almost instinctive land divisions based on geology, soils, native vegetation and economic land-use capability. Its own research teams backed up these important tasks.

Formed in 1956, the National Parks Authority (NPA), though very small – still just several people in a ground-floor office at 1 Treasury Place in the early 1970s, with a team of sometimes very isolated rangers – ran the even then extensive network of parks. The Fisheries and Game Branch, later Fisheries and Wildlife Department and Division (FWD), handled most of the wildlife issues: fishing and shooting enforcement, commercial fishing, quarantine advice, protection of wildlife on public land, limited marine and terrestrial research and some substantial reserves of its own.

## Forward-looking

These last three bodies had been grouped within a revamped Ministry for Conservation in 1973 led by visionary soil conservationist, Dr Geoff Downes, under a committed Minister, Bill Borthwick MLA. The Ministry promoted a more holistic approach to resource use and better communications, took an interest in emerging urban, peri-urban and coastal issues and secured more resources for national parks.

A second important factor, often overlooked today, was the advent of the Land Conservation Council (LCC) in 1971 under the fearsome but very experienced negotiator, Sam Dimmick. The LCC replaced an earlier Land Utilisation Advisory Committee, following a 1969 political controversy, when the West Wimmera pastoralist and Minister for Lands, Sir William McDonald's attempt to alienate thousands of hectares of the Little Desert south of Kaniva was derailed – sadly, not before some land sales and subsequent clearing.

The Premier, Sir Henry Bolte, who had himself been conservation minister around 1950 during one of the Hollway governments, set up the LCC to systematically assess all public land in Victoria for environmental, economic

and community use. The young LCC staff, selected from several departments and given accelerated promotion, in conjunction with departmental liaison officers, nominated eighteen or so 'study areas' across Victoria. Working directly under Dr Mick Lumb, the staff compiled regional geographies known as 'descriptive reports' for each study area, then made recommendations to the Council itself on future land use in two stages, after calling each time for community comment, which arrived by the mailbag! Photocopiers ran into the night! This process – from preparing the report to publishing the second and final set of recommendations – could take two to five years, depending on the complexity of the region, after which changes in land status would be gradually gazetted.

Controversies might range from parochial, in the case of public land around towns, to large-scale decisions, since a major part of the LCC's charter was to reserve land for conservation and recreation. This meant significant inroads into sawlog and pulpwood reserves in Victoria's southern and eastern quadrants and disruption to timber industry planning. Moreover, in an increasingly affluent and urbanised community, many people were passionate about creating new parks. The hardest study areas to reconcile were, predictably, *Melbourne* – the collar of land for 120 kilometres around the metropolis and bays – and *Alpine* – the mountains more or less east of the Yarra valley and Mount Torbreck to Corryong and Buchan.

The practice of allocating native forest areas for radiata pine plantations wound down too – in the 1960s and 1970s, generally 1200 or more hectares of public land were being cleared annually for pines. The LCC's activities also virtually terminated the Victorian tradition of alienating large areas of public land for farming, which had been central to rural development. The Heytesbury dairy-farming settlements, still being levelled in the 1970s by the Rural Finance and Settlement Commission and its successor, the Rural Finance Corporation, and that not-very-wide swathe cleared all the way through the Little Desert south of Kaniva to north of Minimay, were the last to be so transformed.

However over the life of the LCC, the area of Victorian land reserved for conservation rose from around 3.4 to 19 percent. That's all land – not just public land! The LCC paved the way for more intensive forestry on the remaining timberlands. Importantly to conservation in rural regions, and accentuated by the activities of the Crown Land Management Branch and local community zealots, the LCC also showed us the variety, extent and value of those thousands of small Crown land reserves scattered across Victoria, in townships and the countryside, and their importance to biodiversity, landscapes, coastal protection, tourism and cultural and archaeolog-

ical awareness. And it underlined the need to manage them far better, for many had been sadly neglected and remained subject to overgrazing, vandalism, repeated firing, rubbish-dumping, weeds including garden escapes and radiata pine wildings and unauthorised but often traditional gravel, sand and firewood removal – and from the early seventies abuse from cross-country vehicles. In addition, the public became much more alert to broad conservation issues and far better informed on ecology, fire management, catchment and habitat values, land degradation, nutrient flows, endangered plant and animal species and the arguments for and against resource utilisation.

As time passed, the LCC delineated guidelines for roadside and waterway management and many other arenas essential to rural and urban land stewardship, and created marine parks. The LCC brought departmental staff together, but better still, service on the Council itself, comprised of departmental heads and eminent community representatives such as John Turner, John Landy, Joan Lindros, John Bayly and Claude Austin in the first several years, broke down some of the departmental boundaries and encouraged greater co-operation.

The LCC lasted in much the same form, led by David Scott (1984-94) and Don Saunders (1994-97) until it was replaced by the Environment Conservation Council, which ran under Don Saunders (1997-98) and John Lovering (1998-2001). Finally it became the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council under Brian Robinson (2002-04) and now Duncan Malcolm. Surprisingly, given the LCC's sustained achievements, it was not duplicated in other states, except for Western Australia, and even then, only comprehensively around Perth (System 6). New South Wales took an entirely different approach through the Land and Environment Court. (Are there highly paid, black-robed QEs – Queens Ecologists – alongside the QCs?) Much less known today are Victoria's eleven regional Resources Surveys released from 1948-71 by the Central Planning Authority, which had its roots in post-war reconstruction. Sir John Jungwirth seems to have been heavily involved in this work.

The Ministry for Conservation also housed the Victorian Conservation Trust, set up in 1972 under Colonel Ian Wilton, and later Warwick Forge, which became Trust for Nature (Victoria) in 1995 (TfN). Working alongside government, it enabled landowners to hand over bushland to the Victorian community to be managed by the Trust itself, or by a department. It also developed a service to landowners whereby it could place legal covenants over environmentally valuable sections of their land. Later it extended into landowner and community education and activist campaigning and fundraising. There was also the Port Phillip Authority, established in 1966 under

the Lands Minister to co-ordinate development and preservation of beaches, prevent foreshore deterioration and help improve facilities in the area comprising Port Phillip Bay and adjacent Bass Strait coastline between the Barwon River and Cape Schank. The Authority moved to the Conservation Ministry in 1973, but it rejoined DCLS in 1981, which also maintained a Coastal Management and Co-ordination Committee to advise the Minister on coastal management. Moreover, the Ministry for Conservation ran a major project in the early-mid 1970s, the Western Port Bay Environmental Study.

## Pros and cons

Six further features of Victorian departmental life were the fact that *esprit de coeur* since the end of World War II had been very high, reflecting constant growth and achievement, moderate but effective unionism and accessible, pragmatic leaders. The departments offered lifetime careers; trained many of their own staff; had only small numbers of professional women; some had strong in-house research teams; and all were tied philosophically to their dominant professions. Agricultural scientists ran the Department of Agriculture, foresters led the Forests Commission, surveyors and cartographers manned the upper Lands ranks, geologists managed mining. The SRWSC was one big water engineering consultancy and delivery operation (although surprisingly its regional managers worked from the headquarters at Armadale); biologists spearheaded the Fisheries and Wildlife Division. Perhaps the parks and soils departments had more diverse personnel? Regarding the jobs-for-life aspect, there were many exceptions of course, but numerous public land managers expected to work for 40-45 years in the one department, moving slowly or spectacularly up the ladder, or not at all, prepared also to relocate across the state, reside in departmental housing, austere by contemporary standards, and devote their lives to their jobs – and did just that! Proudly and happily!

And the training, despite the strong departmental osmosis, was superb. Foresters went to Creswick and then Melbourne University; foremen and overseers to occasional six-month courses in the forest at Broadford; the Commission strongly supported further education. Crown Lands had no in-house training institution, but the Department of Agriculture had Dookie, Longerenong and Burnley, and later Glenormiston and McMillan at Warragul, as well as tight links to Melbourne University. The SCA ran its own soil conservation courses with demanding examinations, and promoted training and further studies in agricultural extension.

## Second division

There were other active or advisory government land-related entities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Victorian Railways (VR) managed a huge but generally linear estate, from which some of the outermost and highly unprofitable tentacles had been excised from time to time. In a few areas, VR even had small bush-encircled reservoirs, a reminder of the age of steam. Committed to making schoolgrounds more attractive and interesting, the Education Department had, through the Victorian State Schools Horticultural Society, its own nursery – originally at Hughesdale, but in the mid eighties this facility moved to Mount Waverley. It ran Wattle and Arbor Days over the decades to inculcate a love of trees in youth, and establish countless irregular groves of sugar gums across northern and western Victoria. The department also had a Schools Forestry Branch under Bill Grauer with a competent team of regional officers who had started as teachers but, deciding to specialise in forestry, had organised training or secondments to obtain the necessary experience – for instance, Jim Wilson had worked in a British Columbian logging crew. With local Forests Commission support, the Branch co-ordinated school pine plantation establishment and log and pulpwood sales and advised on managing bushland areas attached to fortunate schools. Furthermore the Gould League, named after the nineteenth century ornithologist, artist and publisher, John Gould, was devoted to educating children about Victorian birds. It had a magazine, *The Bird Lover*, and from 1969 published excellent illustrated handbooks on birds, firstly by Margo Kroyer-Pederson and later by the brilliant Susan McInnes.

Other, but rather smaller, land managers included the Housing Commission, the prisons department (French Island, Langi Kal Kal), mental health authority (Ararat, Beechworth) and various harbour trusts. Both the Ballarat and Geelong Water Commissioners maintained extensive bushland and pine plantations on their catchments in the Central Highlands and Brisbane Ranges. The Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board managed a big tract of coastal woodland at Dutson Downs, which it used for effluent disposal. Colac had its own pristine forested catchment in the northern Otways. The Commonwealth retained extensive holdings, mainly for defence (Puckapunyal, Healesville, Hastings, Balcombe, Bandiana-Bonegilla, The Heads, Rockbank, Diggers Rest, several airfields and many ammunition storage depots) and communications infrastructure connected with Radio Australia, the Overseas Telecommunications Commission and the services. The CFA maintained a school at Fiskville, on a former Commonwealth aerial farm; it still does so.

Moreover from the 1960s onwards, the departments had expanded their PR and community education staffs; indeed the successive Victorian governments increasingly encouraged community participation in resource management, which led eventually to Landcare and beyond, but these stories will be narrated later. Perhaps it all started with the Better Farming Train (another example of Sir Harold Clapp's genius?) in the 1920s and 1930s, and the Department of Agriculture and Forests Commission film units (Mervyn Bill ran the Commission team) in the late 1940s, which produced films on farming and forestry, screening them to rural communities in local halls and schools around Victoria. The units often employed trailer-mounted generator sets, for full electrification was only achieved in the early 1970s, with Combiobar and Mallacoota the last Victorian townships connected.

Interestingly and almost forgotten, until the advent of the Alpine Resorts Commission (ARC) in 1983, another Cain initiative, the state's ski areas were managed by different departments: the Victorian Railways ran Mount Buffalo; the SEC managed Falls Creek; the Lands Department administered Mount Hotham; and the FCV ran Mount Buller, Mount Baw Baw, Lake Mountain and Mount Donna Buang. In 1998, the ARC was disbanded and independent boards appointed for the major snowfields.

## Lindsay Thompson exits; enter John Cain

In April 1982, John Cain took the Labour Party into power. Soon afterwards, prominent middle-level public servants were appointed to working parties to start reorganising and amalgamating resource management. Was this because of an idealistic and holistic philosophy, or part of a general reformist approach, or an anarchistic instinct to flatten and rebuild, or a conspiracy with certain conservationists? I don't know; it's possible all of those elements were present. One theory at the time was that we were following general North American resource management practice, but my travels, socialising, reading and occasional conferences have never confirmed this – although on the other hand, there must be many thousands of US and Canadian community enterprises devoted to resource management, a little like Landcare groups and networks.

Another story, also plausible, was that the new government considered the FCV was too close to the timber industry. This may have been so in a few cases – that's life! However, it's not surprising that many foresters and sawmillers got on well. They had had to fight major fires together many times; moreover, after 1939 they mounted a huge and difficult decade-long joint sawlog salvage operation. Then from 1945 they shared the job of push-

ing logging roads into the Alps and East Gippsland ranges to provide timber for the post-war building boom. In any case, the new government brought great changes to a seemingly immutable system of public administration.

First, it set about amalgamating departments, a process of rearrangement that has continued despite shifts of power.

Second, it introduced much more intimate ministerial involvement. Whereas before 1982, ministers frequently accepted the independence and wisdom of their long-serving and very experienced departmental heads, now decision-making would generally be connected to political processes, especially through advisors, often young and with party connections. This system apparently continues.

Third, it at last brought women into the middle levels of the public service, and ensured they were promoted. The first female forestry graduates had entered the service in 1978, only four years before! [In the Forests Commission of the 1960s almost the only females were tea ladies, clerks, typistes (note the spelling), secretaries, lab technicians and a couple of pathologists.]

Fourth, it abandoned the tradition that only foresters could manage forests, only water engineers could run irrigation systems, only geologists could administer gas resources, only agronomists could run the Department of Agriculture, and so on. Instead it opted for managerialism. Joan Kirner (1990-92) and Jeff Kennett's Liberal government (1992-99) continued in the same vein, as has the present legislature under Steve Bracks.

Between 1983 and 1986, the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands (CFL) was created, embracing FCV, NPA, SCA, FWD and DCLS plus VNWDB and Crown Land Management. This was an interesting and patient process orchestrated by an English academic, Professor Tony Eddison. His credentials were never quite clear, but he was accessible and stressed communication, character and combining regional workforces under strong management. He travelled widely, bottled hundreds of cigarettes and, in retrospect, did a near impossible job rather well.

At the same time the Department of Agriculture became the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA), reflecting the Cain government's interest in improving social conditions in country Victoria. In later years at various times DARA, perhaps by then Food and Agriculture (it was hard to keep up), and Minerals and Energy, and what remained of SRWSC after the creation of a series of regional water management enterprises, as well as Aboriginal affairs and land title administration, were subsumed into CFL. It also changed name a few times to Conservation and Environment (1990), then Conservation and Natural Resources (1992), then Natural Resources and Environment (1996).

In the process the National Parks Service, created as part of CFL in the mid 1980s, was hived off in 1996, joined to the metropolitan parks arm of the also dismembered MMBW, and remains a separate body, Parks Victoria. Then in 2002, NRE was split into the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE); the latter embraced the state's urban and regional planning functions and reduced its role in Aboriginal affairs. Ministers and top-level executives have come and gone. In retrospect, whatever the departmental names and the nature and composition of the upper echelons, it was of course the troops on the ground, in the regional offices and depots, the research stations and head offices, who sustained a great deal of the culture, ethics, long-term projects and momentum. More importantly to our story, as I saw it in the mid 1980s, the atmosphere in the newly amalgamated department – multi-disciplinary, creative, political, somewhat chaotic and with overturned loyalties – stimulated creativity and opportunism and led to Landcare.

### All right for some!

One has to say however that the old-style departments, although well run by very experienced gerontocrats, were too isolationist. Some survivors yearn for the old days of the dominating, uni-disciplinary department, generally masculine, theoretically and seemingly apolitical, with its fellowship, independence and almost family-like atmosphere. However, others revelled in the much broader new multi-disciplinary, holistic, equal-opportunity, political milieu introduced in the mid 1980s – collaborative, creative, comprehensive – and found it equally rewarding! And managers, from diverse backgrounds and working in much more complex organisations than the pre-1982 departments, have to put more time into policy development, communications and discussions with advisors, so departmental life is very different than in the halcyon days. This is because, in the early twenty-first century, our problems are much bigger and can arguably be better faced by adopting a political approach. Nevertheless, there seem to be fewer really good modern managers than there were in the days when technical prowess was the main criterion for advancement. And in a dynamic world, managers spiral onwards and upwards, as elusive as snipe, so some don't stay long enough to see the consequences of their more complex or controversial decisions.

Local government has been very important in Victorian resource management as well. In the mid 1990s Victorian municipalities were also reorganised and combined, reducing the number of councils from some 210 to 78. They have experienced the same managerialism, uncertainty, frustration, slightly

incompatible blood transfusions, overturned traditions and wholesale ‘redeployments’ faced by state public servants, but again there have been efficiencies and economies, and decision-making is more regional.

### The other world – the community

On the community side, the story also shows gradual integration from specialised beginnings. One of the first public environmental bodies was the Australian Forest League, formed in 1912, which promoted professional forestry and lobbied to establish the Forests Commission in 1918-19. Withering over the 1920s and 1930s, it was revived in 1943, with encouragement from Sir Herbert Gepp, managing director of Australian Paper Manufacturers (APM), partly because of the continuing danger to Victoria’s forests from fire and post-fire erosion – they had been devastated in 1939, and again faced a severe summer drought. (It was the same old story; the February 1944 fires were very destructive, especially in Gippsland, where Yallourn open cut coal mine caught fire.) Cyril Isaacs MLC, a former teacher and nurseryman (he had started Hughesdale nursery), saw all this as an opportunity to launch a community education program, going far beyond the values of forests for timber supply, which emerged as the Save The Forests Campaign in 1944, supported by the Country Women’s Association (CWA), the Australian Natives Association (ANA) and many municipalities. In July 1944 the first community forest was planted by 1200 people at Dandenong in Isaacs’ electorate, and the next year saw 86 local tree projects across the state through a network of some 70 district committees. Libby Robin tells this story in full until the early 1990s.

### The NRCL germinates

On 22 August 1947, Charlton held its ‘Community Forest Planting’ alongside Borung Highway. A memorable colour film survives: a steam train runs over the Avoca bridge and pulls into Charlton station, on the platform of which several citizens lounge amidst stacks of Victorian Railways egg crates; various groups gather in the main street – the state and Catholic schools, the scouts and guides, the RSL, the churches, the mums with their pushers – all rugged up in topcoats and headgear – and march behind banners from the town to the four-hectare block of public land. The site is laid out with military precision – even the diagonals are in line! The planters are deployed to the same geometric standards (allocated as appropriate to Youth, Women’s, Men’s, RSSAILA and Legion, Country Schools, Charlton Schools and St

Josephs College sections) and, on a signal from a middle-aged man in topcoat and hat, they go for it! Six hundred people plant 1500 trees in blocks: sugar gum, tuart, red ironbark, grey box, black box, forest red gum and tamarisk. Later the kids march proudly past trestle tables to receive a piece of fruit from a wooden crate with colourful paper label, and a cup of 50-50 cordial, in the enamel, probably ex-AIEF, mug each had been detailed to bring along. For anyone over sixty, it truly shows immediate post-war rural Australia: ‘The Way We Were!’ Importantly, the forest is still there on Charlton’s edge, almost sixty years old; have a cappuccino at the nearby impressive delicensed Vale of Avoca Hotel after walking through the equally impressive lines of grey box.

A third community forest was launched in 1949 at Mount Martha, as were 40 hectares or so of demonstration plantings across Victoria for soldier settlers – for hundreds of ex-servicemen were being set up on new farms excised by government from large pastoral estates, especially in the Western District.

Isaacs grew seedlings in his Dandenong backyard and on land leased nominally from Alex Wilkie at Springvale South for the first years, then with state and municipal government support and probably help from APM, which backed the campaign for decades, bought three hectares across Springvale Road and established a ‘research nursery’ managed by Wilkie, which opened in January 1952. The year before, the operation had become the Natural Resources Conservation League (NRCL), and it continued in community and schools environmental education and, acquiring properties and businesses at Cranbourne, Echuca and Dimboola, expanded its production and sales of native tree and shrub seedlings. A film unit formed early in the 1950s under Ernest ‘Watershed’ Jackson, a one-time irrigation farmer with a highly personal style, wispy demeanour, dark glasses and unforgettable calligraphy and publishing techniques, who believed passionately in a catchment-based approach to land management. Isaacs broadcast a series of 50 radio programs during the mid fifties. Joint road plantings with the Country Roads Board (CRB) were popular, especially in northern and western Victoria; their straight lines and heavy preference for eucalypts from WA make them very obvious to travellers, but many are very appealing.

During the same years, the NRCL banded with the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and Australian Primary Producers Union to lobby for expanding national parks. There were several other collaborative public campaigns over the next twenty years, such as the Little Desert, Kentbruck Heath and Westernport. From 1954, eventually with seconded teachers, the NRCL ran courses in tree establishment and maintenance, and conservation in general, for road workers, teachers, schools, park rangers, scouts and

guides, young farmers, shires and farmers and other landowners.

In 1959, *Victoria's Resources* emerged, an excellent quarterly devoted to water, land and forest topics with articles on municipalities across the state, and many contributions from government departments. I bought my first copy from a newsagency that year, and devoured it – repeatedly. In the 1960s George Thompson, one of the earliest members of the SCA and by now the League's director, introduced the idea of devoting a whole issue to an environmental theme. This continued into the 1980s and 1990s, under editors like Felicity Rendle and Nan Oates; in the process it was renamed *Trees and Victoria's Resources* and later *Trees and Natural Resources*. NRCL was reorganised in 2003, with divestment of the four plant nurseries and withdrawal from Springvale, and in early 2004 relocated to Toolangi Forest Discovery Centre, to focus on providing education programs to school and community groups in conjunction with DSE.

In 1975, following an NRCL seminar, the Roadsides Conservation Committee (RCC) was formed within the Ministry for Conservation with VNPA and other support to promote better management of roadside vegetation – in many parts of Victoria roadsides and railway reserves carried the only remnants of indigenous vegetation. It ran well for 25 years, activist and practical, until it was shelved in a *rationalisation* in 1999.

Another important organisation, not dissimilar to the NRCL, was the Murray Valley Development League (MVDL), formed in 1944 by the NSW, Victoria and SA shires that lined the Murray. Its first executive officer was Vern Lawrence, who, when demobbed after commanding an army transport unit overseas, expected to help his family run Murray Valley Buslines, but worked instead for the MVDL for 35 years. The League was certainly interested in economic growth, but it promoted many conservation themes as well. In 1992, responding to general concern for the larger basin, it became the Murray Darling Association; community activist Adrian Wells is one of its mainstays.

## Philosophies change

There were several other major community conservation groups in the 1950s and 1960s. The VNPA had formed in 1952 to work for a parks system in Victoria that represented all ecosystems and ensured our biodiversity was protected. – its founders included Crosbie Morrison, the unforgettable journalist and radio naturalist, whose friendly, gentle voice was well known to most Victorian households from his Sunday evening quarter-hour on the wireless. After its leading role in the Little Desert controversy, which also

saw the Conservation Council of Victoria (now Environment Victoria) launched, the VNPA's major campaign from the early 1970s to the early 2000s was for an Alpine National Park connecting Cobbler and Cobberas to Kosiuscko. Closely associated bodies were the Bird Observers Club, the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union (later Birds Australia) and the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. The latter had branches throughout Victoria and its membership included many farm families – typical farmer members were passionate about wildflowers, especially orchids (and delighted to move into Landcare because it was a way to restore indigenous vegetation).

Scouts and guides could dabble in environmental pursuits – Alex Wilkie ran weekend courses at Springvale in the 1950s and 1960s, on what is now Wilkie Reserve, to qualify senior scouts for the Forester's Badge – I did one. Each student felled a tree, for that was one of the tests! The Australian Conservation Foundation formed in 1966 and developed national and global views on the environment and the capacity to lobby and campaign. There was a Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) from 1972-82 and a Town and Country Planning Association, and the National Trust, formed in 1956, got involved in natural landscapes as well as man-made ones. Dewar Goode stands out as a consistent campaigner.

From 1957 onwards, the Society for Growing Australian Plants – since 1998 called the Australian Plants Society – encouraged Antipodean alternatives to the European garden tradition, and the Victorian Field and Game Association was active from the fifties in encouraging better management of wetlands – then usually called 'swamps,' apart from the occasional 'morass' in coastal Gippsland. Lastly, Dick Piesse, who'd edited *Walkabout* in the 1960s, ran the Environmental Studies Association of Victoria in the mid 1970s, which organised weekend study tours, often on land-use themes, across the state. (His quirky brother, Bob, who specialised in designing and installing electric fences; was very involved in tree growing, even electrifying trees at Werribee open zoo to protect them from giraffes.)

The era of the field naturalist – exemplified by Crosbie Morrison, who had died in 1958, and greatly admired men such as Jim Willis, Deputy Government Botanist; retired teacher Norman Wakefield; Len Smith, student of lyrebirds; former orchardist Cliff Beaglehole, a self-funded botanical surveyor; Ian McCann in the Grampians; and Bill Middleton, District Forester at Wail (Dimboola), who delivered scores of radio talks on native vegetation, birds and farm trees and wrote a regional newspaper column – gave way gradually in the late 1960s and early 1970s to a broader approach via the era of ecology, which brought the resource management establishment into the public arena and many spirited challenges. (There were many women

amongst the field naturalists too, such as Stella Bedggood, Ellen McCulloch, Ann Read, Mary White at Anglesea, Joan Forster and Hilary Turner.)

That resource management decisions could be of great public interest was exemplified by the publication in 1973 of *Fight for the Forests*, by ANU philosophers Richard and Val Routley, which critically examined the clearing of high-quality montane eucalypt forests in south-east NSW to establish radiata pine plantations, and in later editions found much fault as well in the Eden, NSW woodchipping operations. Similarly influential, the omnibus *Alps at the Crossroads*, compiled by Dick Johnson in 1974, publicised the case for a Victorian alpine park. In due course the Wilderness Society (1976) and Greenpeace (1977) formed as national bodies.

### Meanwhile, back on the land...

Encouraging better farming were the Victorian Farmers Federation (under various names) and its associated groups, then as now more of a lobbyist, professional guild, service provider and umbrella to several industrial sections (grains, wool, dairying, horticulture and so on), the Grasslands Society and the Royal Agricultural Society, which awarded coveted regional prizes – silver plates – for the best managed farms. There must have been numerous breed societies that fostered improved farm practices as well. Then there was the Victorian Young Farmers – a story in itself, and very strong in the period 1950-85. The agricultural colleges ran popular ‘short courses’ for landowners, as presumably did Marcus Oldham Agricultural College, which started training private students in 1962. And the Department of Agriculture’s staff included many specialists with a gift for communications and extending new ideas into the industry in person and through newspapers, departmental monthly magazines, pamphlets and radio – especially the ABC *Country Hour*. Perhaps the best known was Jack Green who travelled Victoria’s dairying zones for three decades officially, running daytime and evening discussion groups, field days and display stands. He continued his rounds long after he retired, welcome in numerous dairying households, in which he must have set a world record for scone and sponge consumption!

The SCA had also been part of hundreds of landowners’ lives since its inception in 1950. Ingliston farmer Graham Simpson and John and Margaret Proctor of Kooreh, all still prominent in Landcare, reminisce about the close relationships they had with Jim Allinson and other soil conservationists – ‘I remember Jim being in our kitchen about 9 o’clock in the evening wrestling with our problems!’ says John. The Eppalock project started in 1960 to improve water quality in Lake Eppalock, which was fed by the Campaspe. A

program followed ultimately creating some 150 Group Conservation Areas to promote government-funded soil conservation within clusters of farm properties, sometimes on a (larger) catchment basis. (SCA staff used the term ‘sub-catchment’ widely to denote local drainage patterns.) The SCA staff’s experience with GCAs helped shape Landcare. The first such project was Wilby Almonds, south of Yarrowonga. In the process, the SCA developed rules-of-thumb for administering rolling grants schemes: secure medium-term commitments of funds, not just for one year; approve say twenty-five percent more projects than you have funds for, because about that percentage of projects will not be finished on time; if demand turns out to be heavy, hold back payments until the next financial year. There were also regional soil conservation advisory committees across Victoria; at the 2005 St Arnaud Landcare Awards, nonagenarian Os Sanderson of Coonooer Bridge recalled his great satisfaction as a member of the Avoca catchment body in the 1950s and 1960s.

Perhaps the Hanslow Cup best epitomised the SCA’s work. For decades, handsome cups circulated in the various SCA regions between exemplary farm properties following regular regional competitions. ‘The Hanslow’ had great cachet as it showed that both departmental staff and your peers regarded you as a good production farmer, who was also taking a long-term approach to maintaining resources and assets. With the upheavals of the mid 1980s, including new commitments, new regional boundaries, retirements, transfers and a more holistic approach to farm management – plus the dilution of the soil conservation identity – the Hanslow Cup competition lapsed.

Happily, in 1996-97, after more than one attempt had failed to revive it, Alex Arbuthnot, Jim Allinson and some of Hanslow’s relations, got together with the Hughes family (John Hughes, a Melbourne businessman, had set aside money in the 1970s for the VNWDB to run awards for weed and rabbit control in the Otways and Strzeleckis) to create a new system of biennial state awards – an interesting indication as to how far integration had progressed.

The VNWDB had its own system of advisory committees – perhaps numbering some 300. Pat Larkin says each committee secretary had direct access if necessary to the Board. Lindsay Ezard recalls the St Arnaud committee met twice a year; the most important discussion he remembers was a reclassification of some 150 weed species. Moreover Ron Hodges indicates that across Victoria there were about 3000 community committees of management associated with DCLS, each overseeing operations of some parcel or parcels of public land: showgrounds, cemeteries, coastal reserves, picnic spots, campgrounds and so on. Presumably, one reason for introducing the Crown Land Management Branch was to help standardise the operations of these disparate committees.

## Forestry stirs

Meanwhile in 1966-68, the FCV had developed a farm forestry loan scheme to encourage landowners to plant pines in rougher corners of farms in wetter regions. Drafted by Tom Chettle, a forester with a law degree, it was iron-clad and based on a 25-year loan secured by a caveat and a bushfire insurance policy – landowners received (in later years) \$200 per hectare to establish plantations, interest-free for twelve and a half years, when the first pulpwood thinnings were expected to yield income allowing scheduled repayments, calculated against the prevailing bond rate, to commence. Annual visits by foresters, subsequent reports to owners and occasional residential bush seminars provided technical assistance, all of which generally indicated that these small private forests should be managed along similar lines to the much larger state plantations – which didn't always turn out to be the best long-term plan. Eventually several eucalypt plantations were approved and even some blackwood stands, and some 470 landowners were involved overall, with nine thousand hectares of plantation Victoria-wide, except in the Mallee and Croajingalong, which made for administrative complexity.

Other FCV activities with a community slant included a small team answering mainly urban tree growing enquiries; it comprised Ken Simpfendorfer, author of a popular book *Trees for South-Eastern Australia* – one of many excellent environmental and land management texts put out by Cyril Jerrams' Inkata Press over three decades – as well as Bert Semmens, Brigitte Lafeber and later Graeme Morrison. Perhaps the commonest enquiry: *Four years ago I got a free blue gum from Keep Australia Beautiful for my backyard, and now my neighbour's complaining his sewerage system won't work!*

Furthermore, in the early 1970s a Forest Environment and Recreation (FEAR) Branch (an unfortunate but proud acronym) started under Athol Hodgson, with Stuart Calder, Tom Morrison (son of Crosbie) and Kester Baines, to develop expertise in park and recreational management, because the FCV was setting aside many areas of state forest as scenic reserves, and the demand for active rural recreation – including deer-hunting, four-wheel-driving, orienteering, rock-climbing, hang-gliding and of course bushwalking, as well as standard Sunday bush barbies, was growing rapidly. It also helped delineate the Alpine Walking Track, with some PR assistance from early pilgrims like the ACF's Geoff Mosley and journalist Tim Colebatch. There were also many other PR initiatives and scores of pamphlets and maps, the film *The Living Forest*, and numerous Royal and regional show displays. In addition, seeking to minimise the visual impacts of its logging operations, the FCV imported three US forest and recreational landscape specialists, one

of whom, Dennis Williamson, still practises his craft as a Melbourne-based consultant and university lecturer; lately he has overseen five major student projects with Landcare networks at Apollo Bay, Bacchus Marsh and the Mornington Peninsula.

Then in 1978, the FCV must have sensed the dawning of a new era; Peter Langley took over the Forest Extension Branch with Graeme Morrison, Brigitte Lafeber, Arthur Lyons, Andy MacDonald, Russell Johns, Dorothy Farrugia, Kevin Ritchie and Greg Wallace, the last two in the bush at Ballarat and Bendigo; with Bill Middleton later at Geelong. Through all this time the FCV grew seedlings for farmers and garden-lovers at Macedon and Creswick nurseries – both dating from the nineteenth century with ancient infrastructure and located in charming oak- and redwood-encircled pockets, established when mined and sluiced wasteland abandoned after gold-winning was rehabilitated with softwoods, especially radiata pine. Macedon overseer Jack Bickers reckoned 'Creswick grew rubbish!' compared with his superlative stock. Creswick's delightful Jack Lambert refused to be drawn into this brawl, and was quietly proud of his ties with numerous Western district farming families, including the Langs of *Titanga*, Lismore, where trees had been planted on a broad scale across the grasslands, and records maintained, for a century. Sugar gums had been found to be most suitable for that 'nullabor' region, and the wide belts established by direct seeding in the 1900s or thereabouts to shelter stock remain prominent landscape features and now form the basis of a specialty sawmilling and fuelwood industry, SMARTtimbers.

In contrast, Wail nursery was a newcomer, opened in 1946 outside Dimboola to grow trees for the drier parts of western Victoria, but an interesting arboretum, perhaps dating from the 1920s, encircled it as well. Wail's Bill Middleton and Alf Gray were well known promoters of tree growing, even across into SA, and reputedly Alf brought back a great variety of seed from a holiday in WA, which he propagated and publicised so successfully that for many years these were almost the only species farmers grew in their shelterbelts and local councils planted along streets and country roads. (This philosophy was endemic in the NRCL too!) Finally in the early 1970s Mildura nursery commenced operations to supply trees to irrigators; again WA species featured strongly. Parallel to these public nurseries was a huge operation by the FCV and private companies such as APM Forests, to supply several million seedlings of radiata pine, and a few other softwoods, as well as some eucalypt species, to Victoria's broad-scale forestry operations. Morwell River and Won Wron prisons participated, running nurseries and planting trees; moreover prisoners from Ararat, Beechworth and no doubt other gaols also worked in nearby forests and plantations.

Returning to farm forestry, by the early 1970s many metropolitan business-people were looking for hobby farms and other weekend rural activities, as well as tax concessions (which were allowable then because most rural properties could be defined as a 'farm'), and the farm forestry loan scheme became popular with that sector. Later it was taken up surreptitiously by one or two south-western afforestation companies as a drawcard to investors, not necessarily a bad thing looking back from this much more mercantile era, but unwelcome bureaucratically in the early 1980s, especially when bundles of applications arrived around 29 June each year from crayfishermen in Geraldton, Weipa earthmoving contractors, Bulolo gold miners and the like drowning in cash and seeking tax relief. Broadly, the loan scheme, for all its shortfalls, brought people and production forestry together.

A good thing was that many loan-holders joined the Australian Forest Development Institute (AFDI), which had formed in 1969 (I believe by Peter Gausson) to represent private growers of poplar on the NSW North Coast – and spread to the other states, becoming Australian Forest Growers (AFG) in 1991. (Poplar forestry is almost a forgotten enterprise today, but from the 1960s to the mid 1980s impressive irrigated stands grew at Cobrawonga on the Murray, owned by Bryant and May, the traditional Australian manufacturer of matches, long since bought out by a foreign company, which of course liquidated the poplar groves. Cattle loved poplar foliage – they would crane their necks to watch leaves fluttering to the ground and pounce as the leaf landed – indeed they'd stampede towards the sound of a chainsaw!) In the 1980s the Victorian chapter became very strong, led by Herb Bennetto, Bob Patterson, Brian Wailes, Max Speedie and others, many of whom had started in forestry with an FCV loan to grow pines. A radiata pine marketing co-operative was formed in the North East, perhaps Australia's first.

During an FCV seminar in 1982, experienced NSW forester Curly Humphries said something like this: *If the government did to, say, the wheat industry what it often forces onto forestry, it would face an avalanche of protest! What forestry needs is more Australians to be involved in it.* The AFG has helped create a private forestry community that government will listen to; and to be fair, the Commonwealth and states have mounted many excellent initiatives since the early 1980s, when an exasperated Curly held the floor at Mirrimbah.

### Fair dinkum farmers, or just landowners?

The growth of hobby-farming – perhaps today's term *lifestyle farming* is better – led to excellent initiatives starting in the mid 1970s by SCA and conservation ministry staff, who realised that many people were settling on

rural blocks – bush remnants or former farmland – and commuting to Melbourne and provincial cities. They needed advice on land, crop, water, wildlife and stock management and niche horticulture. David Hill's CAE lectures on farm dams were very popular, and led to very well attended SCA/SWCS field days. David and Marta Hamilton and others then set up a CAE course that ran under many co-ordinators, including Paul FitzSimons, Bob Disken, Steve Burke, Rowan Hore and me (with great help from Alan Cole), for some twenty years before it disappeared during an unfortunate CAE reorganisation in 2001. Landcare network activities make up for this loss in many areas, but the fact remains that hundreds of city people, and lifestyle-farmers around provincial towns, are very keen to learn about practical farming and conservation and are prepared to pay to do so.

### Reconstructing, re-creating

Other elements of the Ministry for Conservation were involved with the community in very worthwhile activities. The FWD started the Land for Wildlife program in 1981, which has spread to other states, and greatly helps landowners create, restore and manage habitat. Its extension material has always been excellent. Today hundreds of properties have both a Trust for Nature covenant and Land for Wildlife accreditation. FWD also had some co-operative projects, including one with the FCV on a Tallygaroopna dairy farm owned by Alan and Mary Burgess designed to show that useful wildlife habitat could be created on intensively farmed land. Peter Goldstraw worked at Sale in the late 1970s improving habitat for waterfowl around the Gippsland Lakes; local VFGA stalwart Herb Guyatt was 'in my office every day!' helping organise resources and working bees involving his fellow shooters and many other community groups.

The most important project however was at Tower Hill, the superb flooded caldera alongside Koroit, one of the state's first parks and a complex and beautiful landscape feature that had been degraded by grazing, weeds, quarrying, fire and pollution. Max Downes initiated a state network of wildlife reserves, starting with Lake Goldsmith and *Serendip*, a wildfowl breeding centre at Lara run by Don White in 1959. There were trial plantings that year at Tower Hill, which was designated a reserve soon after. Guided by an 1860s painting by Eugen Von Guerard of the whole crater and well beyond, but detailed enough for many species to be identified, the first indigenous plantings were in 1963. From then to the mid 1980s, FWD staff, led by Gavin Cerini, and regional volunteers, including hundreds of schoolchildren (2200 one year) replanted the slopes and island cones, over 250 000 plants in all.

Robin Boyd designed an information centre, its roofline inspired by the region's numerous nicely rounded volcanic cones, and the site has regained much of its charm and spirit.

In similar vein, since 1972 the NPS and Parks Victoria have supervised a long-term program at the Organ Pipes, a columnar basaltic outcrop above Jacksons Creek at Sydenham, less than 30 kilometres from the CBD. This is tough country! Starting with a small block of overgrazed plain and steep bare slopes, all covered with artichoke thistle, horehound, boxthorn and red-ink plant, with serrated tussock and prickly pear on the march, volunteers and works crews have slaved for decades, replacing the weeds with the indigenous species known or inferred to have been present there before European settlement. Strict attention has been paid to seed provenance, so that the new vegetation should be a reasonable reflection of what grew there until 1835, when Melbourne was founded and grazing commenced on the surrounding basalt plains, with firewood-cutting on the slopes.

The NPS purchased adjacent blocks and helped where it could, constructing tracks and building a depot, office and information centre. Today Organ Pipes Park covers 134 hectares inspiring all who work in basaltic landscapes, and has a vigorous Friends group. Great contributors have included Lawrie Groom (former town clerk of Keilor), Bob Osborne, Don Marsh, Barry Kemp, Ranger Jack Lyell, Robert Bender and Terry Lane. Indeed, tree removal will be necessary very soon to maintain the panoramic view of the Organ Pipes itself. Brimbank City Council, which owns Sydenham Park, the land downstream between Jacksons Creek and Calder Freeway, has embarked on a complementary long-term revegetation project on its several kilometres of escarpments, so the north western green wedge is being greatly enhanced through revegetation.

## Inspiring hundreds of readers

As the AFDI grew in the seventies, it launched a quarterly, *Australia Forest Grower*, edited by the remarkable Geoff Wilson, a Dookie graduate who'd gone into corporate PR in the dairy industry. One of his initiatives from that time, with six o'clock closing a recent memory, was forming wine and cheese clubs; indeed in several arenas he was a very forward thinker. With wife Mary a patient but very effective collaborator, Geoff promoted commercial tree growing on farms in the mid seventies; most likely it was he who identified the emergence of a new endeavour – *Agroforestry!* Geoff travelled widely in Australia with his notepad and camera, and went overseas on a Gottstein Fellowship. The NZ practice of creating open stands of high-pruned radiata pine, which would subsequently produce top-quality, knot-free wood, and

indeed enrich that country (*The land of the long white peeler log?*), impressed Geoff. He encouraged several Kiwi farm foresters, such as Leith Knowles, Jeff Tombleson, Ian Barton, Ian Nicols and the doyens Neil Barr and Harry Bunn, to visit Australia, which led to many new ideas and friendships.

Geoff and Mary produced tree growing annuals, and with English and US fellow-enthusiasts, Alan Grainger, Henry Esbenshade and Miles Merwin, formed the International Tree Crops Institute, which published magazines and books and ran seminars on economic species such as carobs, poplars, paulownias, dates, quandongs and tree lucerne (tagasaste), as well as honey, pistachio and seed production. Geoff also promoted the value of trees for shelter and shade, and located memorable pictorial examples of the north Chinese *forest net*, vast kilometre-square grids of poplars and paulownias within which horticulture flourished. This led to rewarding contact with the Chinese Ministry of Forestry and three Australian delegations to China, with several reciprocal groups coming here, including some high officials like Professors Wang Shi-ji and Zhu Zhao-Hua. Geoff organised all of this, plus workshops, meetings, field days, presentations to government and social events. He was a wonderful friend to Victorian tree growing and we remember him warmly. Australian paulownia enthusiasts emerged, such as Chris Lucas (still selling plants over two decades later with wife Marie via unrestrained television commercials!). Geoff eventually shifted to Brisbane around 1992, moving on to hydroponics, fish farming, rooftop food production, publishing, playwriting and the IT business, but still coming up with great new ideas in numerous spheres.

## Friend in high places

A genuine liberal, Dick Hamer, became Victoria's premier in 1972, and, in 1977, because he believed that a well managed landscape was good for business and community wellbeing, besides the obvious environmental imperatives, Hamer launched a new and very significant initiative, the Garden State Committee (GSC). Led by John Jack, a forester and later secretary of the Premiers Department, it included landscape philosopher Professor George Seddon, populist gardener Kevin Heinze, television announcer Brian Joyce, Professor Carrick Chambers, Frank Keenan who managed Melbourne City Council's parks, business and farmer representatives and several middle-level public servants, with Alan Thatcher as executive officer. Through publicity, education, events, awards and technical support, it aimed to encourage better streetscapes and home gardens, improved town and country planning and a kinder approach to rural landscapes. An early project was a study of

the Hume Highway and environs – surely one of Victoria’s best stretches of pastoral scenery.

In 1978, with the Institute of Foresters Australia (IFA), the GSC looked at the plight of trees on Victorian farms. Observers could readily see that veteran paddock trees were dying from a suite of overlapping causes, including old age, stock camps, increased chemical usage, stubble-burning, erosion baring their roots, severe damage to bark, exposure, and perhaps mistletoe. A modest pamphlet and some seminars drew the community’s attention to the problem, and suggested some lines of practical action that led to Project Treecover, which ran from 1978-83; the idea was to use standard forestry plantation establishment techniques to revegetate several degraded and privately owned sites close to major country roads. Eventually seven were so treated: land at Caniambo near Benalla; Joel Joel near Stawell; a prominent gullied hill between Wedderburn and Charlton; Red Bluff on the Brumby family’s farm at Coleraine; on the ridgeline of Colbinabbin Range; Mystic Park; and Wickliffe. Completing this project required co-operation between FCV and SCA field staff, which doubtless led to more joint local activities.

## Inspiration

The next phase was organising a major conference, Focus on Farm Trees, in Melbourne in 1980. Undoubtedly this was a landmark; it drew several keynote speakers to the forum, and with various Victorian experts and enthusiasts on the program, attracted around 300 people from all over Australia, many of them mainstream, even noted, farmers. Wildlife habitat was important, especially for birds, as were shelter and erosion control. South African-born Rob Davidson of UNE spoke on the value of native understorey species as food for insects, especially the wasps that ate pasture grubs – the message: restore bushland and increase pasture growth. His prime case study was *Bursaria spinosa*, a spiky shrub or small tree found throughout eastern Australia but probably not well known to his audience. Thereafter all revegetation projects had to include sweet bursaria, if the species were indigenous to that area! Luckily it’s a fast-growing, long-lived, ubiquitous and beautiful plant, with pleasing creamy flowers in summer, which form handy food sources when there’s not much else for wasps to safely graze.

Nan Oates edited the conference proceedings, one of her many literary contributions to community environment education from 1978-92. What else flowed from the conference or accelerated action? Dick Hamer announced on stage that four farm tree groups would be formed: they were soon initiated at Bairnsdale, Hamilton, Rochester and Wycheproof. Tim Cox and others

launched the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV) on a shoestring, with some NRCL support, which led to today’s multi-million dollar operation, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). The NRCL, which had published the conference proceedings, also fostered Australian Farm Tree Regeneration (AFTR), which operated for some years, and the FCV developed the Tree Growing Assistance Scheme (TGAS). I believe that by enthusing people about tree growing, the conference contributed greatly to the evolution and early success of Landcare. Sue Campbell recently reiterated to me what a superb experience it was. I suspect it also led to a group of landowners including David Debenham and Richard Weatherly banding together to develop the first direct seeder for tree projects on farms. Clearly tree growing’s time had arrived!

TGAS was designed to help Victorian farmers grow trees on larger properties, providing subsidies to cover seedlings and in many cases fencing. Peter Langley designed it following a five-week visit to several US states that actively encouraged rural tree growing. Project number one was on Ron Cumming’s tomato farm at Bridgewater-on-Loddon. TGAS proved very popular, and gradually embraced hobby farmers’ projects, some activities by municipalities and other departments, protection of bushland remnants and rare native plants, roadsides and other reserves, natural regeneration and direct seeding. The first projects, characteristically, were mainly narrow shelterbelts along existing fencelines, but applications soon diversified and increased in scale and imagination, and numerous reports came in of innovative ideas and efficiencies from landowners – especially mulches, weed and pest control, site preparation and fencing. I went back to the FCV in late 1981, and saw my first farm plan early in 1982, a map of a well managed property near Bannockburn whose owners wanted to restore scattered trees to cropping paddocks. Interestingly, although it had been left unsaid, they could see that parts of their property would inevitably be subdivided for rural residential housing – so why not put bulk trees in now! Good thinking! TGAS involved scores of FCV field staff in multiple inspections, and an over-long chain of departmental decision-makers. A few projects were referred to other departments, and there were several staff training courses at which interest mounted in emphasising indigenous species for revegetation projects.

## Australian landscape ethos

As projects to restore the original ecosystems, Tower Hill and Organ Pipes were exceptions. I indicated earlier that many nurseries and clients had previously favoured WA eucalypts, and they also recommended and sold high-

ly adaptable, fast-growing eastern species such as Sydney black, Cootamundra and Gawler Range wattles, dwarf sugar gum, New England peppermint, river sheoak and blue gum; moreover the trees planted on land-slips and along gullies by the SCA rarely reflected the original vegetation, and willows unfortunately were the silvicultural, but very short-term, choice in irrigation areas. Some FCV staff members were thinking ahead to landscapes that would quickly lose their links to their natural flora – to use George Seddon’s compelling concept – much of the *spirit of place* – if exotic species predominated. Obviously protecting remnants and fostering natural regeneration were as important as planting new trees. Awakened by the prevailing mood, many farmers were mentally reviewing the changes in their own neighbourhoods – when they were kids going to school they had passed banks of wattle and swathes of orchids and lilies – now there was just phalaris! Could they do something to reverse this?

Several Western District landowners attempted to re-create the region’s iconic red gum woodlands by planting scatterings of well guarded larger trees – forty-four gallon drums were popular as guards. Many people across Victoria started collecting seed and growing their own plants, including understorey species previously ignored by nurseries. David Holmes put forward indigenous tree-distribution profiles relating to geology and aspect as the basis for plantings in the Beaufort-Ararat region. Professor Carrick Chambers wrote an article on indigenous revegetation in a foresters’ newsletter. Beekeepers such as Gavin Jamieson of Ballarat were emphasising the importance of scores of native species to their industry. Tony Baxter at Tallangatta located the White brothers at Baranduda, who’d returned from the War and wanted to plant trees. ‘Why not put back what’s already there?’ they’d asked, and started to grow red box, red stringybark and but but seedlings. The latter was an amazing choice to foresters because, although fast-growing and handsome it had no value for fuel or, seemingly, timber. Indeed in older texts it was described as a ‘bastard box’ to denote its total commercial inutility. (No doubt its ability to drop branches and form holes made it very attractive to birds and mammals, however!) The Whites also protected their new trees with circular fences with the droppers inclined inwards, so that cattle scraped their shins on barbed wire as, salivating, they pushed towards the young trees. It was unconventional and ‘untidy’ but effective – perhaps one of them had been a POW?

In the outer-eastern suburbs and at Monash University, Steve Malcolm had been promoting indigenous species and restoring ecosystems; Graham Lorimer collaborated and some of Steve’s students, including Andrew Paget, formed Knox Environment Society (KES) – indeed, two passionate KES mem-

bers were growing every indigenous species recorded in the municipality in their home garden. Bairnsdale Farm Trees Group thought hard about perpetuating Gippsland’s red gums. Beryl Cross put out her tree guide for the Warracknabeal district in 1983, possibly the first regional revegetation booklet. All of this discussion and action helped cement indigenous vegetation later on in the national Landcare psyche. I wrote an article for the NRCL’s magazine in 1983 that summarised the arguments for re-establishing indigenous vegetation. It was reprinted a decade later and still seemed very sound to me, unless the environment had been more or less irreversibly degraded – by, say, dryland salinity!

### Learning to live with the white stuff

It’s time at last to deal with that most common cause of severe degradation – and in many areas, tree decline – and one of the main formative influences on Landcare in Victoria. Phil Macumber and Phil Dyson recount elsewhere their roles in professionally identifying and assessing the scale of dryland salinity in northern Victoria. Patently salt’s been in inland Victoria for eons; the Natimuk-Douglas, Kerang-Lake Boga, Manangatang and Lake Corangamite-Hopkins systems, Lake Tyrell and the dry gypsum-covered lake beds in the Mallee, such as Raak Plain and Rocket Lake, all indicate that certain combinations of geology, topography, low rainfall, small catchments (or the lack of perennial river systems) and broad-scale high groundwater levels can be manifested in Victoria as saline basins. Moreover terminal lakes like Coorong, Lalbert, Buloke and Cooper – whose contributory streams reached the Murray in more benign times, could well become saline if our climate becomes drier. (Not forgetting the Wimmera River, which surely must once have flowed into the Murray at Hattah until its course was progressively shortened by overwhelming wind-blown sand over many millenia.) But when did we Victorians realize we were up Salt Creek in a very corroded barbed-wire canoe? This is surely fertile ground for historians, but it seems to me that until the early-mid 1970s observers generally saw salinity as a localised problem, but after that rather wet half-decade it was apparent in most catchments in the drier parts of the state.

### Getting the message

In August 1978, the SWCS held a seminar: *Disaster by Slow Poison – Soil Salting*, which was summarised, with papers from a 1977 seminar at Bendigo, in *Victoria’s Resources* in December 1978. John Mann, director of

the Ministry for Water Resources, pointed out that salinity had appeared in some parts of the Kerang-Cohuna irrigation area after just a few years – that must have been in the period 1890-1910. And dryland salinity had been observed soon after settlement. (There's the well known excerpt from a letter by John Robertson, *Wando Vale*, Casterton, describing saltwater springs emerging in the 1850s on his slopes.). Mann said that the need for action on deteriorating water quality and rising salinity in the Murray-Darling system became urgent in the 1960s, which had led to an SRWSC strategy report recommending a \$40 million, ten-year plan to overcome the problems, including Mildura and Merbein salt interception drainage works and the Wakool, NSW evaporation basin.

The SCAs Jeff Jenkin described his Northern Slopes Project, an inter-departmental salinity survey commencing around 1973 that had showed that dryland salinity affected 85 000 hectares, compared with 96 000 hectares of irrigation salinity. Increased infiltration of water, due to regional clearing, leakage from storages, channels and farm dams, accentuated by the heavier rainfalls of the 1970s, was the cause. No salinity had been observed in forest areas at that stage.

Erosion was leading to intersection of watertables in some lower locations producing scalds, and saltier water in streams. Jenkin talked of planting salt-tolerant species, mulching, fertilising, gypsum application and drainage, whereas pumping from bores would not be feasible to combat dryland salinity, but whatever was done had to be on an integrated catchment-wide scale. Another speaker gave options for action, varying from doing nothing, to minimum and more complex engineering works to dismantling the existing systems and using the land for conservation, but debunked as inadequate a well publicised proposal someone had recently put forward based on tree planting in irrigation zones. (The proponent was not identified; was it Geoff Wilson?)

David Williamson, CSIRO WA, noted that there were 800 000 hectares of salted land in the Great Plains region of North America, and that in south-eastern WA, 40 percent of the surface water was either marginal, brackish or saline. Removing native vegetation there had raised salt outputs in one catchment, which had been 70 percent cleared, by a factor of twenty-one. Research was under way into the value of deep-rooted perennials, comparing indigenous wandoo with the introduced blue gum, and determining if plantations upslope from a saline seep would intercept all or most of the water – some 30 species had been tested and results were promising. As well scientists were modelling catchments to find optimum patterns of trees and

pasture for transpiration. He was optimistic that plant-based strategies could reduce or reverse dryland salinity.

Jeff Jenkin gave further detail. Dryland salting had been observed at 2000 separate locations in north-central Victoria; many of these areas were spreading due to rising watertables, and he expected signs to appear soon in numerous other areas. Moreover, from 1971 Jim Rowan had shown that salinity was common in the Mallee; besides the 130 000 hectares of groundwater evaporation areas (such as the Lake Tyrell system) and scalded red clays, there were 1400 salt pans covering 2500 hectares. The Donald area, where 5000 hectares of prime wheat country had been lost, was also a concern, as were properties at Marnoo, Kamarooka, Violet Town and Sheep Pen Creek near Benalla. However, the effects were not merely localised but influenced conditions in both adjacent and distant areas. Jenkin identified three particularly risky land types: alluvial valleys lateral to main streams; undulating Cambro-Ordovician, Ordovician and Siluro-Devonian country; and alluvial flats with impeded drainage. (There was no mention of metamorphic hills, which are now recognised as major recharge zones.) Shallow-rooted pastures on cleared catchments promoted the movement of salts to valley floors and into both surface streams and aquifers. He proposed that short-term and long-term measures should be considered together, and emphasised the need for research, as scientists often do.

Hydrogeologist Phil Macumber also reiterated that twenty years after flood irrigation began at Tragowel in the 1880s, watertables had risen to the surface in many areas. In 1978 the watertable over the whole of the central and lower Loddon plains was less than two metres below the surface, and this groundwater was mostly quite saline – over 10-20 000 mg/l. This had converted some of the freshwater lakes into salinas and killed or severely degraded many woodland remnants. However, it was not a new phenomenon, there having been several similar cycles – for instance from 13 000-9000 years BP when Kow Swamp had a grassy, and heavily populated, shoreline. Essentially, he explained the distribution, behaviour and connectivity of the various northern Victorian aquifers, including the deep leads of the Calivil Formation, and hydrological pressure changes with different surface situations, and, based on rises observed in numerous bore levels over the decades, gave timeframes for rises in watertables to the surface in the Goulburn and Campaspe valleys and the Mallee.

An SCA article promoted deep-rooted pasture species, such as phalaris and lucerne and there was a photo of a tussock of salt-tolerant tall wheat grass 'frequently used in reclamation work ... in the Colbinabbin Range.' Ed

Adamson wrote a sound article aimed at helping buyers of rural land assess potential salinity problems, and the Conservation Council of Victoria suggested mounting a major rural revegetation program and regretted that farmers could still claim land-clearing costs. (The situation changed in 1983.)

### Doing something about it

This indicates to me that by 1978, salinity had been recognised as a severe problem for Victoria. At the time, Terry White was a community liaison officer at Maryborough Christian College, identifying local social and economic projects and carrying them out through the school. When an article in *The Age* described the program, the venerable Ernest Jackson wrote to Terry saying people were working on irrigation salinity but not its dryland counterpart. Ernie included a vast amount of photocopied Hansard material on the topic, and spoke by phone to Terry before breakfast every Sunday morning thereafter. Bearing in mind the Roosevelt-era's Civilian Conservation Corps, Terry realised that, however daunting, this was a socio-economic issue that he could do something about: linking youth unemployment with land restoration. With forester Harold Beer, farmers Alison Teese and Brian Dowie, and support from local curate, Graham Huggins, Terry formed SALT – Salt Action Liaison Team. Nan Oates visited and wrote a plan for the group *pro bono*, and the Ministry for Conservation's Graeme David at Bendigo found \$5000 to launch operations.

Other funds followed, work got under way, two nurseries were established and in 1985, SALT received \$300 000 related to Victoria's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, by which time Nan's report had been reprinted. A Bendigo group had mooted a Project Branchout in the early 1980s, but had stalled. SALT took over the name and broadened its charter to cover the entire Loddon and Campaspe catchments, by which time John Abbott, John Quinlan, David Elvery and Kevin Ritchie were also involved. Over the years the program raised \$850 000. 'We were good at writing submissions,' Terry recalls. Creswick Shire's Cr Rod May of Kooroocheang, now a well known organic farmer, directed the works crew superbly. Shawn Butters took over from Rod in the mid 1980s. Project Branchout utilised employment support programs and any other funds it could generate. The legacy is a wide scattering of tree plantations across the Bendigo-Maryborough region north to the Murray.

### Publicity

By 1982, tree growing was making the news rather often. When compulsive publisher, John Ball (another Geoff Wilson, John had even produced a newspaper in Mandarin for the Victorian Chinese community), commissioned journalist Sue Webster to write for his briefly extant magazine, the name of which has passed from memory, she presciently picked three Western Victorian examples. Peter Francis, a thoughtful retired shearer with emphysema, founder of Australia's largest eucalypt collection, The Points arboretum at Coleraine; John Fenton, crusty farm forester and radical land manager at Branhholme, and wife Cicely, who had re-created a large wetland around the homestead as a firebreak and source of natural beauty and inspiration; and Bert Drayton, pioneering direct-seeder from Timboon, and wife Estelle. Sue's beautiful descriptions of the dignity and enthusiasm of these men and their families deserved much greater exposure, so she revisited them ten years later and also did a small piece on Peter Waldron, Potter Farmland Plan landowner, for *New Idea*.

Other pilgrimage sites occasionally written up in the early-mid 1980s were Neil and Sue Lawrance's property at Vasey with its scattered red gums protected by forty-four gallon drums and direct-seeded shelterbelts, which saved their stock during a cold snap that killed thousands of sheep in the region; ex-Indian Army officer Peter Newcome's totally sheltered farm near Foster; Hugh Morgan's comprehensive cypress shelterbelts at Rochdale; Ern Burgess' radiata pines at Kalkallo; Russell Crichton's lignum plantings on the saline shores of Kow Swamp; the various Acocks families' work on the Campaspe at Rochester; and Bill and Gwen Twigg's broadacre grain and sheep farm at Bears Lagoon in the mid Loddon, where Bill was trying out many combinations of deep-rooted vegetation to lower water tables. Ray Speck and John McCubbin had both planted mountain ash forests – in the hills south of Yarragon and Gormandale respectively – and there was an interesting grove of black walnut upstream from Alexandra, which Hugh Meggitt acquired. Keith Andrews at Delatite was a keen poplar grower, hydro-electric engineer, land reshaper and alluvial miner, and David Cooper in the Howqua-Jamieson area grew trees and experimented with Yeomans' Keyline water harvesting techniques. Geoff Wallace at Kergunyah was the best known Yeomans disciple.

Oliver Guthrie's farm at Rich Avon drew attention because of its remnant cover of buloke and black box. 'You never fall asleep when you're harvesting,' he said laconically, referring to the need to constantly steer around pad-

dock trees. Around Springhurst, several farmers like Lindsay Humphrey and Sue and Sandy Campbell were keen tree growers. Richard Weatherly's property on the Hopkins west of Mortlake, was also a Mecca, and he shared many thoughtful insights with visitors into silviculture, soil seedbanks and environmental change; he also formed a collective to build a direct-seeder with several others like David Debenham and Richard Jamieson. Its TGAS file was probably the thickest ever, but in due course the FCV agreed to grant the group \$3500 to offset development costs. Richard Jamieson's radical huge spiral 'swiss roll' shelterbelts at Woorndoo are visible in Landsat images, he told me recently. Moreover Bill O'Shea at Heytesbury was a very active direct seeder. People started growing plants for sale, looking at local-provenance stock and understorey species, which were not widely available from the large FCV and NRCL nurseries.

In the background, the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) declared unilaterally at very short notice that the period July 1982-June 1983 would be the UN Year of the Tree, which barely affected the government departments, including staff members like me, who had fairly full programs already and, without being too precious, would have liked some consultation. (Even then we knew tree growing events needed a lead time of at least 6-9 months.) Nevertheless, although not much happened, the Year of the Tree caught people's imagination, got some good media, and was so often brought up thereafter it entered folklore. It also led to the nursery industry, especially through Valerie Swain's efforts in NSW, starting Greening Australia (GA).

Alan Thatcher went to GA meetings for some years as the movement, then totally community-based and rudimentary, got under way with projects and marketing forays, but GA didn't reach Victoria until 1987 because, as we have seen, the Garden State Committee was already successfully promoting tree growing. About this time, the Commonwealth seconded Gerry Morvell, Mark Thomas and others to run a national GA office in Canberra, a radical but far-sighted and successful move as it turned out.

### Fruitful committees

Another factor drawing community attention to trees was that two substantial Cain government environmental initiatives were getting under way in late 1982, and two existing but newish activities were being sustained. CSIRO entomologist, John French, had long and very publicly advocated urban forestry, so an Urban Forest Development Committee (UFDC) formed under Peter Langley within the FCV extension group. And very importantly, a salinity campaign commenced.



Launch of Landcare – 25 November 1986 – (l-r) Alan Malcolm, VFF; Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation; and Andrew Cameron, VFF



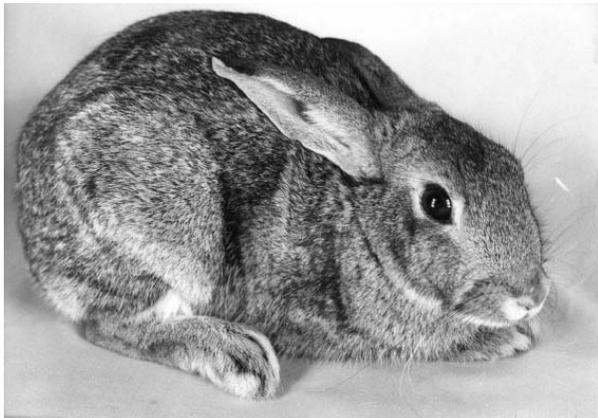
Salinity in the Mallee



Spiny rush – symbol of salinity



SCA gully erosion control structure



Scourge of Australia, and target of Landcare groups and networks



Urban forestry goes indigenous – Joan Kirner launches the Derrimut grassland reserve in early 1986, with Rob Youl (l) and Cr Ian Mill, Mayor, City of Sunshine



Warrenbayne Boho LPG leaders: (l-r) Angus Howell, Darrell Brewin and Pam Robinson, with Dr David Smith, Director of Agriculture



Elements of the Western District – the early 1990s HEAL brochure used as the cover for Andrew Campbell's 1994 book on Landcare



Typical Mallee roadside and remnant vegetation

Violet Town market, early 1990s – Warrenbayne Boho LPG members (l-r) Shirley Say, Pam Robinson, Geoff Say



Tenth anniversary of Landcare, Winjallock, 1996 – (l-r) Heather Mitchell, Terry Simpson, Joan Kirner



Many Landcare groups and networks help rehabilitate degraded rivers

Volunteers – a pillar of Landcare



Community tour studying fauna and flora at Neds Corner, west of Mildura  
Productive, sustainable farming – a major goal of Landcare



Fenced-off grassy woodland, Mansfield

Regent Honeyeater Project, Benalla – 900 hectares revegetated in twelve years



Natural regeneration of former farmland, Rushworth



Stricta Hill, 2006

Before the 1982 election, Steve Bracks, then employed by Maryborough Council, told Terry White that the shadow Minister for Agriculture, Evan Walker, would be at a local hotel shortly; Steve wondered if Terry had anything to discuss with Evan. Did he what! Terry told Evan about dryland salinity and what SALT was doing. After the election the new government wanted action, convened a parliamentary enquiry and soon set up the Salinity Bureau under Graham Hunter.

Moreover, the RCC was doing very good work under Kerry Willis, liaising with municipalities and government departments about better management practices and training, and drawing attention to the importance of roadside remnants. In 1985 the RCC republished Edna Walling's classic: *Country Roads: The Australian Roadside*. And Geoff Wilson's articles and lobbying, and activities by several more mainstream silviculturalists, had fermented interest in agroforestry.

### New thinking on farm trees

Bob McKimm, Hugh Stewart and Jim Edgar of the FCV's research branch had been running trials since 1972 on irrigating stands of trees with sewerage effluent at Mildura, Swan Hill and Robinvale, and were associated with much larger later projects at Wodonga and Shepparton. Research plots at Kyabram complemented this program – but they were irrigated in the normal regional manner. (What was interesting was how dramatically groundwater levels fell in the root zone after a few years of tree growth, whereas they were still just a metre or so below the surface everywhere else on the station.)

Around 1976, Bob and Geoff Williams pioneered the idea at Mildura of small plantations associated with wineries and distilleries to soak up effluent. As people recall it, the FCV and Agriculture Department were working together on some agroforestry concepts before the 1982 election. The FCV had bought a large property at Carngham in 1981, which District Forester Jeff Brisbane and Ballarat colleagues had started to replant with radiata, establishing wide-spaced stands in 1983.

Other trials and agroforests were created on DARA research stations at Myrtleford (Fred Bienvenu - poplars and mint), Rutherglen (Roger Hall), Hamilton (Rod Bird and Keith Cumming) and Ellinbank (Malcolm Birch and Cameron Gourley), as well as at Neerim South, Egerton and Heytesbury (Geoff Beilby and Phillipa Noble), partly through a sesqui-centennial program that Peter Baldwin eventually led. A Joint Agroforestry Management Committee (JAMC) formed, which included Wally White and Stuart Margetts from Agriculture and David Flinn and John Kellas from FCV. There were

research and extension sub-committees. I was on the extension group with Geoff Wilson, Arthur Lyons and Frank Hirst, and we set about broadening community awareness through articles, brochures, staff training, better links with AFDI and its interstate members, contact with NZ farm foresters and less formal field trials. Frank planted and pruned fifteen steep hectares on his Ranceby property, and his neighbour, Gordon Maddocks, established numerous small agroforestry stands. Meanwhile, ITCI member, Jason Alexandra, was doing creative things in the Strzelecki foothills at Cloverlea. Victorians were also comparing notes with agroforesters from other states; Geoff Anderson and Richard Moore in WA; Francis Clarke in NSW; Peter Bulman, Greg Dalton and Jackie Venning in SA.

As ever, definitions varied, but we readily connected agroforestry and sugar gum silviculture in the western District, and with Liz Hamilton and Andrew Lang, ran field days showing that the region's characteristic shelterbelts could be managed sustainably for firewood production at least, especially with good coppicing practices were adopted. A major target was Kevin Wood of the Australian Home Heating Association (AHHA), and wood merchants, for even then, firewood supplies were extended, and here was a major resource on flat countryside, safe to harvest and close to Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. We thought it possible that sugar gum could be sawn, and indeed it has proved to be the case through the enthusiasm and persistence of Liz, Andrew, Sue Harris, Gib Wettenhall and several others. And the AHHA eventually funded several small firewood plantations in the region.

Another innovation was bringing in Bill Loane, a Canberra economist, to attempt to model the effects of farm tree growing on income, farm production and amenity. Bill worked away at this for years, and became involved in many aspects of farm tree growing, but the 1980s technology was inadequate. Today, tree stand modelling to quantify a range of benefits has been mastered.

## Urban activity

When Peter Langley moved to the amalgamation team in mid 1982, I took over running the UFDC, and during the next few years, we concentrated on the western suburbs. (Joan Kirner didn't mind.) We launched several modest projects along Kororoit Creek (the biggest was funded by the Smorgon family with the help of Bernie Mack, Smorgons' chief forester), and around the Altona petrochemical complex and other factories. We ran training days taking busloads of municipal people around Werribee Plains remnants such as the *Eynsbury* grey box-buloke woodlands. The committee also produced arti-

cles on the pre-settlement vegetation around Port Phillip Bay and urban landscaping – recommending a more natural look through irregular, clumped plantings with understorey and grasses, rather than straight municipal lines.

Roger Holloway initiated a Western Gateways urban revegetation project from Newport power station; its main project was the Dynon Road precinct from Moonee Ponds Creek to the Maribyrnong, with other sections of road landscaping, including in Sunshine. Funded through a Western Suburbs Action Program, its main resources came from one of the first government-funded labour-market training programs. Meanwhile Minette Russell-Young enthused her Burnley horticulture students about indigenous vegetation, and the passionate Rod Foster, a ranger at LaTrobe University tragically killed in a house fire in 1985, was developing new ideas for bush and wildlife management. Meanwhile the slightly extra-terrestrial John French wanted to see fruit trees in our streets.

But Australia's best urban forest was also partly Victorian. When the Whitlam government established Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation in 1973-74, it started to buy properties in and around both cities, some of which it soon devoted to broadacre plantings of mainly local tree species. Sue Campbell worked on this project. By the early-mid 1980s, these were magnificent, giving the conurbation a unique setting and spirit, which has been eroded in the last decade by a return to traditional Eurasian species and straight-line roadside plantings.

One day I visited Derrimut, responding to a letter from Werribee Shire about a possible site for an urban forest at the corner of Boundary and Fitzgerald Roads, public land formerly proposed for development to replace Newmarket saleyards. I walked across the paddock and saw unfamiliar vegetation: daisies galore, Austral bluebells, convolvulus, nardoo by the swamp, and what I found out were blue devils and two types of feather-heads (*Ptilotus*) – this was my introduction to native grasslands. When my friend Jim Willis came and identified thirty or so indigenous species, I realised we had a problem. The community wanted an urban forest – trees on those flat bare plains – but we had an important remnant that deserved protection. I invited LaTrobe University botanists to the block, as Neville Scarlett had studied grasslands. They confirmed the site's importance and Minister for Forests, Rod McKenzie almost immediately approved its reservation for conservation. The LaTrobe team agreed that perimeter planting would be acceptable, even if only to reduce windblown weed invasions – so the site has some trees today. That's how Melbourne got its second grasslands reserve – the first is on the Geelong Freeway at Laverton. Soon after, John Stuwe of LaTrobe surveyed the state and

found that much less than of one percent of Victoria's natural grasslands remained. Ironically, much of it was on the western fringe of Melbourne, with its expanses of land awaiting industrial development and subject to not very intensive grazing, and has since been built upon.

## Coalescence

In 1983 the Ash Wednesday fires necessitated special action. Arthur Lyons spent some months traversing the fire zones and interpreting the effect of trees on fire behaviour, and vice versa, and Greg Wallace worked with the Heytesbury-Warrnambool community to start to restore tree cover. Rod Bird reported that shelterbelts at Hamilton had helped fire suppression by reducing wind speeds and breaking up the fire front. Kevin Ritchie was promoting tree growing in north-central Victoria's irrigation areas. The concept of direct seeding was being enthusiastically explored in the southern states. Armidale in New England was organizing a second farm trees conference. The Victorian amalgamation process was well under way, with most employees resigned to change – except for two SCA men: Richard 'Zeke' Hartland and Warwick Papst.

Zeke, a hydrology technical assistant, did his normal work, but somehow managed to continue to plant and maintain trees at Rowsley – the centre of the severely battered Parwan valley near Bacchus Marsh. The SCA had bought back an incredibly eroded ridge, thereafter named the White Elephant Range, which it had fenced off and proceeded to reforest. For maybe ten years, Zeke grew trees in his backyard, collaborated with local landowners, got work crews from Lara prison, maintained fences, attracted sponsorship from Telecom even, and generally showed ingenuity, endurance and passion for the environment. (On the hydrology side, he discovered that the valley's heavy cover of serrated tussock had reduced silt loads in local streams to an all-time low). He continues to work at Rowsley – great effort, Zeke! Warwick Papst was devoted to the Alps and, against the odds, maintained an annual High Country revegetation summer school.

Interestingly, and this must have flowed into Landcare, farm trees group members were asserting their independence from their government mentors. Around Hamilton they were proposing plantings on roadsides, railways and creeklines; at Bairnsdale concern was growing about the death of the region's red gums. I will never forget a meeting there in late 1983, when someone said, 'Wouldn't it be great to get a few neighbours doing the same sort of plantings so that the same trees would run across the locality?' And after some contemplation: 'Nah! It'd never happen!'

But in fact people were working together. After a long consultation by a working party comprising Ross Guymer, Bob Edgar, Steve Slater, Jill McLean and me, a new entity, the Land Protection Service under Dr Bob Campbell was formed. It comprised officers from the SCA, the VNWDB and KTRI people, and the small FCV tree extension section, of which I was still part, and moved into Kew (the SCA's old headquarters). Moreover, the Salinity Bureau was starting to marshal communities in the more badly affected regions. In western Victoria, Neil Lawrance and five neighbours at Vasey, including two Lyons families, formed the Black Range-Dundas revegetation group to create corridor-networks of trees across eight kilometres of farmland. The trees would be planted over the next ten years or so along roadsides, fencelines, unused roads, creeks and the former Hamilton-Noradjuha railway, and would connect two major areas of public land: the Black Range (the one south of Rocklands) and the Dundas Range. Another pioneer, Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group (note the deliberate link with the amalgamated department) had formed on the west side of the Strathbogies ten kilometres south of Benalla. Salting was a major problem, but Pam Robinson, Angus Howell and other creative and sophisticated landowners were thinking both laterally and some distance ahead.

Meanwhile TGAS was foundering; the problem wasn't technical – landowners were increasingly keen – but the public-service accounting cycle didn't fit in well with the tree-growing year. The TGAS planners in 1980-81 should have talked to the SCA, which, as I mentioned earlier, had learned how to stave off the problem by careful state-wide project management and over-committing funding.

## Unprecedented project

Then the GSC launched an initiative with The Ian Potter Foundation, what became the Potter Farmland Plan (PFP). I recall Alan Thatcher telling me it was to be an exercise in farm planning, a chance to renovate several demonstration properties through re-fencing, revegetation, pasture improvement, stock lanes, salinity control, protection of remnant bush, better water supplies, and so on – and networking and technical assistance of course. Soon we were off with a GSC team to look at the Hamilton region. (It was an important trip for me in another regard. As I was driving the bus up through the battered Pent-lands, Carrick Chambers remarked, 'What a terrible western entrance to Melbourne!' From then on, I promoted the idea of a major project around Bacchus Marsh. Some seventeen years later, I was delighted when Grow West started; I think I had a hand in that. And the Pentlands are

becoming rather more arboreal these days. I have to really concentrate now as I drive that stretch, there are so many successful and diverting plantings.)

Hamilton warmly welcomed our group and the rest of the story became fairly well known. Some fifteen properties were selected, most in the Dundas Tablelands, but there were several around Glenthompson. Andrew Campbell, a dynamic 25-year-old forester from nearby Morella, was soon appointed project manager, with John Marriott, a very experienced dairy- and sheep-farmer, overseeing on-ground works. Detailed planning got under way and the first works were completed impressively. It was soon apparent that several families would make exceptional contributions to the PFP; the Milnes, Waldrons, Speirs, Levinsons and Heard for a start. New ideas emerged; Andrew and John publicised them; regional departmental people like Rod Bird and Keith Cumming got involved; and by 1985 the rest of Victorian tree-growing and farm-management scene had started to visit Hamilton.

### Climactic consultation

The last stanza of my story: in May 1986 Tony Eddison visited LPS at Kew and spoke to a dozen of us; I can still hear his Northern accent. 'Joan (Kirner) wants something to take to Cabinet ...' He needed a community land management program. Rob Joy, our excellent research leader, put out some meeting notes. I still have them; they resemble Isaac Newton's first thoughts on differential calculus. But it was Horrie Poussard and Dennis Cahill who came up with the *something*, which turned out to be Landcare. However on 25 November 1986, when Joan Kirner launched the program at Winjallock on Stricta Hill, nobody could have visualised how extensive, productive, appealing and adaptable it would turn out to be!

## The making of LandCare in Victoria

### Horrie Poussard

Landcare was built on a number of previous programs and experiences over the years in natural resource management and community development. It started in Victoria when there were encouraging signs that the environmental concerns of the community were being appreciated and supported by government. These included the 1983 amalgamation by the Labour government of the major Victorian environmental and public land departments into the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (CFL).

In 1986, Dr Tony Eddison was Director General of CFL. In May, at the request of the Minister for Conservation, Joan Kirner, he spoke to the Land Protection Service (LPS), one of the divisions of CFL. There was a need to provide a strategy and associated 'package' to guide land protection-related activities of CFL, which had an influence over both public and private land resources and associated habitats. The approach needed to be integrated – between the existing land protection disciplines – and community-based. The Minister had had extensive experience with community-based organisations and believed this was an appropriate way to approach these issues.

Subsequent documents indicate that there were two elements shaping this new approach:

Firstly, the Minister was keen to meld the activities of the new Land Protection Service into a unified division. Each of the other technical divisions of the amalgamated department was based on an existing entity with an ongoing core of business and clear boundaries (State Forests, National Parks, Fisheries and Wildlife, Public Land Management). The LPS was an amalgam of what were previously disparate organisations– the Soil Conservation Authority and Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board – along with the private tree planting aspects of the Forests Commission.

Secondly, there was a need to show that CFL, predominantly a public land management organisation, also had a role supporting the land protection aspects of private (mainly farm) land, and would continue to service farmers and rural communities.

The LPS Director, Dr Bob Campbell, asked me to look at a basis for a

suitable program.<sup>1</sup> My initial response was a brief outline of the idea of a program, including a name, which was presented to the LPS Branch Managers Meeting of 13 May 1986. It was:

*Country Care: an on-farm conservation program for CFL that encompasses both existing and new areas of conservation action in rural Victoria.*

*Country Care provides a focus for the conservation movement to turn around the depletion of natural resources – land, fauna, flora, clean water – with planned projects that will enhance the rural environment while maintaining sustainable agricultural productivity.*

*Country Care enables the combined efforts of government at all levels, industry and the community to constructively achieve a better rural lifestyle for both this and future generations of Victorians.*

*Country Care aims to integrate into the one program:*

- a) the activities of a range of government departments*
  - b) the valuable inputs from industry and community groups*
  - c) a range of services – research, advisory, community education, works – carried out in the cause of rural conservation*
- the various conservation issues relevant to care of the countryside – conservation cropping, tree revegetation, erosion control, fauna and flora habitat, farm water supplies, agroforestry, etc*<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Dr Rob Joy was tasked to provide some initial thoughts on a Land Protection Strategy. Both of us were asked to table a more detailed presentation at the next meeting of 10 June 1986. My package of actions was subsequently accepted and developed as the initial program. Broader land protection strategy was developed later.

The name *Country Care* was derived from the notion that the program should be applicable to rural land management. It resonated with notions of the *Countryside Code* (actions for visitors to minimise their impact on rural areas) and the UK Countryside Commission, which managed/promoted rural conservation. Subsequently, I changed the name of this proposed program to *Farm Care*, again focusing on rural private land. It must be appreciated that the LPS concentrated on private farmland in its efforts on soil conservation, salinity control, tree planting, and pest plant and animal control.

Following a lot of reworking of the idea, particularly with Dennis Cahill, I proposed a broader Land Care title in an LPS working document on 10 July 1986.<sup>4</sup> This took into account the need for the program to address all Victoria's land resources (urban and rural, public and private). It stated:

*The Land Care program provides a means of identifying, highlighting and integrating a wide range of inter-related (land) protection projects that are currently carried out within individual sections of the department. These projects are concerned with conservation issues in rural areas and relate primarily to agricultural land use. They include erosion control, conservation cropping, tree regeneration and reafforestation, farm planning, fauna and flora habitat, pest plant and pest animal control (and) salinity (control). A unifying program, while not diminishing the importance of individual projects, would provide the context into which such projects could be placed and assessed. This allows the department, the government and the community to more usefully focus on the general land protection thrust of CFL, as well as on particular projects identified with the Land Care program. Subsequent promotion of either the Land Care program or its individual projects should provide a ready focus on government activity in the rural environment.*

At this stage there was a solid focus on Land Care as a government program, which, while working with the community, would also show what the government was doing in the area of land protection. The document also pointed out the internal departmental limitations of linking various interacting activities (such as soil conservation and salinity control, or tree planting and fauna habitat), due to the 'silo' nature of the current program and sub-program basis of the departmental budgetary structure. The document went further in proposing that:

*Land Care could be used as a focus for (the) inter-relationships between CFL and others, and within CFL, in a similar way to that developed for salinity. Such getting together would be valuable both for professional purposes and for efficient planning of government programs.*

A year earlier, a State Salinity Program had been set up with integrated budgets that supported actions from a number of government departments, including CFL. While these sentiments were laudable, they were not accepted as practical at this stage, although they have come to pass over the years of Landcare.

The LPS working document was used as the basis for a subsequent

submission on Land Care (crafted mainly by Dennis Cahill), to the Corporate Management Team – Conservation Focus Committee of CFL. Interestingly in the five days before the submission to the Conservation Focus Committee on 15 July 1986, the program name was further changed to Total Land Care (TLC).<sup>6</sup> It is understood that Tony Plowman, the then Land Protection Adviser to CFL, encouraged this name change. This reflected the interest being shown in the Total Catchment Management (TCM) program, which was set up in New South Wales a year earlier.

It may well be an apocryphal story that Minister Joan Kirner, who chaired the Conservation Focus Committee meeting, saw the program acronym and stated that she was *definitely not* going to be thought of as ‘the Minister for TLC.’ The minutes of the meeting only show that:

*it was agreed that the package is to be known as Land Care.*<sup>7</sup>

In the submission to the Conservation Focus Committee, it was stated that:

*Consultation with some specific groups would be valuable in order to enlist their support for the program. These groups include other departments and authorities, LPRACs (Land Protection Regional Advisory Committees), VFF (Victorian Farmers Federation), Farm Tree Groups, the Potter Farmland Plan group, CCV (Conservation Council of Victoria), Victorian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, and the Roadside Conservation Committee.*

*Promotion of the program would need to be carried out both within CFL, particularly at Regional Management level, as well as in the community.*

It was further stated that:

*(Land Care) will be group driven, that is, its management will be by local groups who will cooperate towards a defined (Land Care) objective. ... The purpose of (Land Care) groups is to focus, and give practical, local expression to local needs, enthusiasms, initiatives and to integrate local and Government strategies, plans and resources to that end.*

*The (Land Care) group projects will not be stereotypes. Projects will fit in with and take on the character of local and regional needs and will enable the expression of local needs and enthusiasms (towards defined land protection objectives). ... group areas will be based on the co-ordination of farm locality and area plans. Where plans are lacking or*

*deficient, they will be developed for this purpose. ... the plans will complement local government plans.*

Dennis Cahill’s succinct statements on the meshing of community-based activity within a broader picture of land protection needs provided a clear framework for the Land Care program. His note on the importance of local and area plans is based on his experience as a soil conservationist and his familiarity with the SCAs Group Conservation Areas, which identified local areas on catchment boundaries.

It is interesting to note that the name of the new program had changed over time from: *Country Care* to *Farm Care* to *Land Care* to *Total Land Care* and back to *Land Care*.

Following ratification of the Land Care program further work was needed to turn the concept into a workable, attractive land protection program. As Senior Policy Officer, I was asked to coordinate Land Care’s further development. And it needed to be done quickly. At that stage, it was proposed to launch Land Care at the Melbourne Show in mid September. It soon became apparent that this target was too soon to get together all the support needed for a good start, and the launch was rescheduled for November.

## From Land Care to Landcare

By 23 July, in a letter from LPS Director Dr Bob Campbell to other CFL Directors,<sup>8</sup> the particular style of lettering was also changed with a joined-up

**LandCare**

word LandCare, similar to current government program names at the time of WorkCare and Medicare. While the word ‘Care’ was a neat word with a broad, positive feel to it, the link with other (Labour) government programs like

WorkCare created some concern within and outside Parliament. Some in Cabinet saw it as downgrading existing important government programs by association.<sup>9</sup> Others in the community with different political views saw it as part of a ‘socialist’ program, at odds with the basically conservative rural community, and therefore lacking credibility. One response from John Jack, Chairman, Potter Farmland Plan (PFP), to Minister Joan Kirner stated:

*From PFP experience there appears to be a number of weaknesses in the proposal title “Landcare” – this will electorally link the policy and embraced programs with WorkCare and Medicare which programs, in our experience, have a discredited image particularly in the rural sector*

... The rural reaction could well be "more of the present, another excuse for a handout to the greenie/government/commo group"...<sup>10</sup>

On 5 August a LandCare Planning Group held its first meeting with the CFL Director General and the LPS Director, Dr Bob Campbell. The Group comprised the Branch Managers of LPS, and representatives from other CFL Divisions (State Forests, National Parks, Fisheries and Wildlife, Regional Management and Community Education).<sup>11</sup> At the meeting it was decided:

*Currently ... to limit the LandCare program to those CFL (land protection) activities that don't involve other departments.*

It was also resolved to:

*Investigate an agreement in principle from DARA and MWR for support of LandCare.*

Over the next two months I visited the VFF, Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA), Ministry for Water Resources (MWR) and CFL regions, to explain the upcoming LandCare program. At that time DARA and MWR showed little interest as they were focused on their own programs. DARA was also making overtures to take the LPS into its fold, arguing that LPS primarily serviced farmers and its program would fit within the DARA spread of activities.<sup>12</sup> This claim was rejected by CFL as LPS also had an increasing role in public land management with soil conservation, and weed and pest animal control.

When approached, the VFF (Land Use Committee) was concerned that the new program would shift the focus of current land protection incentives from individual farmers to groups. They were also concerned that traditional approaches to weed and pest animal control programs would be scaled down or redirected to other areas to finance LandCare projects. However the chairman of the committee, Alex Arbuthnot, was keen for his farm organisation to be involved in promoting broader conservation measures like soil conservation, through the VFF district branch structure.<sup>13</sup>

The Land Protection Council, a body set up to advise the Minister on Victorian land protection issues, comprised a majority of members representing rural community interests along with departmental staff and representatives of key organisations (VFF, Conservation Victoria). When invited to discuss the proposed LandCare program, the Council was also concerned that individual landholders would be at a disadvantage when seeking LPIS funds in the future *vis a vis* LandCare group members.

Joan Kirner knew that she had to get the VFF involved if the program was

to have good credibility within the farming community. At the time the president of the VFF was Mrs Heather Mitchell, the first, and to date the only, woman to lead that body. It was fortuitous. Joan Kirner considered Heather a great asset for the VFF and for LandCare because '*she saw solutions not problems and she was willing to generously share information and the workload.*'<sup>14</sup>

In October, Joan Kirner wrote to the President of the VFF inviting the VFF to be joint sponsor of LandCare, *an exciting new concept in integrated land management.*<sup>15</sup>

Heather Mitchell became Co-Chair with Joan Kirner of the LandCare Program and the two leaders worked well together. Both launched numerous LandCare groups around the state over the next three years.

The mechanics of the LandCare Program needed to be quickly addressed.

Issues included:

- level and types of incentives
- supporting LandCare Projects with services and incentives
- identifying LandCare groups/projects
- the boundaries of what constitutes a LandCare project
- associated publicity and promotion
- training of CFL staff on LandCare issues
- symbol(s) for the LandCare program
- recognition of LandCare projects with awards, signs and so on
- administrative systems for LandCare (incentives given, communication details)
- monitoring and evaluation of the LandCare program
- budgetary and staffing requirements in LPS to run LandCare

On 5 September LPS staff Alan Thatcher and Graydon Findlay developed a discussion paper on the appropriate financial incentives available for LandCare projects. The existing LPIS (Land Protection Incentive Scheme), based on the SCA Grants scheme that had operated for over twenty years, provided incentive grants to landholders to carry out works to address land degradation problems. The LPIS was expanded to include pest plant and pest animal control and the Tree Growing Assistance Scheme (TGAS) for farm tree planting. LPIS incentives had to be signed off by the Minister and were available under the current legislation to individual landholders, but not to groups.

Thatcher and Findlay suggested that the LPIS be expanded to allow incentive grants to be given for assistance for problem assessment and planning. In particular, material could be provided under the LPIS for topographic and aerial maps, notes on mapping of problems on individual properties and the project area, and notes on developing suitable property plans. The SCA

had used such maps to plan group conservation areas and projects in the past when the focus was on soil erosion. This was a way to broaden the property and area planning process, and fitted in with group activities to identify a range of land protection issues. It also underlined the need to review the current legislation to specifically allow incentives for group activities.<sup>16</sup>

The second meeting of the LandCare Planning Group on 22 August was concerned mainly with firming up the concept, developing a promotional program and discussing the implications for policy, research, regional resource allocations and training and support.

Bob Edgar, Manager of the Extension Support Branch of LPS, took on the responsibility for the promotion of LandCare, including the launch of the program. It was obvious that a launch of LandCare in mid-September at the Royal Show could not be achieved, and it would be best to launch LandCare with the various promotional and information material in place.

However the Show provided an opportunity to develop some material, including the first LandCare logo – a sunflower. It was suggested that the sunflower showed a positive, natural image, which also involved elements of agricultural production. There was however some strong resentment from those who thought a ‘tree’ image covered all that LandCare sought. The sunflower logo was kept for several years until ‘over-run’ by the Federal Landcare program’s ‘caring hands’ logo.



Meanwhile I had done a considerable amount of travelling discussing LandCare with regional staff of CFL, farmers and LPRACs. These discussions were helpful in developing the LandCare Operational Guidelines, which were first issued for use by CFL staff in January 1987. They included:

- Promotional material
- Supporting actions provided by various players in the program
- Administration of the program, including registration of groups
- Provision of incentive grants

While LandCare was a government-initiated program, it was based on the notion of a government-community partnership. In many cases the community was a local group of farmers. The value of group action was based on the fact that many land degradation problems (soil erosion, salinity, rabbits, fauna habitat, and so on) could not necessarily be contained, let alone controlled, by an individual landholder, no matter how well that person applied up-to-date knowledge. By working in unison on a local area, a group could

generate a better outcome for all involved. And this could have important benefits for downstream users.

How to identify a workable group was the next concern. SCA Group Conservation Schemes were based on catchment boundaries. However it was the physical rather than social boundaries SCA was concerned with. While in small communities in more remote areas, catchment boundaries did equate with social groupings, this was not necessarily so in larger catchments closer to major rural centres. Work by LPS Senior Extension Officer, Bryan O’Brien, on ‘neighbourhood groups’ indicated that social groups could be important in working together for a common cause. Initially a LandCare *project* (not a *group*) was seen as the basic unit of the program. Within a year this changed with the focus strongly on the group aspects with the word *project* relating to specific time-based activities carried out by the group.

Groups were not identified solely on a geographical or statutory basis (for example, local government boundaries) or on an interest-only basis (as occurred with farm tree groups, whose members did not necessarily live within the same local community). Rather it was decided that LandCare groups needed to show that they could work together to improve their local area. In addition the group needed to be involved in the planning, implementation and on-going maintenance of their project. Sometimes the group could be relatively small (5-20 members) provided it felt it had a common community bond.

Finally the group project had to have the potential for a major improvement in the productivity and/or amenity value of the local area. On several occasions, a couple of members of the one family on adjoining farms applied to be declared a LandCare group, solely to access the incentive grants available, to no avail.

LandCare was launched on 25 November 1986 at Winjallock, a small farming community near St Arnaud in central Victoria. Heather Mitchell and the VFF were keen to involve the St Arnaud branch of the VFF because it was the only VFF Branch at the time that had a conservation farming sub-committee, and an active one at that. Local farmer Terry Simpson was a prime mover on the issue and had had a lot of dealings with government officers in the past on soil conservation, rabbit and weed control and pasture improvement.

*Stricta Hill* was a run-down, eroded grazing block with the one last remaining *Casuarina stricta* tree on the top of the hill. There was some thought that it should be bought by the government and repaired and either remain public land or be resold when stable. The St Arnaud VFF Branch believed otherwise and, with Terry Simpson leading the charge, began working with the landholder. In a joint agreement, local farmers and the owner

set about bringing the area back to a productive life through soil conservation, tree planting, rabbit control and pasture improvement. *Stricta Hill* became the site for the LandCare launch by Joan Kirner and Alan Malcolm (VFF), representing Heather Mitchell on the day.

The launch drew a great crowd and was well publicised through various regional and state newspapers over the next week. And thus LandCare was born in Victoria.

- 1 Minutes of LPS Branch Managers Meeting, 13 May 1986
- 2 Presentation by H Poussard to LPS Branch Managers meeting 13 May 1986
- 3 RM Joy (1986) Some Thoughts on the Development of Land Protection Strategy. LPS working document
- 4 H Poussard (1986) Land Care as an Integrating Carrier of CFL Activities. LPS working document
- 5 *ibid*
- 6 Total Land Care. Submission by LPS to CFL Conservation Focus Committee Meeting, 15 July 1986
- 7 CFL Conservation Focus Committee. Notes of Meeting of 15 July 1986
- 8 Internal memorandum from Director LPS to other CFL Directors. 23 July 1986
- 9 Joan Kirner. Personal communication. 2006
- 10 Letter to Hon Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands from JB Jack, Chairman of Potter Farmland Plan. 8 September 1986
- 11 Notes of first meeting of LandCare Planning Group, 5 August 1986
- 12 Dennis Cahill, Bob Campbell. Personal communications. 2006
- 13 R Carraill (1993) The Contribution of a Farm Organisation to Landcare. Victorian Farmers Federation, Melbourne
- 14 Joan Kirner. (2006) Personal communication
- 15 R Carraill (1993) *ibid* p4
- 16 A Thatcher and G Findlay (1986) LandCare: Possible Forms of Incentives. CFL internal document

## Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group

### Angus Howell

So often in history, our memories flex with the passing of time, and what we choose to remember becomes reality. Fortunately, Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group (WBLPG) in North East Victoria has kept full records of events, field days, meetings, activities and achievements since its inception.

It grew from a small group of landholders in the late 1970s, who talked to each other and to the Soil Conservation Authority about the incidence and spread of dryland salinity in their locality. This organisation had the privilege of being a part of a groundswell of land managers who grasped a wide range of land issues across Australia. These gatherings of rural people announced to all tiers of government that, from here on, they would take the initiative in managing and combating land degradation issues inside and outside their property boundaries, and that they expected full government support for this work.

In the late 1970s our group asked the Shire of Violet Town to convene a public meeting to provide information and gauge the level of concern about dryland salting. Over 100 people attended that meeting, which led to ongoing activities between the Shire, SCA and energetic and concerned landholders. In 1983 came our formal beginning with a local committee of the Soil Conservation Association. Cr Pam Robinson, a Warrenbayne farmer, led the group. She worked tirelessly, providing vigorous and innovative leadership for most of the next decade. The local SCA adviser, Darrel Brewin, believed strongly in people taking responsibility for their own destiny, and knew the range of skills that a group could bring together.

After significant community consultation, we applied to the National Soil Conservation Program (NSCP) for funds to employ one of our own to work in the community under the group's direction, to enhance awareness of land management issues, and to help landholders get on with the task themselves. The submission for funds sought an opportunity to develop a model for Land Protection that could be duplicated across Australia. The group argued that, by doing it 'ourselves,' we could have ownership of land issues beyond property boundaries, and could achieve at a much faster rate than leaving things to government agencies.

Waiting with bated breath, the committee was excited when someone

from NSCP phoned local departmental officer, Kevin Ritchie, to ask, 'Are these people real?' The committee responded with a request for an audience with the NSCP, and given the green light, Pam and others drove straight to Canberra to a warm reception. After a thorough grilling, group members boarded their vehicle and returned to Benalla, the five hours on the road home buoyed by anticipation.

In 1985 the by-now incorporated Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group gained federal funding to employ its own full-time coordinator. However 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.

The WBLPG received further federal funding, and money from the Victorian government and a number of philanthropic bodies, to help empower its 150 landholders to learn about and deal with dryland salinity, noxious weeds, tree decline and habitat enhancement. At all times the group took a professional approach to its activities and its engagement of outside assistance and research support. There were two other major aspects: landholders needed to feel in control of their own projects, and above all group activities had to be fun.

In the mid 1980s WBLPG members realised that, as a cohesive group covering an extensive area, they formed a resource for urban people to learn about land management through hands-on experience, and that farmers were actively involved in caring for their land. With support from the Sydney Myer Fund and other philanthropic organisations, the WBLPG employed another member full-time to run the Warrenbayne Boho Rural Urban Program. Over six or seven years, this program drew thousands to the project area to experience, learn and leave, feeling that they had assisted landholders with tree planting, fencing and other activities.

Before the patron saint of community participation, Joan Kirner, Victorian Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, launched the LandCare program, other self-help land management groups in the region began, notably Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group, Sheep Pen Creek Land Management Group and Swanpool and Districts Land Protection Group. The movement surged across Victoria, was grabbed by Prime Minister Bob Hawke, and now has become truly international, a development in which WBLPG members feel privileged to have played a part.

Warrenbayne Boho landholders have maintained their impetus over the last twenty-five years, and records show that over one hundred people have served on the management committee in that time, a testimony to genuine community ownership.

Congratulations Landcare!

## Forests Commission nurseries

### Tony Manderson, Bill Middleton OAM and Hans Kosmer

If someone asked, 'What institution underpinned today's Landcare?' it would have to be the nursery system run by the Forests Commission since the early 1900s, but more particularly Wail nursery outside Dimboola. Whilst Creswick and Macedon grew stock for plantation establishment and general planting over many years, the posting of Alf Gray from Macedon to Wail in 1946, apparently to get him well away from anywhere due to some indiscretion long forgotten, led him to set up the nursery in 1947. Alf was a keen plantsman who introduced a host of trees and shrubs from all over Australia for propagation and planting out on farms in SA, NSW and Victoria. He liaised closely with Jim Willis at the Melbourne Herbarium, Government botanist Charles Gardiner in Perth and many others. He also established an arboretum around the nursery, which was well known by the early 1950s and still flourishes under the stewardship of an active Friends group. Farmers and others were able to wander through the grounds and select the plants they wanted for their properties.

Alf Gray retired in the early 1950s, replaced by Trevor Arthur and then Bill Middleton – both returned servicemen who understood the wider world. They promoted the nursery and its extension service in a professional manner, which made Wail famous. An extensive herbarium, an excellent library and state-of-the-art seed store were also established. Bill arrived at Wail in 1959 with a passion, borne out of his childhood in Nhill, for plants, birds and natural history. He was dismayed that much of the remnant woodland on private land and roadsides had disappeared throughout the Wimmera, and further afield, and was delighted to be given a mandate to run the nursery. Part of Bill's program was an extension campaign designed to increase community and government respect for the value of remnant vegetation in the landscape. For the next twenty-five years Bill worked from the nursery and Horsham taking every opportunity to talk to people. He delivered nearly 800 talks, made over 350 broadcasts on radio and was involved in TV and conferences – all to spread the word.

This was backed up by the annual and ever-increasing production at Wail of healthy plants suitable for the drier country, working in conjunction with

Creswick and Macedon to supply plants more suited to land south of the Divide. These nurseries, and the people that worked in them, had a passion for trees and shrubs and would do almost anything to get more trees into the landscape. They did not just grow 'trees native to the area,' because the community in those days often saw local trees as a problem, but were prepared to plant other species more readily. This was a key step in gaining community interest in tree planting, when many farmers were concentrating on clearing, and an important step in getting where we are today. Bill's work and his contacts became a key link in the development of the Garden State Committee, Potter Farmland Plan and, subsequently, Landcare.

The FCV nurseries were not limited to Wail, Macedon and Creswick. There had been many nursery sites prior to the 1939-45 War, Broadford and Koondrook to name just two, but the post-war period and the nurseries of the era, were pivotal in developing the Landcare ethic. Mildura nursery, small until 1971, was upgraded to help with the demand for trees in north western Victoria, and came under Wail's technical direction for some years. These four nurseries would supply plants all over Victoria, often by rail, at a time when there were virtually no private nurseries growing farm plants, which is certainly not the case today.

They all went through major organisational changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, following the amalgamation of the old authorities into CFL by the Cain government in 1982-83. The *Vicflora* concept to promote them as an integrated business to farmers and tree planting groups, complete with stock lists and planting guides, came and went in the late 1980s. This was due to the parochialism of the regional administrations that managed the nurseries, and the financial goals of the time. They fell into various stages of disintegration. Some survive today as sheltered workshops or small businesses still providing plants to the community.

The pine nurseries at Rennick, Trentham and Benalla, apart from producing the state's requirements for its own plantations, sold large numbers of trees to farmers and others to provide shelterbelts and farm forests long before the term became popularly used. Nurseries had also been established in conjunction with the prisons at Won Wron (near Yarram) and Morwell River (near Mirboo North), primarily to grow plants for reforestation work with eucalypts in the Strzeleckis following significant federal funding in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both are now closed, but they also became focal points in their latter years for farm tree production for local communities.

The Trentham and Benalla nurseries closed as open-rooted pine nurseries around fifteen years ago, due to the need to embrace new technology for vegetative reproduction to capture the latest genetic gains from research, and the

unsuitability of their soils and climates for this program. Benalla reinvented itself to produce farm-tree seedlings for the North East for some years. A new nursery at Gelliondale near Yarram, developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s on friable peaty soils suitable for cuttings production, essentially replaced them and supplied open-rooted stock to farmers and farm foresters for some years. Arguably the best open-rooted plantation nursery in Australia, it is now owned and operated by Hancock Victorian Plantations.

The system, developed by the Forests Commission and continued by the amalgamated department until the mid 1990s, stood out as uniquely innovative. It brought expertise from all related fields together, not only to produce plants that met their customer's expectations, but to develop practical ways to distribute information. The 'forest extension nurseries' sought, by extending the planting of trees from the forest to the farms and roadsides, through a combination of plant production, delivery, information, planting guides and stock-lists, underpinned the efforts of rural tree planters. These nurseries were not only successful in these terms, but also successful financially within the constraints of a government system.

The people behind the nurseries were passionate about their products. They not only sought to extend their advice, but continued to develop better ways to produce and market their products. To name a few innovations, plant quality was developed to meet the end use, including appropriate containers and delivery systems, with the 'forestry pot' being developed in the late 1970s to match soil volumes, plant development and nursery handling systems.

Other innovations were:

- genetic selection to meet customer needs
- research working groups that brought together the best scientific knowledge of the time in nutrition, pathology, horticulture and many other disciplines
- financial and operational recording systems
- growing schedules and systems, particularly for plants to be raised in 'off' seasons
- development of potting mixes for landcare needs
- development of the 'tree seedling with care' system to ensure the best field performance of nursery stock
- development of planting and aftercare systems

There is no doubt that the Landcare movement would have been hamstrung without the government nursery system that was able to supply large quantities of quality plants at a reasonable price throughout rural Victoria and beyond.

## NRM and local government

### Pam Robinson OAM

At the 1987 Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) conference plenary session, a group of local government representatives, who had attended the *Salt Force* Community Salinity Conference at Bendigo on the previous two days, warned those 300 councillors present of the growing threat of salinity and called for it to be made a priority issue.

Rob Barfus, then Chief Executive of the MAV with a firm voice and definite look of 'Don't get this wrong,' had said, 'Okay, you have five minutes, and only five, to get your message across!' We understood completely the parameters, what we wanted to do and I was delegated spokesperson! At about the 4.5 minute stage of the presentation – with my enthusiasm and passion for the subject rising – I asked for a Salinity Committee or Working Party to be set up within the MAV, stating 'salinity was the single greatest threat facing the Victorian environment.'

The matter was put to the delegates and the hoped-for outcome was achieved. It happened as a result of Rob Barfus making a good judgement; through the MAV president accommodating our request to speak, and through the enthusiasm the Bendigo Conference had generated. The conference had convinced us of the need for greater involvement by local government statewide in salinity.

The timely MAV conference was the 'window of opportunity' at which to convey the urgency of the message. In one week two major state conferences had been connected, and the capacity building had begun in earnest. The result was excellent support for the notion that salinity was an emerging issue for Victorian local government. All at the conference had understood the urgency – rural and metropolitan delegates alike.

The MAV set up a Salinity Working Party, underlining its support by appointing Jan Salmon, an MAV planner, to work closely with the small but committed councillor 'salinity sentinels!' A close relationship was established within the Working Party; the members included Clem Hill, (Waranga), Lynn Murrell, (Portland), Ron Harvey (Yarram) and me. All the members brought extensive on-ground intelligence to the meetings through being familiar with the issues in their parts of Victoria.

It soon became clear that there was a lack of information about the views

of local government, so the MAV applied for and gained a Community Salinity Grant from CFL to undertake a survey of municipalities and their perceptions of salinity. Consultant Rosemary Dargaville was engaged and, along with salinity specialists Danny O'Neill, Terry White and Viv McWaters, contributed to the Working Party, the survey and the final report.

The survey replicated, in part, a study carried out in 1984 by the Victorian Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Salinity and Northern Victoria Water Allocation. Our MAV survey also aimed to look at councils' perceptions of their capacity to undertake salinity control measures and constraints limiting their involvement in salinity control; 132 municipalities responded, of the 160 sampled.

### The extent and significance of salinity

Measuring salinity was found to be extremely subjective - coloured by personal opinion and attitudes. It was also felt that the answers varied because, in some cases, the survey was answered by individual officers, while in others, it was referred to a meeting of council or a subcommittee.

The 1984 survey found that 42 percent of municipalities believed that at least one aspect of salinity was a 'significant problem.' The MAV survey found that a similar proportion of municipalities believed that salinity was a 'significant problem.' By asking a follow-up question the MAV survey found that an additional 30 municipalities reported having a 'minor salinity' problem, making a total of 86 salt-affected municipalities.

Another interesting aspect was that landholders had sought assistance from 29 municipalities, which suggested that the community was ahead in its salinity thinking and actions. Almost all examples of assistance given were of an 'in kind' nature including fencing, provision and planting of trees; support, political action, planning and funding applications; drainage and providing bores; surveys, information and referrals to other government organisations, such as CFL.

Several municipalities made suggestions regarding incentives and controls, especially those that were already dealing with salinity and had councillors and landholders familiar with the topic, and who were involved with works on the ground.

Good examples of the important role local government plays in natural resources management have increased steadily from the mid 1980s; through individual municipalities being more and more active, often through good liaison with CMAs and Landcare groups. Also a wide range of NRM issues is

constantly discussed within local government organisations and many local government delegates, councillors and officers serve on regional and state decision-making bodies. Moreover the various local government professional bodies (for planners, engineers, managers and so on) have become involved in NRM issues.

The Victorian branch of the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) had presentations on salinity at two of its conferences. At Mildura in 1989, Phil Dyson, hydrologist with CFL, was an inspiring speaker; for many delegates it was their first exposure to the issue.

In 1991 the MAV was invited by the Victorian Government to appoint a delegate to the Victorian Steering Committee of The Decade of Landcare Plan – to be launched by the Premier in February 1992.

The National Landcare Advisory Committee (NLAC) increased local government involvement by recommending in 1994 that funding through the NLP (national component) be made available for an NRM Facilitator to be placed within the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). Rob Thorman was appointed and worked with all state associations of local government and also directly with local councils on a wide range of environmental issues. He also worked closely with NLAC and assisted ALGA to coordinate a number of regional environmental strategies based on regional groupings of councils.

## Local government and Landcare

The community, local government and government agencies need to continue to develop partnerships supporting our natural environment. There are so many ways to actively participate to improve the health and quality of our land, water and air. Local government and Landcare have the ability to include all age groups within the community and can play an increasingly important role in areas such as:

- Direct assistance to Landcare groups (including administrative support and use of machinery)
- Strategic planning - within councils and on a regional basis. Zoning can be used to protect prime agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas and waterways
- Rating policy
- Roadside management and associated remnant vegetation, identification of species and so on
- Development controls
- Managing open space areas

- Infrastructure provision - roads, water supply, sewerage systems
- Community education - waste management, caring for coasts, rabbit and weed eradication programs and so on

Local government is part of everyone's address. The relationships for a whole-of-community NRM effort are always there – however, we must remember they need to be continually encouraged, nurtured, respected and never taken for granted.

### REFERENCE

MAV (1989) Local Action – Salinity – An Emerging Issue for Victorian Local Government

## Landcare – it’s not just about the land

### Nan Oates OAM

Landcare! What a wealth of memories this simple word revives for me. 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 and just men, women and children 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.

The emergence of Landcare in Victoria in 1986 was a timely and fortuitous outcome of a number of political and subsequent bureaucratic changes occurring in Victoria. These developments proved a fertile ground for improving our approach to dealing with the range of land protection issues facing the state.

For what was possibly the first time, landholders worked together with a number of government agencies in researching, developing, trialling, implementing and resourcing a multifaceted approach to dealing with land and water use issues. These issues included soil erosion, declining water quality, dryland and irrigation salinity, pest plants and animals, and better pasture and crop management.

### A number of factors set the stage for Landcare

Firstly, the recognition that land and water protection issues needed a broader regional and catchment-based approach because the scale of the problems was too large to be tackled by individual landholders. This was evidenced by the successful catchment-based approaches on soil conservation undertaken by the former Soil Conservation Authority in cooperation with farmers.

Secondly, the formation of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, which combined in a single department the former government agencies responsible for the management of forests, lands, fisheries and wildlife, national parks, soil conservation, and vermin and noxious weeds. This re-

organisation brought together staff from a range of disciplines having a comprehensive regional base, in addition to extensive extension experience in dealing with private landholders.

Finally, the commitment to the program by two women with long experience in dealing with people from all walks of life – Joan Kirner as the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, and Heather Mitchell as President of the Victorian Farmers Federation. Together these two women provided the momentum and support to take Landcare throughout Victoria.

### Why was Landcare so successful?

Landcare fostered an informal group approach whereby local groups of landholders identified their issues and set their own targets with advice and in-kind support from the appropriate departmental staff. Landholders were thus directly involved in planning, financing and implementation of works and accepted responsibility for on-going management and maintenance.

This process created a strong synergy between the landholders themselves and the departmental staff working with them. It effectively created a myriad of research and trial programs throughout the state and provided a wealth of opportunities to try a range of ‘best bet’ approaches. This was a two-way flow and the inputs from landholders’ traditional innovation and ingenuity was of tremendous value.

It was an exciting time to be involved in Landcare. The early years with groups developing all over Victoria celebrating their formation with visits from Joan and Heather, the Landcare conferences in different regional areas bringing together hundreds of like-minded individuals and creating a wonderful Landcare network throughout the state. One bonus for many of us as we drove all over the state attending Landcare launches and conferences was the development of a comprehensive list of which country towns had the best coffee, cakes, and bakery!

### The benefits

Over the last twenty years Landcare has involved thousands of Victorians from all walks of life – from enormous landholdings in the Mallee, to farm-hobbyists and small groups of outer urban conservation groups working to restore areas of degraded public land in their own localities. Looking back these are just some of the positives that come to mind:

- Opportunities for more rural women and children to contribute to better

- land and water management whether singly, in a group or as a family
- Opportunities for some of the higher educated second generation to become involved in new trials and techniques for both land and water management
  - The building of strong farming and rural lobby groups and the restoration or creation of cooperative and social networks. These networks were often utilised beyond Landcare activities, for example, in the event of natural disasters such as floods or fires or personal hardship there was an existing support network to call on
  - Helping provide many rural communities with a more positive outlook in the face of rural economic and social decline, and this in turn helped rebuild social capital and support
  - Injecting new life into regional and rural communities with the development of complementary education programs at all levels, including local government and agencies such as Greening Australia and Conservation Volunteers Australia. Some examples are WaterWatch, SaltWatch, WeedWatch, Coast Care, whole farm planning, indigenous seed collecting, local indigenous nurseries, innovative tree planting techniques such as specialised planting machinery and tree guards, which have generated a whole new industry
  - New technologies have developed in farm planning, fencing, pasture and crop management, native grasses, minimum tillage, habitat corridors and agroforestry
  - Local government has become involved in resourcing groups with in-kind assistance such as hire of equipment, provision of chemicals and short courses
  - Small local Friends groups have developed to care for degraded areas of public land
  - Especially significant for me was the utilisation of the Landcare model by the Country Fire Authority to develop its highly successful Community Fireguard program. Since its inception in 1993, the program has resulted in many hundreds of neighbourhood groups living in bushfire-prone areas accepting more of the responsibility for their own safety and property protection in dealing with the threat of bushfires

Looking back on two decades of Landcare, and acknowledging that I have not been actively involved in the program for some ten years, apart from membership of three existing local groups, the following observations come to mind.

Landcare groups need not go on forever to be deemed successful. Many

groups can appear to have fallen by the wayside but they may well have achieved what they set out to do, or else there has been natural attrition through changes in local land ownership and demography.

While many groups may not be active any more, the bonds of friendship and support forged still remain and continue to contribute to local communities in a number of ways. These include the development of skills in effective lobbying and publicity, applying for government grants, and better cooperation and communication with each other, as well as different agencies.

There has been a real sea change in awareness of how important it is to manage our land and water resources for the longer term and future generations. I do believe that the development of Landcare played a vital role in this growth of awareness. The ubiquitous lines of plastic tree guards throughout our urban and rural landscapes are surely testament to this.

### Some concerns

During the early days of Landcare, and particularly in light of its increasing popularity, there were some internal pressures regarding the departmental 'ownership' of Landcare, especially in relation to departmental funding to resource the movement. Concern was also expressed over the increased demand from some groups or networks to have a paid coordinator just to handle the administrative demands of applying for grants and managing programs on the ground. Would this lead to a dependence on a paid coordinator to keep a group going?

A more immediate concern is the changed organisational dynamics of government agencies since the days of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. The original departmental structure in which Landcare originated is almost unrecognisable today, especially for someone out of the loop so long. In addition there now appears to be a plethora of funding opportunities from a whole range of agencies at state, federal and local level, which has added another layer of bureaucracy to the running of a Landcare group

Finally, because of the natural attrition of staff with a depth of experience in field extension services in a range of disciplines, we are at risk of losing their accumulated years of experience and knowledge of the history of land use and of Victoria's natural land and water systems. It also appears that many departmental staff and services are more centralised.

In addressing these concerns we need to return to the reasons why the Landcare program was developed and its overriding philosophy.

Landcare worked because it gave landholders ownership of what they did. Landcare groups were able to set the agenda for Landcare works, rather

than just do what they were told to by the agencies. Landholders were involved in all stages of planning and implementation and on-going management, and so had a strong stake in the outcomes. This philosophy will work, regardless of which agency provides the resources. What the agencies provide is the best knowledge and information available at the time so that landholders can choose the strategies that best suit their circumstances at the time.

I feel privileged to have been a part of Landcare during its early years and I do believe the program is still as relevant, if not more so, as it was twenty years ago. Since then there have been major advances in technology and the flow of information. The advent of the Internet has facilitated the faster transfer of information and communications generally.

However, we must never forget that the cornerstone of Landcare is the people involved – hence the title of this short essay.

Catching up with the many friends I have made in Landcare at various local field days and activities is one of the most enjoyable aspects of Landcare, and of retirement!

And best of all, I am still learning.

## Farm Advance and Landcare

### Ted Gretgrix

Farm Advance was a unique organisation, set up in the late 1980s in North Central Victoria to tackle some major regional problems which were not being addressed by existing Government and industry programs.

The 1980s were difficult for farmers throughout Australia, and farmers in our region had it no easier than the rest. Besides low commodity prices and the worst drought on record, there was the looming problem of land degradation. Dryland salinity was becoming more severe, rabbits were increasing in numbers and the structure and fertility of the cropping soils were steadily declining.

In response, a group of farmers looked for alternative ways of tackling these issues. They wanted to see the land degradation problems addressed, but they also wanted farm productivity improved. Looking at existing programs to deal with land degradation and productivity, these farmers saw three major problems.

Firstly, there was no local agricultural research institute addressing the specific problems facing the mixed farming enterprises that characterise our region.

Secondly, the existing land degradation programs focussed on solving the problems, without taking into account the productivity implications.

Finally, existing government extension programs deliberately targeted the more progressive farmers, which left the majority of producers to find out things for themselves.

A steering committee was established and, using funding from the National Australia Bank and the HV McKay Philanthropic Trust, a study was carried out to find the best solution to overcome these problems. The key findings were:

- The North Central region needed a fresh approach to solving its problems.
- Farmers were very concerned about their viability and land degradation. However they could not solve the degradation problems unless they were making a profit.
- Farmers wanted to be involved, and indeed must be involved, in deciding what research needed to be carried out.

- The problems of farm viability and sustainability had to be dealt with together. This meant that the Departments of Conservation, Forests and Lands (CFL) and Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA) had to work closely together.
- Extension officers should no longer simply target innovative farmers and assume the message will pass on to other farmers. Very often this did not work.
- Farmer groups were very effective at helping farmers help each other. They encouraged farmers to share ideas and generated a team spirit that had led to excellent results in the past.
- Demonstration farms were important for showing farmers what can be done. However, farmers must be closely involved with running these farms to get the maximum benefits from them.

The result of this study was the establishment of Farm Advance. There was considerable debate amongst the steering committee at the time about what to call the movement. 'Landcare' was just getting under way; in fact the very first Landcare group was established in 1986 at Winjallock, which is in our region, and branding the group as Landcare was certainly considered. In the end, because the committee wanted to highlight the broader approach of conservation and farm viability, the name Farm Advance was chosen, but there was no doubt that raising the awareness of land degradation and doing something about it was at the top of the agenda.

The management committee comprised six farmers, an agribusiness executive, and representatives of the two agencies, CFL and DARA. The National Soil Conservation Program (NSCP) provided funding of more than \$1 million dollars over four years in late 1990, and a project leader and five coordinators were appointed to set up and manage local groups and initiate local projects. Another coordinator, specifically appointed to address the needs of farm women, was appointed soon after.

Over the next two years or so, 33 groups were established within the Campaspe, Loddon and Avoca river catchments, from Kyneton to Natte Yallock to Charlton to Quambatook to Colbinnabbin, all actively involved in the program. In late 1992, a random survey of Farm Advance members indicated the program was affecting a very wide cross-section of the farming community. Some 83 percent of respondents reported changes to significant practices on their farms as a direct result of their participation in a Farm Advance group.

Although other funding was received from different sources over the years, the core NSCP funding for Farm Advance was not renewed and the

program wound down in 1997. A number of the groups involved in the program decided to continue to operate. They were the ones that had a very strong community base and a membership of highly motivated landholders. Some became Landcare groups so as to access funding for specific problems through the National Heritage Trust. Some groups gradually dissolved because they did not have a coordinator to maintain contact and help them continue to focus on the learning processes they had embraced. Other groups moved to other programs, such as Birchip Cropping Group and Bestwool.

The North Central region still enjoys the benefits of the better farming practices and improved land management that Farm Advance promoted and will continue to do so for generations.

## The Landcare experience is everywhere

### Pam Robinson OAM

Landcare is everywhere we are. Landcare is available to us all. The combination of belonging and participating in a stimulating practical community group provides all of us with an extra richness in our lives. For many, Landcare has been the beginning of building confidence in an enlivened way and provided the way forward to contribute with many and varied interests.

I have been asked to write about Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group Inc; an early Landcare group in Victoria that formalised in 1983, after two years of thought and discussion between Angus Howell, my great friend and neighbouring farmer of those days, Jim Wood and others from the Benalla SCA office, and myself.

We were starting to notice changes to our land – bare patches of ground that my late father-in-law Stan referred to as ‘sour little bits of dirt’ – land that would not heal over, land that no amount of hay thrown on it would strike new grass from the seed, land that the sheep seemed to favour to lick and roll in, land that was breaking up and land that had some dead trees – trees that were not dying from old age.

As I look over the vast array of papers, minutes, submissions, media reports and photographs that I have kept as a personal history of the 1980-2006 period – kept in ringback folders for my pleasure – and which have a pride of place in my office, they make for interesting remembrances and in some cases, of times temporarily forgotten. The collection brings forward many names – so many names of good people who really ‘put in,’ people whom I won’t be able to mention in this small article – and faces, some of whom are now gone and others who went on to very major political, professional and community positions. There are any amount of progressive dates I could report showing our group’s incremental development and what was achieved by individuals and group members generally, but it would only serve to make for mechanical reading – and be a tad boring.

Instead, for this retrospective, to set the scene, I will just give a brief history of the project area of Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group Inc and what problems we had, what we wished to do, some of what we got involved in, in the wider arena and then address the even more interesting questions.

What was it really that made us both as individuals and as a very active group, so willing to put in so much time, expend so much enthusiasm and keep going on with our commitment? Why was it that we wanted to be so busy in our district with our neighbours and with our land, and why was it that we were willing to turn up anywhere any time we were asked and share what we could with others? Why is Landcare still important; what do we need to remember and what do we need to forget?

### WBLPG development and action

Before we actually officially became the WBLPG, Angus and I continued meeting various SCA officers – we were committed to doing on-ground works – not sure what but something! We could apply for Conservation Project status and we started stimulating discussions with soil conservationist Darrel Brewin, hot to trot with his new extension ideas. The Angus-Darrel-Pam trio was a big part of what made things accelerate, with great synergy – AND it was fun. We also shared a clear, respectful, inclusive view of our community and, whilst we ran ahead when opportunities emerged, we understood the bottom line– working together and sharing is the essence of effective and productive community development.

### WBLPG gets going

In August 1982, the SCA received a written request from six landholders seeking the formation of a Group Conservation Area in the Warrenbayne Boho area (Shires of Benalla and Violet Town). We were part of a group of about 180 landholders in an area of 25 000 hectares. The main concerns were serious soil erosion and dryland salinity. In February 1983 the Goulburn-Ovens Soil Conservation District Advisory Committee convened a public meeting at Warrenbayne chaired by Tony Plowman. The landholders supported the formation of a conservation project and elected a District Advisory Committee (DAC) Local Committee: Cr Pam Robinson, Cr Jack Heywood, Angus Howell, Col Davies, Kerry Davis and Neil Smith. This was the first Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group committee, and was the beginning of my ten years as chairman. Later Angus, through NSCP funding, became full-time coordinator. In July 1984, 76 people attended a second meeting, endorsing the Conservation Project. Subsequently a major community works program commenced in 1985.

I write the next piece breathlessly as it gives a sense of how it was in our lives at that time! We were off and running from 1983 and we were starting

to develop ideas, undertake farm walks; beginning a new era in the district and reinvigorating the local hall, which hummed with meetings and activity. We got ute-loads of trees and were planting, planting, planting! We contacted all sorts of people who had influence. We wrote submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Salinity, and to the NSCP looking for Community Support funding. We were invited to the Meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers – Resource Management Murray River Basin in Adelaide (1985) as community curios – that’s where the then Minister of Conservation, Forests and Lands, Joan Kirner, gave a commitment to community action in Victoria. We wrote papers on *The Effectiveness of Small Group Development* and *The Role of Local Government – A Model for Action*. We did exciting things like presenting papers and giving advice, attending meetings with agency people and ministers. We felt worthwhile when we registered papers with the National Library. We were invited to workshops at Dookie and Bendigo with papers called *How to Get the Message Across* and *Why it must be a Community Effort*.

We enjoyed encouraging new neighbour groups such as the Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group Inc, which Geoff McFarlane and Bill Willett formed in 1987, and later both groups made a submission to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet in 1988. We applied to the Sydney Myer Fund and got funding to employ group member and former school teacher, Kerrie Wilson, as a rural urban education officer, as we were now hosting schools and providing education and project opportunities for primary through to tertiary students.

Horrie Poussard of DCFI trusted me with writing some of the basic information for the Landcare Kit – *Group Development and Group Action*. The NSCP funded a video on our activities and I had the daunting and wonderful opportunity to manage the project, script and edit it with professional video film people. *Landholder Group Participation – A Model for Action* sold 260 copies nationally and internationally.

New Zealand’s MAF and Hawkes Bay Regional Council engaged Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group in 1992 as consultants, and Angus Howell and I went to discuss and develop a Landcare Ethic for NZ. We wrote on and on: *Ownership of the Project – What does it Mean? How to start Groups and Keep them Going*. We moved on with our learning and embraced new facts and information – we adjusted our plans. We learnt so much more about our land and our district and how we all need each other if NRM is to bring bigger benefits regionally and nationally. We took risks and we got rewards.

Phew! Many days and nights were spent in these pursuits – all the time

keeping up with our ‘hands on’ works on the ground, and other commitments both at home and in the community. We were achieving a lot and basically in the early days we knew we were onto something good – how good, we probably didn’t completely know, but it was exciting, full of opportunity and well worth turning up for! We met people from around Australia and the world who called by, we shared our ideas and we gleaned a lot of information from others. We had all ages coming through and the visitors included ministers, government people, professionals, NGOs, students, scientists – and the curious.

So what really made us as individuals and as a very active group so willing to put in so much time, expend so much enthusiasm and keep going on with our commitment?

## Analysis

The 1980s was a decade of renewed excitement politically – community was ‘in.’ There was tremendous support for those that suggested solutions and gave ideas rather than repeating the problems and suggesting ‘they’ (usually governments) needed to do something! This was a time about partnerships and taking responsibility; it was a time when community had a voice and was welcomed into arenas not previously accessible. It was a time of exciting change, a time of increasing harmony, a ‘can do’ and ‘will do’ spirit.

Why were we so busy in our district with our neighbours and with our land, and why we were willing to turn up anywhere, any time we were asked and share what we could with others? Because this was new – looking beyond our properties and seeing the relationship of each place to the other. It was refreshing to be more closely linked again in our community through this very satisfying program of tree planting, pasture improvement, water monitoring, better stock management, new fencing and cheerful meetings. Many of the previous organisations had died away and the local hall took on a new springtime atmosphere, where it had been clad in winter garb for so long. We worked hard with our ideas, weren’t shy in promoting our thinking and were flattered by the attention and opportunities given. People turned up again and again for each other in the district and brainstorming ideas was a most productive part of our development. We saw incremental changes to the landscape that were pleasing; we could laugh a bit at and with ourselves, our characters and our ways. We worked our way through the tough moments and held firm to ideals and ways that worked for us. Many of us gained the tools and courage to take on leadership roles elsewhere and continued with strengthening our communities. Many dreams and thoughts

of growing trees for profit, of growing grapes and running bed and breakfast businesses, have been developed by some of the landholders; and many of our children went on to have careers that were whetted through their growing up in Landcare. The group continues today with an additional focus of caring for endangered species of plants and animals, especially birds.

So Landcare is still important. What do we need to remember and what should we forget? Landcare continues to be a very unifying way of working together. It has all the potential to grow and grow and to be the acme of community development through partnerships and inclusiveness, while achieving so much improvement of our environment. Within rural and urban communities there is still a lot of work to be done with all aspects of land, water and air, and we need to encourage the new and younger participants.

Through those owning land, and with all the people moving on with a 'sea-change' or 'tree-change' – those who have a keen volunteering capacity, Landcare provides a way for people to harness again for themselves, the land and their community. Great talents and diversity are available to help achieve so much good. Landcare is a terrific opportunity to have fun, share talents and diversity and to get even more accelerated works achieved while gaining stronger communities.

We need to remember community in whatever programs are being developed – people are always the way forward – to ignore this and lose people who can feel that things are disappearing out of their hands through a top-heavy bureaucratic and excluding style, is to risk losing the very essence of what has made Landcare work.

Landholders and volunteers are keen to continue with fun ways to participate socially, environmentally and economically. It is essential that the operating principles and processes for success have firmly in the centre – people – us – community.

*What do we need to forget? Not much – maybe just that it doesn't matter really 'who was the first group' – its what we all have done collectively and what is still to be done together!*

Finally – Landcare has been a highlight of my life. I have made so many friends, learnt so much, been alongside so many good people, felt I have contributed and have been afforded so many opportunities both in the rural and urban environments.

Moving from the farm to live in Melbourne I have found out it is true – no matter where you travel, anywhere and anytime you can do some 'hands on' and have fun through Landcare.

## Recollections of Project Hindmarsh

### Darryl Argall

Project Hindmarsh evolved from the small West Wimmera Tree Group, ably led by the late John Oldfield. The group had received a modest grant to study the roadside vegetation from the Wimmera River in the east, westwards to the South Australia border, with the Big and Little Deserts forming the northern and southern boundaries. It employed an environmental scientist, Rob Scalzo, to do work over eighteen months, starting in 1995. Scalzo and his trusty Combi van ranged along back roads collecting data, which was to form the basis of the Hindmarsh Biolinks and lead our shire into environmental awareness.

I was elected inaugural Mayor of Hindmarsh Shire on 15 March 1997, after Jeff Kennett forced amalgamations across Victoria. In our case the former Dimboola and Lowan Shires made up the new Hindmarsh Shire: 7500 square kilometres with only 6500 people. Some 97 percent of our land had been cleared for broadacre farming. With boomsprays 30 metres wide, even individual trees were under threat.

Scalzo's data showed that, of the three percent under native vegetation, most was on roadsides, especially the old three-chain (60 metre) and two-chain (40 metre) roads designed as stock routes, but was often in pristine condition with many rare and endangered species. His study also identified noxious weeds and pest animal habitat, and found that, if 100 kilometres of strategic gaps were revegetated, there would be a continuous 2000 kilometre long regional 'biolink' formed, linking the Big and Little Deserts for the first time in over 100 years, a project of national significance.

The five or six members at the West Wimmera Tree Group meeting were very impressed with Scalzo's report and thought that if they revegetated two or three kilometre annually they would get the job done in 30-40 years. Whilst not much of a 'greenie,' I could see the opportunities for the Shire to become involved and get the job done a lot sooner. I sought support from the engineer, John Partington, and the other councillors, and we decided to try and do it in four or five years. The Shire would help seek sponsorship and provide equipment for site preparation and watering.

To revegetate we needed trees, we needed to spray, rip and prepare the

various sites, collect locally sourced seed, find some sponsors and then form partnerships to get people along to help plant.

In July of 1997, Ron Dodds (West Wimmera Tree Group and Greening Australia), Max Skeen (Department of Natural Resources and Environment and now Wimmera Catchment Management Authority) and I organised a meeting of all Landcare groups to find out what everyone was doing and ask was there a better way of doing it.

We found that all groups were trying to obtain funds to buy bait-layers, rippers, fumigators, sprayers and so on to get rid of pest plants and animals. There was little communication between the groups and they were all fed up with the paperwork. They decided their top priority was to lobby government to fund a Landcare facilitator to take the pressure off the volunteer secretary-treasurers of these sixteen or so groups.

I lobbied the then Minister for Environment, Marie Teehan, and managed to get funding for six months, plus a further twelve months funding if all went well. Greg Barber was appointed and took to the job like a duck to water, organising several meetings where the Landcare network and Shire met government and non-government agencies and drew up a strategic plan that highlighted four key areas: Hindmarsh Biolinks; Enhancing the Biolinks; Sheltering Fragile Soils; and the River and Lakes. Of the sub committees formed, the most active was the biolink group.

Ron Dodds had four weeks to bid for NHT funding that had just become available. Our initial bid failed so we concentrated on getting the right data for another attempt in 1998, which was successful.

With no funding and trees ordered for 1997, Rob Youl of Landcare Australia and I launched a major effort to attract funding. Rob and I approached Clipsal, Aveda Cosmetics and Coles Myer. We were successful in selling our project, and also I met the owners of ACE Radio 3WM, Geoff & Helen Handbury. After a presentation to them and the CEO of Vicroads, Colin Jordan, we had over \$70 000 to pay for the preparation, plants and people for the first year.

During this funding drive, Rob Youl introduced me to John Stirling, editor of the Victorian National Parks Association's *Parkwatch* magazine. John offered to put the Biolink story in his magazine and to recruit people to our first planting weekend, while Greg Barber was working with landowners and the Landcare network to attract locals. Two buses were hired to bring city folk from Melbourne, and six local buses to get people to the sites. Local groups and service clubs prepared the food; Little Desert Lodge was selected to accommodate visitors, because of its diverse facilities. Visitors, including

doctors, lawyers, accountants, retirees, students and many others, joined our locals to form a 300-strong band that planted over 20 000 trees on eighteen sites.

Year Two saw Ron Dodds and the Landcare network successfully attract grants for trees, seed collection, preparation, organisation and monitoring. This made life easy, as the project was organised to fit the dollars and, with our major sponsors ACE Radio 3WM and VicRoads staying on board, we were could offer volunteers and visitors a cost-free weekend.

Year Three centred on Kaniva to promote the project in the north of West Wimmera Shire. Over 400 people attended and organisers were stretched to the limit. Year Four saw the federal Minister for Environment, Senator Robert Hill, symbolically plant the one millionth tree and complete the Biolink project. Senator Hill was extremely impressed when shown the previous year's works using federal funds. Improved biodiversity, the involvement of local farmers, the metropolitan volunteers, the creation of jobs and the partnerships formed between government and non-government agencies were all major project priorities.

One hundred kilometres of gaps were filled, some with six and eight rows of trees. Direct seeding of riplines after Year One had seen hundreds of thousands of young seedlings coming to life. Despite some of the driest years on record, our monitoring shows a 75 percent success rate – and planting success is directly linked to good site preparation.

The concept of farmers fencing off bush remnants and linking them back to the roadsides was gaining momentum. The first year only seven farmers participated, but seven years late the tally was over 180 farmers participating in landcare projects. Salinity problems along the river trench have been tackled by planting of thousands of saltbush plants, some engineering interception works, and seaweed trials. Riparian vegetation works and control of weeds such as bridal creeper along the river have also productive.

Above all, Project Hindmarsh has led Victoria in terms of local government involvement in Landcare. The development of partnerships with Greening Australia (Project Hindmarsh manager), government departments, non-government organisations such as Trust for Nature, VNPA and Landcare Australia, and industry sponsors such as ACE Radio 3WM and VicRoads, along with Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, has saved much duplication, created many jobs and set a sound strategic direction to look after our environment for generations to come. The project has involved schools and people of all ages, who have come together to work and socialise for the benefit of the environment.

The birth of the Scalzo Plan, an AO size map showing the region, with overlays of pre-European settlement vegetation, identified gaps in corridors, pest plants and animals and rare and endangered species, was the catalyst for this magnificent project. The plan painted a bleak picture for future generations, if we did not lift our environmental awareness. The Council and its Landcare network have been recognised with two state environmental awards, as have some of our leaders. The Shire now has a roadside strategy that will ensure the biodiversity of this region will never be lost.

The following figures show the results of eight years of planning and implementing Project Hindmarsh:

	1998-2001	2002-2005	Total
Total seedlings, trees and shrubs planted	283 000	248 300	526 300
Total kms of direct seeding	947	1410	2 357
Total plants established by direct seeding	447 000	711 500	1 158 500
Total plants established	685 000	999 800	1 684 800
Kms of shelterbelts established	80	62	141
Total area ha protected or revegetated	1 133	1 091	2 124
Fencing constructed - km	137	148	285
Numbers attending planting events	1400	1090	2 510
Number of properties where works have taken place	116	158	274

I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all who have worked on the famous Project Hindmarsh.

## VNPA and Project Hindmarsh

### John Stirling

As a friend and vice-president of the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), Rob Youl, Landcare's project consultant invited me to early Project Hindmarsh planning meetings held in the shire offices in faraway Nhill throughout 1997. Rob believed that the nature conservation aspect of this project might well interest VNPA members.

As Project Hindmarsh planning was aimed as replicating, as closely as possible, the biodiversity existing prior to European settlement, the VNPA was most willing to canvass its members for assistance. As Rob had guessed, this practical activity meshed well with the VNPA's Vision: 'We share a vision of Victoria as a place with a diverse, secure and healthy natural environment cared for and appreciated by all!. There was also the VNPA's major role in the struggle to save the Little Desert from land clearing in the late 1960s. Project Hindmarsh, with its aim to create a biolink between the Big and Little Deserts, was always likely to have special interest for the VNPA.

More than 100 members turned up to the first weekend planting held in August 1997. Because this weekend proved so successful, 'word of mouth' recommendation has seen similar numbers attending every year since. Many have participated every year and view the project as an important part of their yearly calendar.

Over the years, VNPA members have grown to appreciate, understand and respect rural life with all its struggles and opportunities. This has derived from our working together to enhance nature conservation. The generosity, acceptance, and friendship offered by the local community has won over the hearts of VNPA members: who could forget the wonderful 50th anniversary cake presented to the VNPA on Saturday evening in 2002!

Highlights of VNPA's involvement in Project Hindmarsh include:

- The doing
  - VNPA members working with the local community to restore biodiversity
  - Well over a million trees planted in nine years

- Our volunteers contributing labour over four years, the equivalent of a full-time worker for 52 weeks
  - Assisting with the overall planning of the project by means of comprehensive regular feedback
  - Through John Stirling, assisting with preparing the design of the evocative fencing-wire and city-country Project Hindmarsh logo
- City meeting Country
    - Appreciating the hospitality and friendship of the local community
    - Greater understanding of the beauty and character of the region
    - Developing skills and knowledge associated with restoring the biodiversity of the Hindmarsh Landcare region
  - The achievement
    - Enhancing nature corridors between national parks and other reserves
    - Extending buffers to national parks and corridors onto private land
    - A great sense of accomplishment in seeing the extent and the success of the planting achieved over the years
    - Tangible results in restoring degraded land
    - Making others aware of the nature conservation work of the VNPA

## Education for whole farm planning

### Margaret Jansen

As the Potter Farmland Project (PFP) was ending in the late 1980s, Glenormiston campus of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (VCAH) began running pilot courses in whole farm planning for farmers in western Victoria. They were an extension of its farm and dairy management courses, which had been running since Glenormiston's inception in the early 1970s. The pilot courses included visits to PFP farms and the involvement of agriculture and conservation departmental staff.

Keen to build on the momentum created by Landcare, Glenormiston gained an initial grant of \$100 000 over two years from the Victorian Education Foundation to develop a specific course in whole farm planning. The course was to be accredited by the State Training Board (STB), to be used by educational institutions state-wide. A further grant from the Commonwealth government helped farming couples participate in the courses by subsidising childcare.

Course development aimed to make the initial analysis of farm soils and physiography 'user-friendly' for course participants as against 'blinding them with science.' All farm plans were based on an aerial photograph of the farm. Using clear plastic overlays, three separate farm maps were drawn up, denoting the physical features, current layout and the ideal layout for the farm. The latter was designed to incorporate landcare principles, and counter the perception among some farmers that whole farm planning was merely putting in shelterbelts rather than a holistic approach to farm and land management.

The Soil Conservation Authority had carried out a similar approach to whole farm planning for some years. However, by 1988, CFL was providing broader training to farmers in Landcare groups, particularly in north east Victoria, in whole farm planning.

In the Glenormiston courses, specific farming enterprises were considered: irrigation, broad-acre cropping, grazing, dairying, horticulture, hobby farming and so on. The overall consideration was that of caring for the land - to use the words of one Potter Farmland participant: 'to work with nature, not against it.' A holistic approach required course participants to commit to paper their aims and aspirations for their farm's production, for their farm's environment and for themselves, no matter how trivial, how basic or how

seemingly beyond the realms of possibility they seemed. These documents were used as a basis for family discussions, which sometimes pointed to the need to address issues such as estate or succession planning.

Once the whole farm plan was drawn up, there was a session devoted to implementing the plan – prioritising works, budgeting and financial planning, availability of grants, taxation benefits for landcare work - with some form of realistic timetable.

After living with the plan for twelve months, there was a follow-up session at which course participants reported on progress, difficulties encountered and other relevant issues. Then each course participant who had met course requirements was presented with an appropriate certificate.

### Course delivery and outcomes

In our experience most landholders preferred to learn through informal exchange of information with their peers. The content for each course was developed in consultation with participants and local departmental staff. However, drawing up of the plan, the farm visits and implementation budgeting were non-negotiable. The remainder of the content was negotiated according to what the group perceived as the most pressing landcare needs of their particular area. Help was given in assisting course participants to order their aerial photographs and childcare subsidies enabled couples to attend. At the final session, twelve months later, it was not uncommon for class members to proudly announce: 'We've formed a Landcare group.'

From 1990-1997, some 1500 farmers prepared whole farm plans via the courses. Whole farm plans provided a means of looking at a farm in the context of landcare, in particular, catchment management. The number of Landcare groups increased in number, often because of the awareness generated by the holistic planning process and the back-up from government department advisors. From the late 1990s plans were placed in a catchment management context. With their whole farm plans in hand, farmers could now visit financial institutions and negotiate loans in a much more meaningful way.

While the Glenormiston course related to Victoria, other states were developing similar landcare planning strategies. New courses were developed for national accreditation. Integration of whole farm planning into other farm management courses became standard practice for educational institutions. The creation of Landcare in Victoria and the Potter Farmland Plan Project acted as catalysts in formalising landcare education which, arguably, dramatically changed the way farmers looked at the land management and, in many cases, their farming practices and enterprises.

## Landcare in the IT era

### Peter Jamieson

Without a broad, well understood and shared community commitment to our environment we will continue to have serious environmental problems. The principal challenge of Landcare has always been the establishment of this broad understanding and commitment to our environment. Science and government officials can enhance community participation in environmental repair and the culturing of more productive sustainable habitats - but only communities can achieve this remediation through participation. Information access and an acceptance of the capacity of people to make a difference, are not widespread. We need mechanisms to research and share information and methods of collective action to form the basis of successful landcaring.

Australians are inclined to expect government to undertake this environmental management role – and too often community involvement is seen as 'dangerous greenie activity' that may threaten 'our way of life.' The importance of Landcare is that it has developed a movement that places environmental responsibility back with the people - where it belongs. This movement started in rural communities where the connection to environmental factors is most apparent. However, it must be replicated in urban environments that have shaped our current rural and urban patterns – if they are to be sustainable. The imagination of thousands of people who intuitively understand the need for broad community participation in the management of natural systems and sustainable production has been fired by Landcare. Every one of these people has brought unique insights, skills, networks and resources to assist the amalgam - Landcare. Every individual contribution has become a part of the community participation process that Landcare exemplifies.

My family's contribution has been driven by the twin passions of believing community participation is required to define a well informed and shared future, and that we need to culture productive sustainable habitats to ameliorate our environmentally destructive behaviour.

My wife Chris, daughters Riccy and Nerida and I established a hazelnut and blueberry farm in Edi Upper based on sustainable farming principles. We were very active in the 'alternative farming' movement that blossomed in the early 1970s. Chris and I also shared a teaching job whereby in nightly pillow talk we determined who would do some exciting new development on the

farm the next day - and who would teach. We were also active in the establishment of the Edi Black Range Catchment Group and the Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group. I became a member of the Department of Agriculture's Ministerial Advisory Committee for the North East, and this provided an opportunity to represent the emerging 'clean and green' perspective.

Computer technology also started to explode into everyday use in businesses, public administration and schools during the mid 1970s. Information technology provided wonderful opportunities for shared learning, in and out of the classroom, and contributed to new community impetus for further co-operation. I approached officials from the Kirner government to see if they would provide me with the opportunity to research the implications of new online networks to increase community participation in the definition of sustainable futures. The result was a secondment to provide ministerial advice on new community initiatives made possible with the emergence of online community networks. The advantages of new information technologies to enhance Landcare soon became evident. After much research, development and community support we were able to establish North East Telecentre - one of Australia's first community online centres. Federal and State funding and community employment programs helped the Telecentre greatly. I was also appointed to the Premier's Taskforce for Multimedia, representing community online providers.

Through the North East Telecentre we established community online publishing facilities. We concentrated on environmental issues and technical training. Individual Landcare groups and networks were encouraged to publish their own websites and share their information online. Several projects were undertaken with government employees strongly committed to community-based Landcare. The webpage <http://www.netc.coop/environment> (Landcare Classics) developed out of this process.

The North East Telecentre also pioneered [www.landcare.net.au](http://www.landcare.net.au), which has since been taken over, with strong Victorian government support (see <http://northeast.landcarevic.net.au>). Landcare.net.au is now available for Landcare Australia to re-energise with a community-based national perspective.

Whilst Landcare online has been developing for over a decade, like Landcare itself, the community's work has only just begun.

## Landcare in review

### Patrick Francis

In looking at Landcare over the last twenty years, certain key points stand out to me. The Landcare movement is the most successful grassroots approach for restoring and repairing natural resources across farmland. However Landcare's success has also been its nemesis as governments hijack it to meet their responsibilities. The Natural Resources Management 'industry' has developed ostensibly to support the Landcare movement, but I believe that in reality it has 'parasitised' it. On-farm environmental programs are being run by a wide range of organisations: commodity groups (MLA, AWI, Horticulture Australia); farmer lobby groups (VFF, Ag Force); R&D corporations; CSIRO; catchment management authorities; and state government agencies - often more than one in each state, for example, DSE and DPI. The Landcare movement is impotent because it relies on government funding and regulations. Finally there is a failure to officially recognise landcare farmers and their produce, although many are embracing continuous, holistic improvement in natural resources.

On the future of Queensland's Dairying: Better N Better for Tomorrow program, farmer Peter Rohan commented in December 2005:

*One thing I would like to see the program include in the future is some sort of recognition for environmental performance. Awareness among the community of natural resource issues is increasing and therefore, we would like to see some recognition of the efforts we are making to sustain the natural resource base and environment on our farms.*

The Landcare movement on grazing farms has generally failed to effect holistic adoption, as evidenced by the annual summer-autumn and drought-year paddock degradation. Agricultural science's productivity-first approach continues to dominate grazing management, particularly in southern Australia. There is little effort to adapt grazing management to meet the challenge of climate change.

In a nutshell, what stands out is that despite twenty years of Landcare in Victoria, natural resources on farms are, in most situations, managed and resourced separately from the agricultural enterprise. Additionally, suppliers

of information, funding and research for natural resources are quite separate from those promoting productive agriculture.

This demarcation is the stand-out reason for excellent results when it comes to conservation on farms, such as through tree planting, remnant vegetation protection and riparian improvement, but a relatively small impact across productive land. As one of the founders of Landcare, Terry Simpson of Winjallock says,

*Ninety percent of Landcare publicity is about trees, birds and butterflies. At best tree planting is only going to cover ten percent of the landscape – but what about the other ninety?*

Despite the wisdom in messages since the 1980s from farmers like Terry Simpson and Bill Twigg of Bears Lagoon, there is an inability to see the holistic nature of agricultural land management. There is also general reluctance to recognise holistically managed farming ecosystems that have replaced native vegetation with introduced species, as sustainable and regenerative across all natural resource characteristics.

But there is a notable exception. The broader community has the perception that 'organic' farming is the only truly sustainable agricultural system. Holistic landcare farming should be, in the community's eyes, on this same pedestal.

## Regenerative farming practices

There are some exciting developments taking place in regenerative farming practice. They apply to management across the entire farm, and are not restricted to traditional landcare activities. As an example, a paper to the NSW Grasslands Society in July 2005 by CSIRO scientists, V Gupta, M Ryder and D Roget stated:

*Soil is one of our most precious non-renewable resources and the soil biota represents a large portion of the earth's biodiversity. Soil organisms regulate a majority of ecosystem processes in soil that are essential for plant growth, soil health and sustained productivity.*

*The efficient use of soil resources and inputs for pasture growth requires (a) synchronization of nutrient availability to plant demands, (b) lack of constraints (plant pathogens, chemical residues, hostile sub-soils) to plant growth, and (c) ability of the plant to recover from grazing. Plant-biota interactions have an important role in (a) and (b) and these are in turn heavily influenced by grazing management (linked to*

*the ability of a plant to recover, which depends on the intensity of grazing and is related to the seasonal conditions).*

The Landcare movement has less participation in grain-growing districts. But most farmers are keen observers of innovative practices which landcare farmers have gradually perfected. Most farmers have subsequently changed their approach and have adopted conservation farming practices. Long-term sustainability, new technology, plant genetics, herbicides and machinery have been of great assistance in achieving conservation farming. Also grain farmers have been prepared to undertake their own research and information transfer – for example, Birchip Cropping Group in Victoria.

## Extension messages

It is not difficult to understand what is going wrong with the delivery of sustainable farming messages, when you see the sorts of extension programs being delivered. Questions should be raised by all agencies about why such fundamental components of farm land management like sowing perennial pasture species, applying fertiliser and lime and soil testing continue as key objectives for extension. NHT funds are still being used for these sorts of projects. These topics have been on the agenda for the last 25 years if not longer. What is missing behind the fundamentals of owning farmland and education of farmers that allows this situation to continue? Do we expect that we need to keep reinventing the wheel about such fundamental farming practices, forever? What would Bill Twigg suggest? This progressive north-central Victorian farmer was growing lucerne across his farm in 1981.

Here is a typical 2006 example of information for landholders:

*Making perennial pastures work for you*  
*The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is holding a practical and comprehensive workshop and bus tour on establishing and managing lucerne and other perennial pasture species, at Navarre (Upper Wimmera) on Friday, 3 February.*

A participant in a free community seminar on the health of the Werribee and Maribyrnong catchments in April 2006, reported:

*This seminar was attended by over 200 people. Five prominent bureaucrats said little about the health of the catchments but plenty about planning, policy, state of native vegetation and social changes affecting*

*the catchments. Participation in Landcare groups has produced some visual impact on the landscape in the catchments, but overall catchment health is unknown. No indicators of catchment health were presented. Landowners' concerns reflected frustration with policy more than doing anything about the environment, such as opposition to plantation forestry, frustration with land use zoning and frustration over employment conditions for NRM support staff.*

Interestingly the Port Phillip catchment has around 5000 farm businesses that utilise about 60 percent of the land. Why isn't there a basic land management program anyone can voluntarily join which provides a simple blueprint for improving natural resources health?

Adoption of one simple soil test on an annual basis would progress the catchment's health over time - that test is for soil organic matter (soil carbon). Add a few other key indicators such as whole-farm perenniality, percentage ground cover throughout the year, percentage remnant or renewed vegetation, percentage fenced riparian areas, whole farm greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) balance, and some real progress would be made. Add in some best-practice components, such as time of spreading fertiliser, use and storage of pesticides, workplace safety and animal welfare, and the catchment has a land ownership program that will advance catchment health.

## EBMP

An Environment Best Management Practice (EBMP) program designed in Victoria by the DPI is strongly promoted in some regions. It is a useful start but lacks a realistic long-term monitoring component for key environmental indicators. It also has no credible means for recognition of participants and the improvements they make. The weakness of the EBMP program and its now often promoted corollary, the Environmental Management System, is their focus on environment protection. The broader community has a mandatory expectation of landowners to protect the environment, so these programs give reassurance in that regard, but they offer little in terms of actual natural resource improvement unless some forms of incentives can be provided.

## Recognition of holistic farming

In much the same way as organic certification achieves premiums for suppliers, conventional agriculture needs a certification program that offers real environmental outcomes, as well as food safety, workplace health and safety

and animal welfare standards. Landcare Farming certification is the next step for the Landcare movement to take to ensure landowner participation and community support.

There is an urgent need to develop a mechanism through the Landcare movement for recognising the adoption of such a best practice program and even more need for rewarding improvement over the long term. The program needs to be available to all landowners and funded adequately to maintain professional support staff on a long-term basis. It is time to allocate a higher percentage of NHT funds towards adoption of such programs and reducing the percentage provided for grants.

## The grants-based approach

The grants-based approach to Landcare is losing its relevance given the state of knowledge developed over the last twenty years. Grants were originally provided to farmers to discover new approaches to land and water management. Unfortunately they have gradually become a condition for involvement in a new approach. They are not needed for discovery anymore, but could still be useful to stimulate action in some circumstances.

The future for the Landcare movement on farms rests with government and agencies providing it with the recognition it deserves for achieving change. It needs to be funded to independently administer programs that monitor change and can recognise landowner involvement and improvements made at the individual farm level. The Landcare movement's independence of agencies and government departments is critical for its long-term future.

## A family and Landcare

### Tom and Sue Loughridge

In 1972 we purchased a 54 hectare dairy property, known to older residents as the 'blackberry farm' for obvious reasons. Tunnel erosion was also a problem, something Sue had grown up with - she remembers her father digging out many cows or young cattle from collapsed tunnels. As young farmers trying hard to make a go of it, we did not want to lose cattle, nor did we want tractor accidents. Therefore we ripped many existing gullies, filled them in and planned to plant trees. We say now how lucky we were that we delayed planting, because in 1981 we purchased the adjoining farm and all the trees would have been in the wrong places! In 1982 we did start - by purchasing 500 trees from NRCL at Springvale, thinking, What a job! However, in one day, Cup Day in fact, we had them planted, after digging holes with a shovel, watering them in and, to keep the rabbits at bay, putting a large circle of blood and bone around each tree.

It was all pretty easy and they seemed to be doing well, so the next year we ordered 1000 trees and some years even took on 2000, aiming to fence off all the tunneled areas and shelter cattle from the strong winds. After a few years of shovelling, we discovered the Hamilton tree planter. Sceptical at first, we soon learnt how much easier it was and how well the trees grew. And, with less upturned earth, rabbits were not the problem they had been. As we planted and fenced, we came to realise how much safer the farm was, especially for tractors and machinery, with all the steep gullies fenced out and planted.

Along the way we were asked to join Bass Valley Landcare Group, something we were unsure of but decided to do. At one meeting there was an invitation to attend a Landcare conference at Bendigo; there were no takers, so Sue said she would go. After standing in the dark on the Bass Highway, and being picked up by two men she had never met, David Plant and Greg Price, she set off to Bendigo. She came home and told her neighbours that we should form a group, as our problems were very different to those faced in the Bass Valley.

Following a meeting at our home, Jeetho West Landcare Group was established in 1988. The small group consisted of mainly dairy farmers, but there

were some other non-farmer landholders. Members basically planted their own farms, but came together as a group to tackle larger projects, enjoy the social side of Landcare and exchange ideas. We commenced planting along the South Gippsland Highway in two areas, then decided we needed a large project. Alsop Creek was tackled as the farmers living along it wanted to fence off the creek and revegetate the streamside. Four of the five were already members and decided to approach the fifth; he jumped on board and became a very enthusiastic participant. We went on and, as a group, planted over fifteen thousand trees in three years.

A Landcare milestone came for us in 1995 when we were unknowingly nominated by the group for the Primary Producer Award. We didn't know that our family had passed on our photo albums and all our notes to help with the nomination. When we were invited to the presentation function, we only attended for the sake of the Jeetho West members - we felt it our duty to attend. On arrival we were asked which category we were in and were unable to answer. We were named the winner and still can remember the shock. And we needed to be heading home as we had promised our son Chris we would be home to help with silage.

We were even more surprised when told subsequently that we would be going to Canberra for the National Awards in 1996. This was very memorable too - being with 500 other Landcarers in Parliament House. We had never thought of awards when we started our Landcare involvement, so it was a thrill beyond words to be announced the Primary Producer Award winners. After our win we had the happy experience of addressing the Ballarat tenth anniversary conference. Landcare has given us a lot of satisfaction and we have made many friends and encouraged many people along the way. We have been proud to host numerous busloads on the farm and know that what we started all those years ago has helped the environment.

## Taking Landcare to the world

### Victoria Mack, Sue Marriott and Mary Johnson

#### Background

In 1987, Hamilton Region 2000 (HR2000), funded by Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, began as a program to encourage farmers and townspeople to discuss their future, and the relationship between the region's economic, social and environmental sustainability and the health and productivity of the land. Victoria Mack was appointed as the community facilitator for two years. Sue Marriott had organised the many farmer field days that had been run by the Potter Farmland Plan (PFP) since its inception. She realised that when the PFP came to an end, there needed to be a mechanism to continue its extension and education role.

In 1989, with the help of HR2000, Sue started Hamilton Environmental Awareness and Learning (HEAL) Inc funded in part by Greening Australia. For the next five years, HEAL continued to coordinate visits to the PFP demonstration farms, and other emerging 'conservation-based' agriculture and environmental projects in the region. Thousands of visitors participated, including farmers, students, educational institutions, politicians, journalists, scientists and the wider community. In 1993, HEAL contracted Associate Professor John Cary, University of Melbourne, to research the impact of the HEAL educational tours. He found that sixty percent of people who had taken part had returned home and taken action, be it starting a Landcare group, undertaking a whole farm plan, or initiating revegetation.

In 1989, the Wool and Rural Industries Skill Training Centre (WRIST) Inc, today called the Rural Industries Skill Training Centre (RIST) Inc was inaugurated. Originating from HR2000 discussions and championed by Hamilton farmer Peter Small, it was designed as an industry-driven training centre linked to agricultural research to help farmers, particularly wool growers, drive productivity and product quality in the face of increasing global competition. In 1991, RIST received an annual operating grant of \$80 000 per annum for three years from the Victorian government, and was given industry training centre status by the federal government. Victoria Mack left

HR2000 to become RIST's executive director in 1993. Sue Marriott started to coordinate the RIST Land Management Unit (LMU), run farmer conservation and land management extension. HEAL was disbanded. Mary Johnson and Chris Lever also joined RIST as coordinators.

There was more to emerge from the PFP. Sue Marriott was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to investigate how other countries were tackling environmental extension and community and farmer-based environmental stewardship. She travelled to South Africa, Poland and the United Kingdom. In 1994, Elaine Spencer-White, an English woman living in Johannesburg, had contacted Helen Alexander, the second National Landcare Facilitator. In 1995 Sue met Elaine and several key South Africans to discuss how South Africa could best learn about and experience Australian Landcare – for Sue, that had to be at first-hand.

A Property Management Planning Conference in Coffs Harbour in 1996 led to discussions between Sue Marriott, Brian Scarsbrick and Rob Youl of LAL and Theo Nabben from the WA Department of Agriculture about sponsoring a South African delegation to Australia, which Sue and Elaine coordinated in 1997. Thirteen South Africans and two USAID representatives from Washington toured WA, SA and western Victoria, and attended the National Landcare Conference in Adelaide. At the conference John Anderson, Minister for Primary Industry, presented the delegation with a caring-hands logo in the style of Australia's. Entered into a South African competition, it was subsequently accepted as the major logo, and Landcare was written into national policy in South Africa, focusing on institutional strengthening. Today, Landcare South Africa is managed by the national government, with delivery devolved to provincial governments, drawing extensively on the Australian model. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) provided substantial early support. Landcare South Africa has managed to successfully devolve project delivery to communities, encouraging them to chart their own courses, helped by government-supported facilitators.

#### SILC is formed

This successful tour also led to the Secretariat for International Landcare (SILC) forming in 1998, comprising Sue Marriott, Victoria Mack, Mary Johnson, Chris Lever, Julian Cribb and Professor Stuart Hill. Some in-principle government support materialised, and philanthropists Helen and Geoff Handbury made a generous one-off grant of \$350 000.

Between 1999 and 2003, SILC strongly promoted Australian Landcare

across the world. This included hosting international delegations to Australia to allow them to experience the Australian Landcare model in person; speaking at international forums and conferences; writing papers and other promotional activities; lobbying; conducting study tours for Australian and international students; and undertaking research and development projects both in Australia and in the Philippines.

Landcare in the Philippines came into being under its own initiative in 1996 when a group on the southern island of Mindanao started Claveria Landcare group. In about 1998 Dennis Garrity, then regional director of ICRAF's South East Asia section, and now director general of ICRAF in Nairobi, Kenya, became an enthusiastic advocate for Landcare and began to explore a Landcare approach within ICRAF's agroforestry projects. ICRAF's first Landcare thrust was in the Philippines. In 1999 the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded a five year Philippines – Australia Landcare project under the stewardship of Noel Vock, in partnership with Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the University of Queensland, ICRAF and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture. This highly successful project was re-funded by ACIAR – AusAid in 2004.

The fledgling Landcare projects in South Africa, New Zealand and the Philippines were encouraging, but it was difficult to persuade major international agencies that Landcare offered a new approach to food security, natural resource management and environmental protection, particularly in the developing world. However, SILC recognises now that, in parallel with the evolution of Landcare in Australia, there is a new interest in 'participatory' and 'people-centred' approaches to development and catchment management issues in numerous countries. Many of these experiences are maturing, developing a track record, which can be assessed, and providing many lessons. But the nature of these approaches means that their outcomes and lessons are often fragmented and not easily accessible. There is a tremendous network of people involved, but a lack of forums through which practitioners and facilitators can tap the collective wisdom of this network.

## The future

SILC believes its future task, by means of a foundation, is to expand Landcare's international focus through a stronger ambassadorial role to find solutions to political impediments to Landcare ideas; more capacity-building projects; expanding study tours and training across international boundaries to link community groups and others working on similar projects; helping

the network of practitioners and community-based Landcare leaders communicate; and linking with other natural resource management overseas organisations to set up one global Landcare organisation.

In time, the Landcare movement will be recognised as one of the best environmental participatory movements around the world, because the Landcare concept can empower, build capacity and achieve results for communities; develop partnerships between landholders, community groups, government and industry with triple bottom line benefits; and help shift power incrementally from top to bottom. This requires trust, partnerships, cooperation and communication - but the rewards are potentially great if these can be built and sustained.

## From a Landcarer's memory bank

### Alex Arbuthnot AM

Many of us involved at the start of Landcare just cannot believe that, twenty years on, it has become a national and international icon, perhaps the greatest environmental and social movement of our time!

Minister Joan Kirner asked VFF president Heather Mitchell to be a partner in the newly proposed LandCare program. Heather discussed this with me, her vice-president. We need to appreciate that, in the 1980s, farmer organizations focused on economics — and land management and environmental issues were not on their agendas. My advice to Heather was, 'I think we should be part of the LandCare initiative, but isn't the name funny!' Of course, in today's world 'care' is tacked onto many nouns!

In the late 1980s, I was asked to represent the NFF president, Ian McLachlan, at a meeting of Australian and state agriculture ministers on soil conservation. I followed a speaker from ACF who, with great enthusiasm, spoke on the need to address erosion. ACF had undertaken a national survey that identified soil erosion as Australia's major land degradation issue, and had subsequently received a government grant to do further work. I followed the ACF speaker and, on behalf of farmers and the NFF, also spoke very positively (maybe a bit 'tongue in cheek') on the interest and support that NFF was giving to soil conservation.

In my report I emphasised the need for us to take a stronger role in promoting soil conservation. I can recall the NFF's CEO, a young Rick Farley, claiming that NFF did not have the resources. I said, 'Neither did ACF — they used the public purse, and why don't we get street-wise.' This may have been one of the 'seeds' that gave birth to that masterful alliance between NFF and ACF, resulting in the national launch of the Decade of Landcare by Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

I also recall great speeches by Julian Cribb in the 1990s when, as an agricultural journalist with *The Australian*, he suggested that, by the year 2000, Landcare should be a billion-dollar export industry for Australia. This vision is still relevant; and we should market our knowledge and product using our Landcare logo to benefit farmers who have invested in landcare over the last two decades.

## Mount Hope

### David Millsom

In 1974 I moved from Melbourne to Mount Hope near Pyramid Hill, soon realising that removal of native vegetation was largely responsible for the local saline soils and the decline in wildlife. We began by planting trees to improve local habitat and amenity — the wrong species in wrong place, but we'd started on the learning curve. As secretary of Pyramid Hill and District Progress Association in 1978, I organised a community tree planting on Bullock Creek, and in 1985 was a founding member of Mid Loddon Tree Group, and three times chairman.

During the 1980s, along with Paul Haw and Lloyd Naylor, we went from growing seedlings in bark sleeves to using forestry pots to the large-scale use of Hiko and Lannen air pruning containers, a fast decade of development. It also saw the start of our using saltbush for fun and profit. In 1990, realising that the scale of land degradation was not fixable by planting nursery-grown seedlings, and a better 'mousetrap' was needed, I looked at direct seeding. I tried it on my farm with mixed results, but could see it was the method that would enable us to work at the scale required. In 1991, with a Rodden seeder borrowed from Woods and Forests South Australia, we successfully direct-seeded a hectare site with one kilogram of seed. (By comparison in 2005, working as a contractor, I seeded 1000 kilometres of seed line and used 350 kg of seed!)

The year 1991 also saw the first direct seeding of saltbush on my farm, despite hostile opposition from the agriculture department. Fifteen years on there are well over a thousand hectares of direct-seeded saltbush in Northern Victoria and southern NSW, with accompanying improvement in soil condition, stock feed and wildlife habitat.

In 1992 we began direct seeding the Terricks Ridge corridor project to join Mt Hope fauna and flora reserve to Terricks park; this project continues today. The mid 1990s saw Terricks Ridge Landcare Group form.

I joined Greening Australia in 1993 on the Murray Corridor of Green, and worked for GA NSW and GAV for nearly ten years, finally as a technical development officer, in which role I relentlessly developed and applied

direct seeding. There was also field application of smoked water, improved seed treatment methods, development of seeding machinery – for which I was a highly commended finalist in the Institute of Engineers Australia 2001 salinity award. With CSIRO in 2002, I initiated the fieldwork that led to the production of Wattle Grow, the world's first inoculant for acacias. I finished this work as a volunteer having been retrenched from GAV in early 2003. Since then I've been a direct-seeding contractor, teacher, adviser and farmer.

The problems we face are still massive, and much more effort is required to ensure our children's future.

## Regional Landcare Plans

### Graydon Findlay and David Cummings

At the beginning of the Decade of Landcare in 1990 there was no agreed plan by which the conceptual goals of sustainable land use would be achieved. Nor had anyone listed what actions governments at national, state and local level should take to help communities reach this goal. To address this, the Ministerial Soil Conservation Council agreed to preparation of a National Decade of Landcare plan, whereby each state would formulate its own decade plan and that these, in combination with the Commonwealth component and a national overview, would constitute the National Plan.

The principles that guided landcare at the local level were applied for preparation of Victoria's Decade of Landcare Plan. A steering committee with a majority of community members was supported by departmental staff from a wide range of disciplines, assisted by contributions from participants at a community workshop and feedback on a draft plan.

A key action in Victoria's Decade Plan was the preparation of nine regional landcare plans (RLPs). These were developed in 1992-93 by regional community reference groups (CRGs) supported by interagency working groups and guided by contributions at community workshops and comments on draft plans. They were presented to Minister Geoff Coleman at Parliament House in June 1993 and endorsed by government as a strategic and dynamic component in the development of integrated catchment management in Victoria. The RLPs were produced within a tight time-frame (twelve months) and a small budget of approximately \$56 000 for each RLP.

Allan Curtis from the Johnstone Centre at Charles Sturt University was a member of the Community Reference Group for the North East RLP. As well as making a detailed examination of the participatory planning process, Allan also conducted a survey of the 130 community representatives on the nine CRGs. His report<sup>1</sup> examined the extent to which the RLP planning process enabled landcare stakeholders to participate in regional policy making.

He concluded that the RLP was a bold and ambitious attempt at community participation in natural resource planning. He reported that a majority of CRG members believed that they made strong contributions to CRG debates, that their views were listened to and that they had an important

impact on RLP outcomes. Landcare groups were well represented in the RLP process and CRG participants considered that the RLPs adequately covered the work and concerns of landcare groups. The report identified a major flaw in that CRG representation did not reflect the wider definition of landcare. Key stakeholders such as urban residents, businesses, river management authorities and women were under-represented in the RLP process.

I Irvine and Associates independently analysed the extent to which the RLPs achieved the requirements detailed in the Guidelines. Their report<sup>2</sup> showed that most of the RLPs were deficient in relation to detailing targets, progress, performance indicators, strengths and weaknesses in existing plans and programs, and resources required for new programs. The final project report<sup>3</sup> recognised that a technique for determining RLP priorities was not available in time for it to be used in the planning process. Examination of the RLPs showed that there were three times as many actions relating to land management compared with those for healthy rivers or nature conservation. The government response to the RLPs<sup>4</sup> accepted the priorities in the plans in the interim, subject to them being reviewed and refined when an improved priorities methodology was developed.

The wider significance of RLPs to resource management in Victoria became apparent late in 1992 after the election of the new state Liberal government. In its election platform the Liberal party made a commitment to reform land protection legislation and introduce integrated catchment management (ICM). In his second reading speech to the Catchment and Land Protection Bill, Minister for Natural Resources, Geoff Coleman foreshadowed the preparation of refined regional plans when he stated:

*Each Regional Catchment and Land Protection Board is to oversee the preparation and maintenance of a regional catchment management strategy as a principal co-ordinating tool and as the basis for its on-going advice to government. Initially these will build on existing regional landcare plans.*

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## IFFA

### Tony Faithfull

In the early 1970s the idea of using Australian native plants in gardens and landscaping became popular. Australian plants attracted native birds and allowed us to escape the cultural cringe and impracticality of the green European garden. The importance of conservation was recognised also, and groups like the Conservation Council of Victoria (now Environment Victoria), Victorian National Parks Association and Tasmanian Wilderness Society (now The Wilderness Society) were successfully lobbying for areas of the best indigenous habitat to be set aside as national parks. Hundreds of small areas of bushland, often along roadsides, had been designated as wildflower reserves by various authorities and groups.

It was also very clear that in our everyday surroundings the natural vegetation and local animals were disappearing fast. Native vegetation just wasn't valued. Governments, utilities and individuals had no hesitation about bulldozing native vegetation, even so that they could replace it with other native plants. What was also clear was that environmental weeds would destroy the remaining bits, even National Parks, if they weren't actively managed. What was needed was a program to raise the profile of native vegetation and habitat, protect it from removal and degradation, and even start to reverse the trend by restoration and revegetation.

The Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association, formed in 1986 by individuals who were concerned about these issues, aimed to promote awareness and conservation of indigenous flora and fauna (particularly in the Melbourne region). IFFA brought together people already doing this work and other devotees for support, exchange of ideas and to begin the task of convincing people that protecting and restoring remnant vegetation and planting indigenous plants should be basic management requirements.

One of the first activities was to publish a series of pamphlets under the banner 'Melbourne's Indigenous Gardens.' The pamphlets encouraged the conservation of remnant vegetation and the use of indigenous plants in rehabilitation and landscaping, and gave local contact information for interested people who wanted to take it further.

IFFA started publishing a newsletter, *Indigenotes*, which soon became a respected source of information about managing remnant vegetation and

revegetation. IFFA's membership swelled to around 1000 in the early 1990s, and a NSW branch was set up. IFFA saw many successes. Protection of remnant vegetation became enshrined in law. The importance of managing environmental weeds was recognised. Native vegetation management became an industry, with expertise developing rapidly. Many local indigenous nurseries were set up and promoted the use of indigenous plants. Greening Australia developed a training program. A journal, *Ecological Management and Restoration*, was established to exchange information about technical matters.

Early in the new decade the entirely volunteer office-bearers of IFFA wearied. They wondered if IFFA was still needed. A meeting was held in 2004 to consider this question, and rather than going extinct it was decided to rebuild IFFA. After all, remnant vegetation was still being removed, there was another generation to educate, lots still to learn about indigenous plants and animals and techniques for management and restoration. Questions were raised about the quality of restoration work that was sometimes done.

IFFA's aims were reformulated: To promote the appreciation, study, conservation and management of indigenous flora and fauna through research and discussion, networking and advocacy, and information exchange. IFFA started re-publishing its newsletter and running activities for its members again, and revamped its website. Its membership is increasing. IFFA still needs new blood however. Enthusiastic volunteers are required to organise and run activities, let people know about IFFA, generate articles for the newsletter and website, and so on. There is still a lot of work to do, and potential for IFFA to contribute.

Interested people could visit IFFA's website at <http://iffa.org.au>, or email the secretary, Michele Arundell, on [secretary@iffa.org.au](mailto:secretary@iffa.org.au).

## Two decades of Landcare

### Rob Youl

#### Taking stock

In late 1986, Conservation Minister Joan Kirner, a leader and innovator, had just launched Landcare on Terry Simpson's Winjallock grazing property. Potter Farmland Plan (PFP) was making a big impact on Hamilton and impressing a growing number of visitors; agroforestry had its institutional and quirkier sides and suggested a stronger economic basis for growing farm trees. Departing from John French's vision of ubiquitous utilitarian metro-plantings, urban forestry was becoming urban indigenous revegetation and riparian bushland re-creation, with a touch of grassland management. (Interestingly, western suburban householders telephoned Joan Kirner immediately CFL staff initiated the first controlled burn of Laverton North grassland, which criticism she passed on in no uncertain terms. This illustrated the challenges of broadacre reserve management on the metropolitan fringe, despite the vital role of fire in sustaining grassy ecosystems and the general need to prepare for wildfires.)

Direct seeding was now more common – Vicroads for instance had revegetation specialists like Richard Vines in Benalla. Rod Bird, Keith Cumming, Neil Lawrance, Bruce Milne and Peter Waldron – indeed PFP people generally – were prominent practitioners around Hamilton; with Bert Drayton and Bill O'Shea in the Heytesbury, and Richard Weatherly and colleagues in other several areas, as well as John Lawrence around Benalla. Practical landowners everywhere were coming up with efficiencies: better tree-guards, new weed eradication techniques (chemical and physical), fencing concepts, sound coppicing, innovative tools. There was a gratifying awareness of the value of natural regeneration; and local nurseries and seedbanks dealing with indigenous plant species were springing up. (There could be 150 of them today across Victoria.) At Cavendish we even had Jim Hoffmann's tool for lifting excess red gum regeneration from the soil and transplanting it elsewhere, including growing it on in beer cans, of which there was no shortage at his place!

A cooperative spirit prevailed; field days proliferated at which it was hard to tell the landowners from the public servants; and CFL staff from DARA personnel. Importantly, the Salinity Bureau was active and finding its projects often blended well with Landcare. And many stories were coming in of excellent support for Landcare from municipal councils – not that this was new! For instance, Merv John, Wycheproof's shire engineer, was well known as a tree-lover; so was Ballarat's Rex Hollioake. Phillip Island Shire was a Landcare pioneer too, and many municipalities had had long associations with NRCL.

## Communicating

Over the next few years there was more literature: Rowan Reid and Geoff Wilson on agroforestry (in 1988 Rowan would start his demonstration farm at Bambra); Potter's manager, Andrew Campbell on the PFP and farm planning; Brian Garrett also on farm planning; Roland Breckwoltd on farm wildlife; Rob Davidson on indigenous species; Denis Saunders on corridors. We also had Campbell, Chandler and Thomas with *Victoria Felix; Improving Rural Land with Trees* (editors, Andrea Lindsay and me; endpapers by John Las Gourgues, based on an idea by RMIT student, Kevin Taylor, showing engagingly how northern Victoria could be revegetated using roadside, riparian and remnant vegetation as a springboard); David Jones, Isla Robertson and Sue Moodies' book on urban forestry; Nan Oates and Brian Clarks' *Tree\$ for the Back Paddock*; Steve Burke's pamphlet on direct seeding, and later his book on shelter; more regional revegetation guides; and even a video or two. And of course there was Bill Parsons' classic on Australian weeds. Moreover, CFL was publishing many reports and pamphlets.

NRCL's magazine often ran good articles. Ed Adamson was editing *Trunkline* for the VFF's farm trees arm; Shawn Butters, Peter Davies, and rather later Matthew Coleman, Cathy Junor, Julian King, Greg King and Paul Crock followed Ed as Landcare staff in the VFF. With help from John Fenton and me, the VFF put out a pamphlet on how trees positively affect land values. Geoff Wilson's ITCI output was prodigious, and he ran several workshops, and the media were helpful, especially the rural and provincial newspapers and regional radio stations – ABC and commercial. Then Nan Oates and I met some National Trust people at Mooramong, Skipton, in the late 1980s, which eventually led, thanks to the Trust, to the first field guide on grasslands: editor Stephen Wallbrink, photographer Jo Heard. Professor Jim Sinatra (a cousin of Frank – they looked quite alike) took his RMIT students

for years to work on Lanark, John Fenton's property at Branxholme, and, in what must have been a wonderful atmosphere, generated some good concepts on re-creating and managing large-scale rural landscapes. Perhaps he sang *I Did it my Way*, by the campfire, in homage to John! Elizabeth Jacka's cleverly illustrated paper on the return of Lanark's birds, later published by Birds Australia, came out of this long association. Bill Sharp, Roger Young and John formed a large contracting operation, Rural Trees Australia at Hamilton, also in the late 1980s, and Don Thomson and David Hay started what has become a major rural landscape architecture company.

## Balancing policy and practice

Departmentally, I recall this as a time of consolidation. Horrie Poussard seemed to be forever returning from another Landcare group launch. There was a State Landcare Committee. I was writing tree-growing policy, not one of my great skills. My policy was: Try anything that might work, at least once! But I helped set up the Land Protection Incentive Scheme (LPIS) and continued happily with various committees, training ventures and projects. There was now a wide range of tree advisors in the CFL regions, and some in DARA, and by the end of 1988, by which time 39 groups had formed, it was very apparent that the Landcare concept was popular and effective. The multi-disciplinary Landcare groups were more independent, more diverse than their earlier counterparts. Public servants supported them but did not lead, however they fostered a culture of networking, sound planning and a flair for thinking laterally when it came to seeking more resources. (When Bob Edgar had told me in mid 1986 that Joan's new program would be based on groups, I said nothing, but was privately sceptical – groups had been tried before – couldn't we do something really innovative? I was wrong; somehow Bob and Horrie, with formidable backing from Joan and Heather Mitchell, got it just about right for the times and the task!)

Agroforestry had moved to CFL's State Forests arm, which diluted the extension side somewhat, and urban forestry to Melbourne region, which made sense. On the other hand, I'd really enjoyed meeting and working with soil conservationists such as Horrie Poussard, Graydon Findlay, Dennis Martin, David Elvery, Zeke Hartland, Dean Runge, Geoff McFarlane, Rob Patrick, John Cooke, Bill Sharp and Laurie Norman, and weeds and pest animal specialists like Bob Edgar, Pat Larkin, Ken Jillard, Robin Adair, Jeff Yugovic and many others.

There were also several memorable symposiums. AFDI organised a bicen-

ennial conference at Albury in April 1988, naturally with plenty of field tours to farms in the North East and Riverina. Qantas had given AFDI some trans-Pacific tickets so I went to the third World Urban Forestry Conference in Orlando, Florida. I doubt I enticed anyone to Albury, but I was able to give a talk on Oz-style urban forestry, including some beautiful photos of the AWDC's plantations from Sue Campbell. The audience was amazed at my images of the city's bush-clad hills: *Waddy need more trees for? Ya got enough already!* The then US version of urban forestry was devoted more to street-tree maintenance and arboricultural techniques à la the famed Alex Shigo, whom I met at Orlando. (Nick Rivett had brought him to Australia at least once in the mid 1980s.) But many Mid Westerners were passionate about grasslands, as Tim Barlow found on his Churchill Fellowship tour several years later, and I still think the US experience in this field could inspire and assist us. The first state Landcare conference at Bendigo in 1988 was just as memorable; there was a great spirit amongst the pleasingly cosmopolitan attendance. Two things I recall were Joan's 'gift' of Landcare to Senator Peter Cook; she said that Victoria had a model the other states could utilise. And Anglican Bishop Oliver Hazelwood warmly supported the regional community's fight against salinity.

In 1988 I went to a superb regional get-together organised by Yarram people, including Frankie MacLennan. As after-dinner speaker, I made as many risqué observations as I could get away with about growing up in the amoral, pollutant-rich Latrobe Valley, just beyond the Grand Ridge Road. But two aspects stand out to this day. Although only two years had passed, there were lots of Landcare groups in Gippsland, and several reported on their activities. Greg Barry, Jeetho West dairyfarmer, told us that his group had organised planting days along local creeks, involving up to five neighbouring properties. My mind jumped back to Bairnsdale in 1983! *'Wouldn't it be great to get a few neighbours doing the same sort of plantings so that the same trees would run across the locality?'* And after some contemplation: *'Nah! It'd never happen!'* Well, it had! And today it's an Australia-wide phenomenon. Indeed, I coined the phrase 'Quantum leaps and quantum creeps' to describe this aspect of Landcare: one year something seems nigh impossible; two to three years later, when you look about you, to your surprise everyone's doing it!

The second recollection: a field trip to Carrajung devoted to trees, rabbits, blackberries and ragwort, ended with a magnificent afternoon tea, one of the first of many gastronomic Landcare experiences leading me to conclude that 'bulimia, anorexia and severe dehydration are very unusual in Landcare!' The

movement maintains exceedingly high culinary standards – for instance, legendary Melbourne vegetarian chef Shanaka from Lentil as Anything and an Argentinian steak specialist cooked for this year's Yarrilinks planting weekend. I recall also an agroforestry conference at Morwell in 1989. Mike Hall from Traralgon put a couple of generous decades into private forestry, through AFDI-AFG and various government committees and forums, so Gippsland has always been an epicentre of this craft. Furthermore, consultant and activist, Angela Munro, recognizing that municipalities were getting much more involved in Landcare, organised a stimulating conference for council environment staff at the Conservatorium in 1988.

I recall from those years several Landcare field activities: a Lake Burrumbeet planting Sue Moodie organised; talks to Landcare groups and field days at Sunday Creek, Wooragee, Streatham (Rosemary Weatherly's seminar on the basalt plains), Warrenbayne, Nagambie, Highlands and several visits to PFP. The LPS was promoting the catchment management philosophy, about which Ian Hamer was particularly passionate until his tragic and rapid death from cancer. River 'management' had entered the vernacular and Ovens River managers were getting a name for restoring indigenous trees to their streamsides. Both Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group and neighbouring Molyullah Tatong Landcare Group flourished around Benalla, with Pam Robinson, Darrell Brewin, Angus Howell, Col Davies and Bill Willetts all prominent. More regional-scale projects were emerging, especially in the North East – through people like Lyn Coulston, Denis Martin and Royce Sample, and in the Loddon valley through David Millsom, Paul Haw and others. At Stawell, Barry Clugston was coordinating the first community catchment plan of which I'm aware: Wimmera Catchment Co-ordinating Group's Wimmera River: Integrated Catchment Management Strategy, funded by the National Soil Conservation Program and released in 1992.

## Advent of Greening Australia Victoria

By 1987, Pat Feilman had replaced John Jack as chair of the GSC. As executive secretary of The Ian Potter Foundation, she had helped John and Peter Matthews manage the PFP, and being a nursery owner had extensive connections to the horticultural industry. Neil Watson had followed Alan Thatcher as executive officer. Victoria was by then the only state without a branch of Greening Australia Limited (GAL), which frustrated the national president, John Haydon, a sharp and smooth planning barrister from Brisbane. Victoria relented, mitosis occurred; the more raffish or extreme members of the GSC,

me included, formed the nucleus of Greening Australia Victoria (GAV) in late 1988-early 1989 and a cauterised GSC continued as usual. Neil Watson managed both groups. Our mob talked new and bigger projects, and initiated an improved urban forestry program, Go Green. The memorable David Lloyd, who had a flair for publicity through his involvement in the Don't Be a Wally with Water campaign, and soon became a racy regular on Terry Laidler's ABC evening radio program, was the first Go Green manager. Suddenly out of the blue, we learned that the Commonwealth government, through the Environment Minister, Graeme Richardson, had commissioned Greening Australia to establish a billion trees nationally, and had made the first down payment to the states – \$460 000 in our case.

Asked to quickly nominate the best revegetation projects across Victoria and allocate the funds; the Victorian branch selected Go Green, Treeline (revegetating Western Victoria's decommissioned railway reserves), the PFP follow-up training program run by Sue Marriott for Hamilton Environment and Learning (HEAL), Tree Project, ATCV and some other rural activities (I'm hazy on this, but always felt we did rather well). We also tried to foster a multi-group project; choosing the degraded Pyrenees region, we asked CFL's Mike Ransom to call a meeting of local groups and offer them \$48 000 for a joint project, hoping the community would work together, or at least set its own priorities. Although less than three years since Winjallock, already six groups operated in the region. Instead the groups voted to split the money six ways and do individual works. I'm certain today the decision would be more radical, targeted, visionary and coordinated.

But this incomplete recollection highlights the trust and de-voled decision-making of the era. And good decisions were made rapidly. I often mention in talks on Landcare that only a few group treasurers have had their passports confiscated. Jaws drop, until I admit that I'm joking. Really, one of the cores of Landcare is that we have evolved an honest, reliable, frugal and accountable culture of money management. Landcare is corruption-free.

### Corporate virgins

Alcoa had invested generously in Landcare and tree growing in WA; the story was that many West Australians thought Alcoa's business was planting trees, rather than mining bauxite and smelting aluminium, so well known were their environmental activities. One day Alcoa's management in Collins Street summoned the nascent GAV executive, and told the four of us that, as its Portland business grew, the company would invest in similar community ventures here. This was another bombshell – none of us had considered this

possibility, or had any commercial experience, nor had we prepared for the meeting, yet here we were before industrial giants. We must have looked a mob of dags! Alcoa's community-government affairs manager, John Hannagan, was very understanding, and helped us throughout. Shortly after, GAV proposed to Alcoa that it invest, inter alia, in revegetating dismantled railway lines in south west Victoria. It did this through Treeline, run well by Paul Stephens, although CFL's regional management tended to divert him to its own projects – not an isolated phenomenon! The concept, later promoted by Minister Mark Birrell, is now widely applied – I was delighted recently to see how many walkers and cyclists use the Myrtleford-Bright rail trail – but remember Alcoa pioneered the concept, before going on to Woody Yaloak, Portland seedbank, Borrell-a-kandelop and many other GAV and Landcare activities.

The Billion Trees campaign necessitated GAV's rapid expansion. We moved to the Weights and Measures offices at Old Melbourne Observatory, next to the clandestine Abalone Task Force. The buildings – aluminium pre-fabs – were demolished several years ago to create the splendid Gardens-Observatory-Shrine precinct. Andrew Straker, Sandi Dickinson and David Young (who now works at a high level in Canberra) joined David Lloyd on Go Green. During the search for a rural tree advisor, a modest and interesting bloke appeared who'd been in the metal industry and helped run his family's farm. This was Jim Robinson, now an integral part of the Victorian revegetation scene, with sixteen years of great service.

We kept the same grassroots board for another year, when GAV Limited was created and the whole operation formalised under Dr Paul Hudson and John Taylor, manager of the Botanical Gardens. By that time I was a GA employee myself. Over the next two years a rural program and a Rural Facilitator Network were created to support Landcare revegetation activities. Early facilitators included Claire Dennis, Libby Fisher, David Warne, Ron Dodds, Denis Martin, Lorraine McKenzie, Lyn Milne and Kate Walsh. The GAV rural program implemented numerous Alcoa-funded projects including Warrambeen Landcare Education Centre (Ian and Trish Taylor), Portland Indigenous Seedbank and the direct seeding machinery loan scheme.

### Corridors of Canberra

In late 1989, Bob Campbell, Land Protection Service director, kindly seconded me to Greening Australia's national office in Canberra (GAL), which had just been commissioned to establish One Billion Trees. Luckily, I could work from Melbourne; my wife, a town planner, would have refused to move (I

will not live in a planned town!). My first job was Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) field officer, charged with the task of organising a basin-wide community education event, perhaps employing vintage aircraft and loosely called Operation Dunnawalla, a Koorie word for brackish lake. Budget problems loomed and that evaporated; I settled into life dabbling in national policies, community education, training, promotion, pamphleteering and project conception and development – all fascinating and requiring frequent trips to Canberra. I helped organise two national conferences in Adelaide, Sowing the Seed and Catchments of Green. (Travelling to the latter, I was upgraded to first class, and chatted to the middle-aged American woman in the next row. The next day I read the Adelaide headlines: Tammy Wynette in town!) I was intrigued and excited by a conference paper on managing Lake Eyre catchment – somehow I hadn't thought of it in that light before.

During 1990-92 I occasionally saw Andrew Campbell, by now the first National Landcare Facilitator (NLF). After PFP he'd had a couple of years at Melbourne University studying and writing, then become NLF in 1990. He was travelling much more widely than me, of course, and covering every state, and he really got to know rural WA, NT and Queensland, as well as the Golden Wings Club system. In retrospect, he made a great contribution to spreading Landcare across the nation. He would tell us southerners that there were pressing land management problems wherever he went in Australia – salinity, tree decline, massive erosion, loss of biodiversity, declining water quality, weeds and pest animals – but in every case communities were forming Landcare-type entities to get to grips with their problems. And no doubt Andrew's own presentations inspired some new community bodies. Andrew also published a second major work, a book on Landcare; not so long after that, Valerie Brown put out Landcare Languages, which is a masterpiece of book design. I also met the CEO of the newly created Landcare Australia Limited, Brian Scarsbrick – GAL and LAL were fencing a little in those very early days as they tried to sort out who did what.

In Canberra I worked with GAL stalwarts such as Alan Cummine, Sylvia Gleeson, David Curtis, Gus Sharpe and many other great people. For much of my time the CEO was Winsome McCaughey, who thought in Cinemascope, and sometimes had several major good ideas in the one minute. I tried to help her promote and plan for revegetation projects on a regional, even multi-regional, scale. Before I left in late 1992 she launched her COGs program, especially using the Catchments of Green and Corridors of Green themes. In Victoria, Catchments of Green led eventually to Woody Yaloak Catchment Group becoming a leading Landcare network, following the development of a plan by Cam Nicholson, supported by Steve Burke, and Corridors evolved

into the Cathay Pacific superb parrot campaign, so we were on the right track. I still travelled throughout the Basin, relishing the chance to visit places like Roma, Dubbo and Armidale; the Murray Darling Basin Commission was dedicated to community consultation, so there were several meetings with diverse graziers, farmers and municipal councillors. (In retrospect, I think that Canberra is a bit isolated, somewhat rarefied and under-achieves. It has heaps of talented, travelled and richly experienced people, but the Molonglo miasma reduces creativity and collaboration, and encourages conservatism. However, the Commonwealth government has warmly embraced regionalism, to the Landcare movement's great benefit. Indeed I think future historians will recognise Landcare as a pioneer force in moving from state to regional government in Australia. And what other country has given so much continuous, bipartisan official support to community action on the environment? So many thanks, and apologies, Canberra!)

### Sawdust and seminars

I still got involved in Victorian projects. As an army reserve engineer, I'd commanded 91 Forestry Squadron, the only unit of its kind in Australia. (It was based on the wartime forestry companies, which operated in the UK during World War II producing sawn timber). We often used portable sawmills for major tasks – for instance when building the 56 metre jetty at Snake Island in 1982, and I believed that they had a place in agroforestry. Accordingly, in 1991 Geoff Wilson and I decided to run an exposition of portable sawmills, which we called Farmwood.

We selected Hammon Park, Creswick as the venue and worked closely with Trevor Pollard and Vern Howell of the Victorian Timber Industry Training Centre to locate manufacturers, dealers, associated products and sources of demonstration logs. About ten manufacturers made a commitment to appear, including an NZ company. How did we get insurance? I don't know! Recognising that operating small portable mills amongst large crowds could be dangerous, we approached the worker-safety authority of the day, and were sympathetically treated, with an inspector present throughout. In fact the event went really well, attracted hundreds and made a tiny profit, despite the fact that most people didn't pay admission but just climbed over the low fence. Auctioning the beautiful timber produced on the day helped us clear our debts, and the VSF students shovelled away the massive quantities of sawdust for a few slabs – of beer, not timber. I'm told that portable mills are now common in rural Australia. Geoff and I tried also to publicise Yarram-based Andrew Knorr's radially sawn Radcon timber products.

In 1991, I went to a conference in Ridgetown, Ontario on agroforestry. One of our field trips along the Lake Erie shoreline took us to swampy black-soil country used for horticulture, where we met some public servants in uniform; these were employees of the regional catchment management authority, which had been set up in the 1920s and 1930s to manage urban and agricultural catchments to reduce damage from flooding. A friend who has worked here and in North America says that agroforestry and community landcare there are still far more institutional and top-down than in Australia because of their more rigid and compartmentalised administrative systems.

### Back to the bureau

In late 1992, I returned, not to CFL, but Conservation and Natural Resources (C&E). By now Landcare was entrenched in the national environmental scene. I sat down next to the dynamic, independent, creative Viv McWaters, Victorian Landcare Publicity Co-ordinator, and there I stayed four years. Viv put most of her many ideas into practice; she could knock a newsletter together in a morning, and she was increasingly involved in facilitation training, which had come mainly out of WA, with Kevin Balm its leading exponent. Participants built up trust and morale by undergoing physical, mental and social exercises, in the process becoming better team players and developing their planning and communications skills. She ran an Australian conference for co-ordinators, *Live and Earthy*, which was exactly that, before moving to regional jobs and facilitation consulting.

The Salinity Bureau and Landcare were reasonably, but not completely, integrated. Landcare and the C&E river management team could have been closer, but Vera Lubczenko, Tarnya Kruger, Di Marshall and others (mostly ex-teachers) were building up the Waterwatch and Saltwatch networks and running various other excellent community education programs. Anne-Marie Tenni was there, a lively operator. Carrie Tiffany was writing *Salt Force News* and running a salinity grants scheme with Geoff McFarlane. (I think around then she would have learned from David Elvery about the 1920s institution, the Better Farming Train, the subject of her first major book.) Alan Thatcher was our manager. There were now hundreds of groups across Australia and national Landcare awards, and in Victoria a plan to introduce ten regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards. Farm forestry, depicted by Curly Humphries in 1982 as having no profile or clout politically, now had hundreds of adherents, backed by activist regional committees and a state council under Angus Pollock; blue gum plantations were becom-

ing common, and the Commonwealth had announced its goal of trebling the area under forest plantation by 2020.

The Landcare Centre at Creswick Nursery run by Geoff Park and Trish Kevin was especially productive, with regular environmental training for teachers during school holidays: Landcare for Educators. A day was always devoted to Lexton, where one of the oldest groups has planted scores of kilometres of eroded gullies in the head of the Avoca River and Bet Bet Creek. Locals like David Clark and Dal McErvale would meet the teachers at the foot of Benmore, a vast bare metamorphic ridge with an apron of saline gullies, which was subdivided in the early 1980s by a notorious development company into small allotments, the owners of which are often hard to trace. The students and their Landcare mentors would ascend the hill passing up a delightful bushy and rocky gully to the steep crest with its magnificent views of the northward-flowing valleys, the semi-timbered slopes around Lexton, the bare basalt plateaux north of Waubra, a sweep of granite ranges and the Pyrenees beyond Avoca. While everyone lunched, David Clark would present his wry history of Lexton – in Mitchell's words, A valley of the finest description! One year Barry Traill whistled up the local bird life, virtually every golden whistler in the region, creating a scene to rival Hichcock's *The Birds!* Later the group would call at Keith Impey's farm – Keith gathered firewood on Benmore's slopes in the 1950s with only his grey Ferguson tractor for company, but over the years had become a keen tree planter with several hilltop blocks.

There were still lots of committees and working groups, and we continued to have plenty of direct contact with the farming community and the public. No-one worried about security then; indeed any citizen could stroll around the department's Victoria Parade head office looking for service, pamphlets, advice, a receptive ear for their particular personal crusade, or even the toilet. The gentle Lionel Elmore would call to talk about the western basalt plains – ultimately his nephew, Christopher, published a book based on Lionel's lifetime of field observations of natural processes. Another visitor was Hans Manson of Avenel, an early indigenous nursery manager who had grown trees for the most natural-looking stretches of the Hume Freeway, and was now painting detailed and emotional environmental works. Mairi-Ann McKenzie came in with her deeply held views on indigenous ecosystems. In the mid 1980s, Jean Richards, a former missionary in Ghana and passionate believer in the Jean Pain humus management school, would often arrive unannounced, initiating immediate mass flight to the fire escapes. Now I visited her in her nursing home.

## Landcare, art and publishing

Another institution was Landfest, which for several years brought many of Australia's best-loved musicians to Creswick, including major Koorie bands and singers, to play before large crowds on the lawns. I was also keen to bring culture and Landcare together, and arranged for the movement to sponsor two exhibitions at Ararat Art Gallery – one devoted to the glorious landscapes of Tim Guthrie, Oliver's late brother from Rich Avon near Donald, and another showing craftwork using natural materials. Furthermore, we initiated the (North) Hamilton Rotary Landcare Art Prize in 1995. Kenneth Jack graciously offered to judge the entire show, including our section. The prize ran for seven years, and one year we also had a cartoon competition. For the Potter ten-year celebration in 1995 we worked with Hamilton Art Gallery. Director Danny McOwan obtained large reproductions of some of the gallery's 19th century regional landscapes (for example Clarke's painting of the Wannon Falls) and then commissioned local photographer John Kiely to try to locate and depict those spots; the results were fascinating and, as Lady Potter pointed out in her speech, highlighted the fact that much of the region was not heavily forested originally, and indeed had many stretches of natural grassland.

Another artistic venture was the opening of Landcare Month 1994 with an exhibition of Stawell painter, Cate Whitehead's work in the Galleria, Elizabeth Street. Cate had flown over the Pyrenees with Barry Clugston – himself an artist – and been moved by the erosion and bareness. The crowded Galleria wasn't a great venue to show off large provocative paintings. In 1993-94, Ian Cumming produced and toured a provocative Landcare revue, *Hanrahan be Damned!* I saw it in Avenel and at the 1994 Cowes Landcare conference.

We were involved in the Landcare Field Guide – Cullen Gunn's excellent handbook, and a video sponsored by BHP Waratah promoting catchment management, with much of the filming centred on the Whiteheads Creek community, including Ron Hall. I helped with the computer graphics, creating ever-expanding arboreal corridors across the landscape to underline the value of revegetation. Much less successful was a 1993-94 venture, a brochure called Reading the Land – we designed it for tourists on buses between Melbourne and Phillip Island. It was taut, nicely illustrated and printed on heavy card. We distributed it to 50-60 bus lines, motels and other tourism bodies, and drew no response whatsoever. From 1995-97 I helped Julia Carpenter and Geoff McFarlane produce two editions of Group Skills

and Community Action, replacing Landcare Action Pack, which dated from 1990-92. Viv McWaters and I produced several issues of Landcare News, and in the mid 1990s we distributed questionnaires and put out three of Dr Allan Curtis's familiar and very useful reports on Victorian Landcare: The state of play; Getting the job done; A decade of partnerships. Then in late 1995, when visiting the newly formed Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group, I met Peter Jamieson of North East TeleCentre, now NETc, who told me about the internet. It sounded good to me. He offered to publish three Landcare efforts extremely cheaply – Landcare Field Guide; Victoria Felix and Group Skills and Community Action – they're still there on NETc's website under 'Landcare classics.'

I wrote numerous articles on Landcare in Australian Forest Grower, Trees and Natural Resources, BP Landcare Challenge, Saltforce News, Victorian Landcare, Indigenotes, IFA Newsletter and Conservation Gazette. The man behind the latter, Peter Castellas, said recently, 'Conservation Gazette published news, views and issues on the environment and was the first environmental newspaper pitched at a mainstream Australian audience. Issued monthly, with a print run of 250 000, it ran for two years (roughly 1994-96) and was fully funded through advertising revenue from corporate, government and community partners, who recognised it as a much needed media outlet to get a message out to a broad audience.' Another gutsy media venture was the monthly Murray Basin Landcarer, published at Holbrook by Michael Elvins and Ron Miller, from 1993-96. This plucky effort by a creative journalist and printer working on a shoestring deserved much more support. Viv McWaters organised an entertaining cassette by the Coodabeens, but it didn't appeal to rural Landcarers. I had a second go at this medium, approaching a commercial producer of taped tourism commentaries for major highways to work on Landcare cassettes for motorists, but nothing happened. (In our game you keep trying!) A more successful cultural endeavour was marketing a tape of wonderful Landcare songs by Fay White, Terry's wife.

The BHP Waratah video, centred on Whiteheads Creek, east of Seymour, linked us to a new Landcare activity. The two stars were Neville Prince, BHP Waratah's agreeable Kiwi fencing expert, and Ron Hall, chair of Whiteheads Creek Landcare, which had been active in salt management and community education, and was now building its own hall – the Ron Hall Hall? At the end of the tape, a philosophical Ron says that we have to have a go at restoring our land and water resources, even if we don't have all the answers currently. I'm sure he employs the word sustainability. I always think this is logical; nothing can be completely sustainable, but a high degree of sustainability – say a state of sustainability – is a reasonable, and we hope attain-

able, goal. I had met Ron in late 1993 when Richard Forbes and I took two busloads of listeners to Doug Aiton's ABC afternoon radio show to the country to look at Landcare. It was dry and hot but we planted some symbolic trees in a salt pan. Disabled rural-landcare singer-songwriter, Jill Stevens came along too with her family, and we had a great day, which Doug analysed on air the next week. This led to at least two similar outings, with more serious tree planting, to Winchelsea and the Bass Range. In 1995 Paul Crock, Mike Cleeland and colleagues coordinated major roadside plantings between Bass and San Remo, with ABC listeners a key HR element.

### On-the-ground

In late 1994 we learnt there would be an Angry Anderson One Million Trees Challenge. Peter Yau (NRCL), Ian Smith (ATCV-CVA) and I drove often to Albury where Landcare Australia's Brian Scarsbrick co-ordinated operations. The campaign, run throughout the Murray valley in September 1995, achieved its goals, was great fun and, as an hour-long program hosted by Ray Martin, was watched by 1.5 million Australians. Angry himself proved to be friendly, tireless and very sharp; he handled journalists brilliantly, as we saw in an exceptional interview on the last day. Having built up a team, we decided to do a follow-up: it became the Powlett Project, initiated late in 1995. As the first chair, I led a local group, supported by ATCV-CVA and Tree Project, which raised \$28 000 to enable 40 000 trees to be planted in 1996. The most pleasantly derived funds were from the premiere of a French film which raised \$3500, thanks to Kevin Lane of Esperance International and Maidie Puls and Heather Martin of Findhorn Foundation. Martin Fuller, Brian Embon and Paul Speirs followed me as chair. Still going strongly, into its eleventh annual planting program as I write, Powlett Project has attracted support from BHP, Telstra, International Power Mitsui and NHT. In 1998, with Scouts Australia and 1200 kids, we planted 56 hectares in one weekend, at a cost of one broken arm. My aunt, May McMaster, born at Outtrim in 1898, was the unofficial patron until her death in 2002. Now its icon is Paul Speirs, a compulsive revegetator, weed controller and communicator from Archies Creek, who has galvanised action in the catchment over the last ten years.

I helped organise conferences at Cowes and Ballarat, worked with Rotary to promote its schools portable nursery boxes, distributed several free Fuji Xerox faxes and photocopiers annually to Landcare entities, worked with the Australian Golf Course Superintendents Association to improve environmental standards of golf course management, and participated in Operation Blue Hills, the North East community campaign against Patersons curse, run by

Ian Lobban, Diana Patterson and Rob Patrick from 1993-95. There were tenth anniversary celebrations for Potter and the Winjallock launch of Landcare, and state and national awards. Victories by Queenscliff Primary School and Tom and Sue Loughridge were especially welcome. Tom and Sue, and their predecessors, Kevin and Jenny Blake, proved to be great ambassadors for Landcare, and both gave me insights on sustainability – clearly many farmers thought responsibly about the distant future. The awards helped bridge the metropolitan-rural gap, as did a couple of much more modest projects. The Urban Rural Links program, under Ingrid Duncan at Bundoora, took city kids to the country. And the redoubtable Minette-Russell-Young, one of the first members of Greening Australia Victoria, ran an open day in 1993 at the Greenlinks Box Hill nursery for Landcare groups in the Strathbogies.

Educational activities were important too with annual lectures and field trips on Landcare for forestry and agriculture students with Dr Stuart Hawkins of Melbourne University. We always took the students to Bacchus Marsh, and stood together high above the brown bare valley (with its contrasting lush groves of brown Buerre Bosc pears!) seeking their ideas on a regional Landcare network and program. The first Grow West manager, Carmen Zerafa, appointed in 2001, had been on one of these excursions. Through the Geography Teachers Association of Victoria, many other students came to the Bacchus Marsh area, to learn from the efforts of the SCA and Zeke Hartland in the White Elephant Range – these tours were facilitated by Vera, Dianne and Tarnya, my ex-teacher colleagues, working with local farmer Irene Watson, who had a very good knowledge of the geology and physiography of this fascinating and still not well known valley. We tried also to help Alan Windust, an environmental and landcare publisher, who ran the Community Landcare Centre, Bendigo, a shop-front organisation overseen by a small board.

There was plenty of fun of course – one great institution was the catchment bike ride, cycling with occasional stops to look at Landcare, and camping in local halls. We ran two along the length of the Hopkins, from Ararat to Warrnambool, another down the Woody Yaloak from Ballarat to Colac around the western side of Lake Corangamite, and a fourth from Ballarat to Geelong. I hadn't been able to do the first Hopkins ride, but led the second. It was raining heavily when we hit Wickliffe and entered Narrapumelap homestead. Meeting the owners I found we were in big trouble. Not only had Paul Stephens failed to organise this stop before he left for Britain, he hadn't paid last time. I pulled out my bag of cash and settled both accounts, and we had a fascinating time at the homestead, rescued and now becoming opulent, before pushing on to Woorndoo, where the elderly but vital and technically

well informed Flora Richardson gave a great talk on salinity. A Melbourne Cup lunch at Warrnambool in the boathouse was a wonderful end to our journey, which had started four days before on the Divide north of Mount Langhi Ghiran. A few years ago Bob McKenzie organised an environmental forum at Mortlake. I was delighted to find that he had walked the Hopkins, Victoria's longest (so the website says) internal river in 2000, and written a book on his trip. The Hopkins is battered in the north, better in the middle, and beautiful in places in the south – but is still under threat.

## Landcare's reputation spreads

Overseas interest was mounting in Landcare; I helped David Elvery with material for a soil conservation conference in Bonn in 1996, and was dismayed when it came back undelivered – I'd expected more of the German postal system! However I built on the text and it has been published seven times, expanded each edition, as the booklet: Landcare in Australia – founded on local action. Through Horrie Poussard I met Fathers Brian Gore and Charles Rue of St Columban's Missionary Society, who were looking at Landcare as a model for overseas community development. Three members of the US RC&D movement – a national network of regional community and environmental development committees with several parallels to Landcare – visited here in 1995. I showed them around SA and western Victoria. Arriving late evening at their Albert Park hotel, we learned to our collective horror that the daughter of Gary Fak, one of the visitors, had been severely injured in a road accident. She survived, recovered fully, later studied in Perth and married an Australian. Geoff McFarlane brought Canadian visitors here, and I hosted an Englishman and an Argentinian. For several years John Claringbould, chairman of Landcare Australia, and I lobbied National Geographic about an article on Landcare. In 2000, we finally got a reasonable mention in a story on the Australian environment written by Mike Parfit.

Looking back, one of the highlights of this period was a happy get-together Paul Crock, Alex Arbuthnot and I convened at Lady Northcote camp in the Rowsley valley in 1996, which concentrated many of the state's Landcare co-ordinators, and led to the formation of the Victorian Landcare Network (VLN), a guild for Landcare professionals, in 1997. The Network has flourished. Its ten regional representatives meet bi-monthly; it holds annual forums. The VLN promotes training, safety, partnerships, networking, peer support, better employer-employee relations, access to technical knowledge, Indigenous programs and greater awareness of Landcare. It triumphed in February 2006 when, led by Emma Bennett, a thirteen-strong

team went to a tsunami-damaged estuary on the southern tip of Sri Lanka and worked for two weeks repairing damage and working with local businesses to develop ecotourism opportunities. One superb outcome: the team developed brochures for four of these (including a camp, guide service and a caterer) and had quantities printed for distribution to regional hotels and travel agencies. The VLN hopes to make this an annual activity. By the mid 1990s it was obvious that, in Victoria, the regional network was the ideal task force for many Landcare enterprises. We did a state survey, and publicised the results – I recall that there were 45 networks in Victoria in 1995.

## Corporate fundraising

In 1993 Landcare Australia's Sydney office formed Landcare Foundation Victoria. I was secretary of a small committee led by Cr Wellington Lee, Deputy Lord Mayor of Melbourne. We explored fundraising ideas, ran a cocktail party at Telstra state HQ, organised bus tours to the Pyrenees and Woody Yaloak for foundation members and potential and committed sponsors; and over several years, with help from Sydney, raised some \$4.3 million for Victorian projects. We also tried to train groups and networks to better manage corporate partnerships and give more back to their supporters.

This led to a new job. Working from Farrer House in Collins Street, I have for almost ten years been fundraising; helping groups and networks conceive, plan and manage projects large and small; running PR campaigns; writing; accounting; occasionally obscuring misdemeanours – in all, being part of one of Landcare's support teams. Of course government funding overshadows our present efforts, but we see commercial income increasing greatly, especially through carbon sequestration. I often wear my two suits and FJ reefer jacket, but I still get into The Bush. We also organise works projects for staff members of corporate partners. Five favourite venues are Friends of Westgate Park, the frugal handful of stars that have resuscitated this former tip and airfield; the Brimbank City Council project at Sydenham Park – look for it next time you're taking off westwards from Tulla; George Paras at LaTrobe University with his nesting boxes; Grow West, which is booming under its community board, John Forrester and Cara Reece; and good old Powlett Project.

Three hundred words left: some vivid impressions of ten fascinating years. Tom Dumaresq's Goulburn Valley ironbark forestry-lucerne operation; seeding 90 hectares of the McHarg Range one day in 2005 with Clare Claydon, Paul Dettmann and Baynton-Sidonia and 160 others; singing Old Man River to 2500 people at Renmark with James Blundell; huge corridor

networks created by Kowree Farm Tree Group under Sue Close and Andrew Brady; working happily with Paul Burns of International Power Mitsui and Malcolm Warren of SP AusNet; my terrific colleagues Matt Reddy, Rebecca Millard, Kate Fenby, David Hehir, Ben Keogh, Ken Gibson and Kari Iwancz, and earlier Justin McFarlane, Lea-Anne Bradley and Lindy Moffatt; wonderful Wimmera Biolinks planting weekends – I’ve attended twenty-three in nine years. (Why not ‘bonkolinks’ – they facilitate faunal sex – faunacation?) Lindsay Ezard recently did 100 hectares of direct-seeding in one day! Wow! Innovative Terry White deserves his own chapter – with Fay. There’s Deans Marsh community – warm, active and cultured; Olympic Landcare at Ravenswood in 1998; Judy Crocker’s prodigious Loddon (with a Rodden) direct-seeding operation; our Grassroots program with VicTrack; revegetation along Franklin River at Bennison by Adrian Rathjen, wife Karen and the local community.

And TreeProject, formed by Maggie McLeod and Belinda Gross in 1988 to run major urban events! Since 1990 it has produced some two million seedlings for rural projects; its 300 volunteers grow 100-130 000 plants annually. More memories: It’s been great meeting South African and Filipino Landcarers. I recall the durable Mackay and Thomas families with their ridgeline plantations at Elmhurst; many days driving on Landcare missions with friends John Stirling and Dave Peters; several projects around Omeo and Swifts Creek; the remarkable Doug Parke and the Land Rover community with its devoted, capable Mobile Landcare Group. I love working with enterprising groups like Merri Creek Management Committee, and Bass Coast and Heytesbury District Landcare Networks, and such competent people as Jodie Gager, Emily Tyson, Klaus Boelke, Pat Larkin, Russell Ellis, Bernie Rudolph, Ray Thomas, Mike Cleeland, Kellie Nichols, Matt Stephenson, Jason Summers, Lisa Wangman, Penny Gray, Darren Williams, John Amor, David Lean, Bronte Payne, Andrew Stewart, Mike Robinson-Koss, Brendon Thomas, Ralph Cotter, Rebecka McCann, Cam Nicholson, Kevin and Alice Knight, Moragh McKay, Wally Cooper, Kevin Atkinson, Alan Murray, Alexandra Gartmann, Lachlan Milne, Pat Liffmann, the team from Ballarat Environment Network, Ron Dodds, Ian Smith, Kevin Spence, Don Jowett, Neil Blake, Zoe Thompson, Tracey Cassar, Pat Corr, Rae Talbot, Iestyn Hosking ... Blast! I’ve used up my 7500 words, and there’s still much to say, many more people to congratulate in Victorian Landcare!

## Catchment song

### Fay White

Down, down, down, down, rain has to fall down  
 And everything tries to catch it, as it falls on country or town  
 And it splashes on rooftops, drips through trees, falls down on valley and plain  
 Everything tries to catch the water – whenever it rains

And down, down, down and away, the rain runs down and away  
 It doesn’t hang round in the place where it falls, though the trees might want it  
 to stay  
 For it runs into rivulets, creeks and streams, down gutters and gullies it goes  
 Ever on down with a watery sound, till it reaches the river below

And there to the river in the valley, the rain at last has come  
 And all round the valley are the hills and the mountains where the raindrop’s  
 journey was begun  
 And all of the land that the running river gathered its water from  
 Is called a Catchment - and everybody lives in one

If you cup your hands in front of you and hold them up to the sky  
 You can make a little Catchment to catch the rain, right in front of your eyes  
 Your fingertips are like the mountaintops, the creases are the creeks you see  
 And where your hands join together that’s the Catchment’s river running down  
 through your arms to the sea

And a Catchment is fine if there’s forest on its mountains, deep pasture on the  
 farms below  
 You need plenty of plants to catch that rain, make the running water go slow  
 But if the forest is gone, nothing is there to stop the water’s flow,  
 That’s trouble for a Catchment, for the land will start to go – uh-oh –  
 It’ll wash down, down, down. Down, the precious soil will wash down

And the farmland will be split with gullies and the river go muddy and brown  
So we've got to take care of the forest and land that we gather our water from.  
That's our Catchment - and everybody lives in one  
Take care of your Catchment - 'cos everybody lives in one

Words and music © Fay White 1994; available on CD from Grapevine Music, 37 Goldsmith St  
Maryborough 3465 Vic Australia - used with permission



## Editorial team

**Mary Johnson** grew up on a farm near Peshurst, Victoria. Her father, a dedicated conservationist and natural historian, helped preserve significant areas of native vegetation in south-west Victoria. A founder of the Secretariat for International Landcare (SILC), she has worked in agricultural science, education, environment and community development within Australia and overseas.

**Victoria Mack**, who lives on a farm at Darraweit Guim, is an adult educator and director of the registered training organisation Land Connect Australia Pty Ltd, which specialises in education and training in agriculture, horticulture, rural community development issues and conservation and land management. She has extensive experience in rural education and training Australia wide. Victoria is also a freelance cartoonist for rural media, illustrator of training manuals and a founder of SILC.

**Sue Marriott** and her husband John run a Coopworth sheep stud near Geelong, Victoria. Farming earlier at Hamilton, she and John were involved with the Potter Farmland Plan; she also spent several years managing rural training programs. Through a 1995 Churchill Fellowship, she expanded her international networks and organised the South African Landcare study tour of southern Australia in 1997. She is a founder of SILC.

**Horrie Poussard** worked in agricultural extension, soil conservation and catchment management in Victoria for 25 years. As a senior policy officer in the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, he collaborated with Joan Kirner to conceive and launch the Landcare program in 1986. He and wife Wendy, now run an international consultancy specialising in community development and NRM projects. They have lived and worked in Korea, Fiji and Vietnam, with short-term projects in the Philippines, Cambodia, the South Pacific and Argentina.

**Rob Youl** held many farm forestry, Landcare, urban revegetation, project development and publicity charters with Victorian resource management departments and Greening Australia from 1981-96, and has been a project and fundraising officer with Landcare Australia since 1996. He owns two blocks of native forest and has worked on New Zealand Landcare projects.

## Contributors

**Alex Arbuthnot AM** is a Gippsland dairyfarmer who has been involved in farm politics and advisory bodies for three decades. A former president of the VFF, and a board member of Landcare Australia Limited, he sits on many state and national bodies, including the Australian Landcare Council.

**Darryl Argall** has always lived and farmed at Kiata, and has had almost two decades in local government. He has been mayor of Hindmarsh Shire six times. Deputy chair of Wimmera CMA, he is almost as proud of Hindmarsh's record in community development and job creation, as he is of its Landcare record.

**Andrew Campbell** trained as a forester, led the Potter Farmland Plan in the mid-late 1980s, wrote two landmark books, was the pioneering National Landcare Facilitator in the early 1990s, studied in Holland and France and returned to Australia, eventually becoming CEO of Land and Water Australia.

**Susan Campbell** grew up in a house with an Edna Walling garden and was a landscape architect with Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation for fifteen years. She has been very active regionally in Landcare, national president of Conservation Volunteers Australia, a board member of Greening Australia Victoria and a long-term member of the VFF Farm Trees and Land Management Committee. Sue and husband Sandy farm at Springhurst; they were Victorian winners of the Landcare Primary Producers award in 2005.

**Rob Chaffe** is an experienced soil conservationist, who has been based at Alexandra for more than twenty years.

**Ian Cowdell**, trained in engineering and economics and worked in the Ministry for Conservation and other departments for 25 years in various roles in environmental assessment and liaison. Retired on the Mornington Peninsula, he remains interested in landscape issues.

**David Cummings** is a soil conservationist. He worked from the early 1970s to recent years in the various departmental arrangements – from SCA to DSE – and with the Victorian Catchment Management Council.

**Moray and Rosemary Douglas** retired to Bairnsdale, Moray's last forestry posting. They also lived in Swifts Creek, Heyfield, Mansfield and Mildura during Moray's long career in logging and fire management and silviculture.

**Phil Dyson** led many government research projects and teams working on salinity through the Centre for Land Protection Research, Bendigo. He now practises as a land management consultant working from Bendigo.

**David Elvery** had almost four decades in the field in SCA and later departments, much of it as a regional manager in central Victoria. Retired in Bendigo, he retains his passion for better land management.

**Tony Faithfull** has worked on many Melbourne bushland conservation projects, especially in the northern suburbs. He is now with Moonee Ponds Creek Coordination Committee.

**Graydon Findlay** is an agricultural engineer who spent his early career in the SCA. In his last two decades in the various environmental departments, his diligence and capacity to draft Landcare and salinity plans useful to politicians, management and practitioners was well recognised.

**Pat Francis** is one of Australia's most experienced and welcomed rural journalists, having edited Australian Farm Journal for twenty-six years, and Australian Landcare magazine since it began in 1996. He also farms at Romsey.

**Peter Greig** trained as a forester in Victoria and gained a PhD in forest economics at Oxford in the mid 1970s. He moved into the transport, water and merchant banking sectors, before buying a farm at Deans Marsh in 1994. He produces beef cattle and wine grapes, and is chairman of Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

**Ted Gretgrix** was a national service officer in the late 1960s and farmed for almost forty years, before becoming a rural finance counsellor. He has been a shire councillor and served on a CMA and regional water bodies.

**Angus Howell**, a farmer from Warrenbayne near Benalla, was a full-time coordinator for Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group Inc for several years in the mid 1980s-mid 1990s, during which time the group was amongst Victoria's best known Landcare entities.

**John Jack**, a leading Victorian forester, ended his career as head of the Premiers Department working directly with three premiers, Dick Hamer, Lindsay Thompson and John Cain. As the first chair of the Garden State Committee, he played an important role in several germinal environmental initiatives of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

**Peter Jamieson** taught for 26 years, during most of which time he and wife Chris farmed at Edi Upper. Around 1990 he opted for a wider landscape, started working on the community aspects of IT and moved to Wangaratta. Peter manages North East Telecentre at Wangaratta, a pioneering community IT cooperative.

**Margaret Jansen**, with a background in education, was a mature-age student in farm management. From 1989-97, she led the whole farm planning course at Glenormiston campus of Melbourne University.

**Peter Langley**, a field forester trained at Creswick, Melbourne and Oxford, led the Forest Extension Branch from 1978-82, then took a prominent role in the formation of the new Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, especially in the regionalisation of management. He retired to Eagle Point.

**Tom and Sue Loughridge** are dairyfarmers from Loch near Korumburra. Born in Northern Ireland, Tom was a national serviceman in South Vietnam in an infantry battalion. Sue grew up at Jeetho West on a farm that they eventually purchased, and still work with their family.

**Phil Macumber** worked for 30 years in the Departments of Minerals and Energy, Water Resources and Conservation and Environment, specialising in the hydrogeology and salinity of northern Victoria. He was instrumental in developing the regional groundwater picture for much of northern Victoria and chaired the Victorian Government Interdepartmental Salinity Resources Investigation Committee during the mid 1980s.

**Tony Manderson, Bill Middleton OAM and Hans Kosmer** all served as foresters with the Forests Commission and amalgamated departments until the 1990s. Tony led the team that established the Victorian Plantations Corporation, then worked for Hancock Victorian Plantations. He now farms at Barwon Heads. Bill, after service with Trust For Nature, has retired to Barwon Heads. Hans now consults in forestry and horticulture and divides his time between Melbourne, Paynesville and New York.

**David Millsom** grew up in Melbourne and has lived on historic Mount Hope for 32 years. A passionate revegetator with community groups, Greening Australia Victoria and as a private contractor, he is one of Victoria's best known direct-seeding practitioners. For recreation, he sails his yacht in northern waters.

**Nan Oates OAM** did a Master of Environmental Science at Monash, then worked in forestry, Landcare and CFA circles in several roles. She wrote widely, produced some Landcare classics and edited *Trees and Natural Resources* in the late 1980s.

**Pam Robinson OAM** came to Benalla in her early twenties, farmed at Warrenbayne until 2001 and was a councillor in Violet Town Shire for twelve years with two terms as president during the 1980s. She played a leading role in forming Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group. She has since been a community representative on various Landcare, farm forestry, Murray Darling Basin and salinity panels. Currently the Australian Government NRM Facilitator in Victoria - Water and Rivers, she lives in inner Melbourne.

**Father Charles Rue** is a Columban priest and scholar who has worked in Korea and Jamaica. He now lives in Sydney and continues to foster conversations between religious and environmental circles.

**David Sanders** began his career in the SCA around 1960, later moving to FAO, where he worked on soil conservation policy and programs for thirty years. He remains a world leader in his profession.

**John Stirling**, a teacher for 35 years, and now retired, has had a long involvement with the VNPA, National Trust, City of Port Phillip and other environmental bodies. He and his wife Ruth, passionate bushwalkers, were instrumental in linking the VNPA with Grow West in 2006.

**Alan Thatcher** was executive officer of the Garden State Committee for nine-ten years. He served in the various environment departments until the late 1990s and now works as a land planning consultant.

**Fay White**, a superb singer and songwriter from Maryborough, has been associated with many environmental and cultural projects and has made many concert tours. Her husband, Terry, is the well known pioneer of regional greenhouse trusts, Waterwatch and community education.



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