



# Celebrating 10 years of Achievement

---

**Victorian Landcare Grants**

Glenelg Hopkins









# Victorian Landcare Grants.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA has offered the Victorian Landcare Grants (VLG) for 23 years. This document celebrates a 10 year period of that funding.

The Victorian Landcare Grants program have played an important part in supporting the catchment's Landcare groups and has been the catalyst for a range of amazing on-ground work.

The Victorian Government began funding the Victorian Landcare Grants program more than 25 years ago, enduring successive governments and their priorities to support a continuing grants program. The impact of the grants program investment has been multiplied by the in-kind investment by Landcare members, which is over 100% co-contribution to the value of the grants.

Not only have projects funded under the Victorian Landcare Grants program undertaken hundreds of hectares of revegetation, many hundreds of kilometres of fencing and controlled a vast number of pest species, they have also had a profound impact on their local communities as a whole. These grants, and projects completed under them, have directly influenced practice change across farms, inspired farmers young and old to get involved in natural resource management, and given a sense of belonging and community to group members.

The Victorian Landcare Grants program offers two funding streams for Landcare groups to gain support through:

Project grants – these have had an upper limit varying between \$20,000 and \$50,000 designed to enable groups to implement on-ground and community engagement projects;

Support grants – these are \$500 grants to assist with insurance and basic administration costs of running a local Landcare group.

The popularity of the grants is confirmed each year when they are oversubscribed by between 75 and 100%.

The Victorian Government Landcare Facilitator Program has run alongside the Victorian Landcare Grants and employs nine facilitators in the Glenelg Hopkins catchment area. These facilitators are hosted by individual Landcare groups across the region but with the facilitators often representing a number of small groups or a wide geographical area. The facilitators play a significant role in the grant process, developing the majority of grants applications on behalf of the group/s and local area.

Landcare groups are a valued feature of the region. They act as source and deliverer of information to both facilitators and the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, they provide community newsletters and events, and connect people together to achieve community and individual landcare and natural resource management goals. The environmental and biodiversity health of the region has undoubtedly benefited from the work undertaken by the local Landcare groups on the ground.

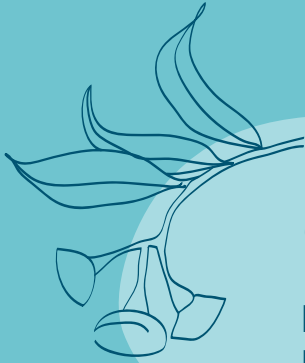
We hope you enjoy this celebration of the measurable achievements made by participants in the Victorian Landcare Grants program over the years from 2012 to 2022.

The extensive work of landholders, Landcare groups, Landcarefacilitators, and the ongoing investment in local natural resource management projects through the Victorian Landcare Grants continues to this day.

**Tony Lithgow**

Glenelg Hopkins CMA Regional Landcare Coordinator

# Celebrating 10 Years of Victorian Landcare Grants



**964.91**

Hectares of  
Revegetation



**348,422**

Tubestock Planted

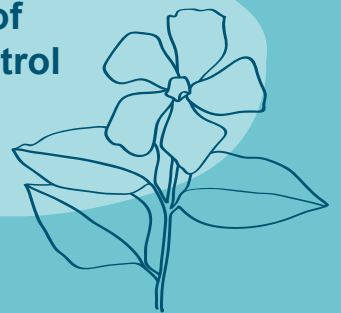
**438.40**

Kilometres of Fencing



**181.5**

Hectares of  
Weed Control



**\$3,863,082**

Inkind Contribution





“The VLG program itself has  
been running for over 25 years.”



**181**

Workshop/  
Field Days

**165.06**

Hectares of  
Direct Seeding



**225**

Landcare  
Publications



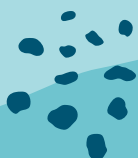
**1129.97**

Hectares of Vegetation  
and Direct Seeding  
combined



**\$2,556,474**

Total Budget







Kate Drum from Maroona helping plant trees in 2018.



Kate at the same plantation in 2025.



# Case Studies

Success stories from programs  
funded by Glenelg Hopkins CMA  
and the Victorian Landcare Grants,







# Wannon River flows clear at Park Hill

**Hamish Bailey, Wannon.**

## Key Outcomes

- Multiple farming and conservation benefits
- Wannon River and gullies and shelterbelts fenced and planted
- Tubestock and direct seeding of indigenous species
- New water points and laneways.

Transforming a degraded landscape to a natural oasis has been achieved in a relatively short time at Park Hill on the Wannon River.

In just two decades, Hamish Bailey and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority have worked together to benefit farming and the natural landscape alike.

Fencing off six gullies, two creeks and creating 20 kilometres of shelter belts has not only protected and enhanced the classic Australian landscape of the Wannon River but has made the farm easier to manage and more profitable.

With soil types ranging from buckshot under clay loam, sandy soil, volcanic flows and black riverflats it was natural to reference to land type and in doing so fence off vulnerable areas.

By doing so Hamish has created laneways for easier stock movement, shelterbelts for lambing paddocks while being able to sow smaller paddocks down to various deep rooting perennials.



“I feel really proud of what we’ve been able to achieve here, its set up for many decades to come. Those giant red gums that have been here for hundreds of years look over us and I think if they could talk they’d approve of the changes we’ve made for everyone.”

The benefits for better farming also compliment the natural habitat as gullies planted down to trees now support undergrowth that not only holds the soil together but improves water quality and has attracted an abundance of wildlife not seen at the farm before.

Starting in 2005, shortly after taking the reins of the family farm, Hamish hit the ground running.

“I was very keen to start fencing and planting as soon as I could, so it was great to have the funding of the CMA combined with my enthusiasm to make a difference. Looking back I’m amazed how much of a difference we have made in just 20 years.”

The use of both tubestock and direct seeding has seen she oaks, wattles, red gum and manna gum planted on the drier land higher of the hills and tea tree, swamp gum and melaleuca on the lower lying wetter areas.

The 2024/25 drought has hit the Glenelg-Hopkins region extremely hard with the lowest 12 months of rainfall since records began.

In the past you would expect skinny animals walking on parched, bare earth, damaged pastures and gullies, rivers and creeks muddied as water points and hills ready to erode once the rains arrive.

However, at Park Hill, while the sheep are fed and watered in containment, the pastures are alive and ready to hold precious moisture when it falls, ready to regenerate before stock are let back on to graze.

With over 60 kilometres of fencing, 45 water troughs and 13 kilometres of poly pipe installed at Park Hill, not only is iconic the Wannon River and its many gullies and creeks now protected for the future but the most suitable pastures are now sown on the most suitable soil types and smaller paddock sizes allow for better rotational grazing and resting.





# Unsolved conservation mystery at Curra

Peter and Jo Armstrong, Streatham.

## Key outcomes:

- Mixed farming: Merinos, prime lambs, grains, oilseeds, beans
- Fenced off and planted unproductive gullies
- Finding the perfect mix of conservation and production
- Rising salt up gullies a recent mystery

Peter Armstrong with Harry and Bruce standing in a newly sown pasture with one of the fenced off gullies behind.



The Armstrong family's history with Landcare extends to almost three decades and in that time the landscape of their mixed farm, Curra north of Streatham has changed dramatically.

From largely bare paddocks bounded by salty gullies, the farm is now defined by thousands of mature trees within those fenced-off gullies, now covering almost 60 acres of the farm.

It's a mix of conservation and farm production that has Peter Armstrong happy with the change they have made in their lifetime but also looking forward to the family achieving plenty more.

"When I started here it was obvious the gullies were salty and had rocks right down into them so we couldn't crop them anyway, so we decided to fence them all off and fill them with trees to manage the saline areas. It's hard to believe but salt was the big fear back then, you don't hear that much about it now."

With assistance from Landcare over the years, many thousands of eucalypts and some wattles have been planted, both tubestock and some direct seeding. Up to 1000 trees are planted annually at three metre spacings and the results are very obvious to see. The vast majority of trees have grown to become mature. Unfortunately, with the last two dry seasons the tree plantings have stopped but once decent seasons return the plantings will be back.

Peter says there are plenty of dual benefits to integrating conservation into a mixed farming operation.



"The trees have been great for us. This was a windswept place, by creating trees in shelterbelts and laneways has really changed that. Having that cover for sheep in both summer and winter months is a big benefit. We have many native ducks on the property including wood, chestnut and grey teals and pacific blacks, which all help control pests such as slugs. The shelter belts certainly help make spraying a lot easier by cutting down the wind."

One of the main reasons for fencing and planting gullies was to manage salt creeping up from gullies into productive farming areas and overall, this has been successful.

"Over the last 30 years the plantings have stopped the salt, reduced the water table. It's really done the trick," Peter adds.

However, in the last two very dry years there has been some interesting and puzzling results.

"We've had two of the driest years on record and the gullies are full of water again and now it is clear that in one gully the salt is moving up again. It's moved through the trees and further up the gully which has us wondering what is going on as it defies what we've been observing over the previous two decades. We've shown plenty of people and no one has an answer for me at this stage so that is an unsolved mystery."

The rising scald is of concern as it is heading towards a significant water source on the property.

Despite this one area of concern, the overall conservation activity at Curra has delivered multiple benefits.

"It's very important to be managing an entire ecosystem, to provide a home for many plants and animals, not just the ones that deliver us farm production. So, I welcome the approach from people and organisations that seek to recognise our role as managers of a more sustainable landscape, sustainable from both a farming and conservation point of view."

**"Over the last 30 years the plantings have stopped the salt, reduced the water table. It's really done the trick,"**

One example of this are the native bats that are terribly important as they can eat 20 grams of insects each per night and reduce our need for insecticides.

Peter has noticed a large increase in native animals over the last 30 years with a lot more bird species now on the farm, including a pair of rare Brolga that now call Curra home.

"Hearing the booming bittern call from the gullies is a real highlight and Curra is now home to generations of wedge tailed eagles. I really love it, it makes me feel really good. It's a pretty simple equation; if you don't look after the land it won't look after you."

To that end Peter says the future involves more tree plantings and a move to more perennial pasture species to not only provide more year-round feed for stock but to also keep valuable ground cover over drier months.

This is complimented by more nitrogen fixing clover species that reduce the reliance on nitrogen fertilisers for crops.

**"We have a system that has stood the test of many years and multiple generations and with the next generation now on the farm I think things overall are looking up,"** Peter added.







One of the wattle plantations at Boonderoo that have created interest from across Australia.

# Crowbar treeplanting pays off in volcanic proportions

**Morna and Jeff Semmens, Gazette.**

## Key Outcomes

- 900 acres
- Stony and rocky landscape
- Over 26,000 trees planted since 1989
- Over 23 kilometres of plantation fencing

Over nearly 40 years, Morna and Jeff Semmens have methodically transformed a brutal treeless rocky landscape into a farm full of native trees and lush pasture.

In the shadow of Mount Napier, this oasis of conservation and agriculture shows what is possible when a plan is put into action by a dedicated, committed, hard-working team.

Boonderoo was purchased in 1989 by then speech pathologist Morna and teacher Jeff who got to work immediately working on improving water, fencing and pasture renovation across 900 acres of harsh stony barrier country. Needless to say, farming up against a relatively recent active volcano has its fair share of challenges given the raw landscape.

“The farm was extremely rough, essentially it was rocks, reptiles and rabbits. The place was covered with bracken fern and thistles from one end to the other with wind howling through it in winter” Jeff says with a look that tells you that every square metre of the farm has required serious work.

Within this epic transformation, biodiversity and wildlife have taken precedence with some 26,000 trees planted throughout the farm, creating fantastic shelter and habitat for farm and native animals alike. Jeff is also pleased to say the farm is rabbit free after decades of focussed work.



**“Our very small wattle trial has connected us with bigger players in the native food space around Australia, as well as indigenous leaders,”**



Many of the trees have been planted with a crowbar which gives an idea of just how tough this landscape is. “We’ve planted native trees pretty much every year, helping to contribute a wildlife corridor between Mount Rouse and Mount Napier,” Morna adds.

Crucial to success has been the collective knowledge and support of the local Gazette Land Action group and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority. This combined expertise together with Landcare Facilitators and various grants, helped the Semmens implement their Whole Farm Management Plan and turn project plans into reality over the years.

Tree planting and water infrastructure have always taken priority. Wide shelterbelts and plantations have been established with a mix of eucalypts, banksias, acacias together with local species of callistemons, casuarinas and melaleucas, often linking up with existing or proposed plantations on neighbouring farms.

Coming from non-farming backgrounds not only brought a different mindset and approach to the local area but helped the pair to build new relationships in what is a very established and tightly held farming region. In more recent years, selected species of wattle plantations have been established for edible seed, biodiversity and shelter.

The Glenelg Hopkins CMA supported Morna and Jeff to run several field days, workshops and dinners to showcase the industry, bringing wattle scientists and experts from all over Australia to visit the area. “Our very small

wattle trial has connected us with bigger players in the native food space around Australia, as well as indigenous leaders,” Morna says.

The pair reflect on nearly 40 years of work at times with a great sense of achievement.

Morna adds “one of my favourite times of the year is just before the Autumn rains when I sit up at the top of a hill and look across what was a dry landscape but with rivers of green plantations through it. It’s just a wonderful sight and the realisation of what we set out to achieve.”

Morna and Jeff Semmens of Boonderoo, Gazette at one of their wattle plantations.







# Hopkins River riparian revival creates a haven

**Jane O'Beirne and Michael Rea,  
Hopkins Falls.**

## Key Outcomes

- Fencing off and excluding livestock from the river
- Up to 2000 trees planted per year
- Direct seeding along shelterbelts
- Significant improvement in native animal populations

Jane O'Beirne has worked for 25 years to help restore the delicate riparian zone along the lower reaches of the Hopkins Falls.

Along the lower reaches of the Hopkins River there is a slice of heaven where habitat for animals of the land, water and sky has been carefully restored.

Jane O'Beirne and Michael Rea have been fencing off and planting the riparian zone along the iconic river for 25 years.

"It was a gentle start as we had little knowledge but by joining the Landcare group, speaking with neighbours and with the great expertise of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (GHCMA) we have made a difference to this part of the world by doing a different section every year or two," Jane said.

Up to 2000 trees and shrubs have been planted per year and with successful direct seeding projects the pair can now see the significant difference the work has made for what was a damaged riparian zone.

The area is close the Framlingham Forest and therefore a significant site for all manner of wildlife. The Hopkins Falls Landcare Group now has the goal of creating a wildlife corridor all the way "from forest to the falls" with many landholders fencing off the river and revegetating.

Jane adds the Rivers of Warrnambool project run by the GHCMA has added significant momentum to this and has the aim of revegetating all the way to the mouth of the Hopkins in Warrnambool.



## Up to 2000 trees and shrubs have been planted per year and with successful direct seeding projects



“There were a lot of koalas passing through here that didn’t have many trees to live in when we arrived. Wallabies are common here now, not to mention the large numbers of parrots, cockatoos and eagles that we enjoy and of course we can’t forget the platypus, so it’s an important area for a lot of animals.”

In the meantime, the property is a working cattle farm so whilst new water points had to be created for the excluded livestock, the tree planting and shelter belts have created a more favourable environment for the cattle as well.

Knowledge of what to plant and where came from the GHCMA with swamp gum, manna gum, blackwood, tea tree, sedges, club rushes, wallaby and tussock grasses all being used along the river.

Mature plantations along the banks of the Wannon River above the Hopkins Falls.

“It was essential to have the great expertise of the people at the GHCMA as they helped with everything from securing funding through the species selection and of course successfully getting the outcome that we see today. There is of course expenses that we have to fund, but of course we are happy to do that because it gives us a great thrill and it really adds to the land.”

Jane says there’s a long way to go to help restore the health of the river as the Hopkins is generally not in good shape.

“It’s good to know you can really make a difference if you have the will to do so. One of the other great benefits here has been the hosting of school groups. This farm has helped a lot of kids better understand our environment and how we can live in harmony with nature. Allowing kids to get their hands dirty while planting trees is very healthy. There have been so many advantages to the work we’ve done along this beautiful river.”







Nelson Coastcare Inc's Mary Styles

# Local Nelson guardians protect their unique wilderness

## Nelson Coastcare Inc

Anyone looking for a model of strong community-led land management need look no further than the Nelson Coastcare Inc.

This group of volunteers work in various novel ways to conserve and improve their globally recognised habitat in the far south-west of Victoria at the mouth of the Glenelg River.

The biodiversity and pristine wilderness of the Glenelg Estuary and the wetlands of Discovery Bay were the inspiration for setting up Nelson Coastcare in 2011 by the late Leila Huebner, OAM.

The Estuary and Long Swamp are unique wetlands, providing habitat for 95 bird species, a quarter of which migrate from Russia and China. The site contains threatened plant and animal species and is a significant breeding ground for fish species such as black bream and estuary perch.

Leila's vision to recognise the ecological values of the area with Ramsar conservation listing was ultimately achieved, protecting the site into the future via an internationally recognised treaty.

The baton now has clearly been taken up by Mary Styles who speaks proudly and enthusiastically of the ongoing work of the 40 volunteers within the organisation.

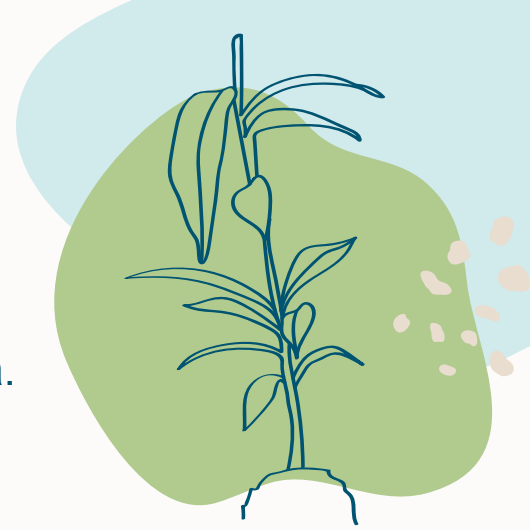
As a registered charity, Nelson Coastcare Inc has its house well and truly in order with clearly stated strategic plans, action plans, vision and purpose on their dedicated website.

### Key Outcomes

- Internationally recognised ecological status
- Protecting a unique local environment
- Dedicated and active volunteer group
- Clearly stated aims and on-ground action teams
- Diverse interests and expertise but one common goal



The Estuary and Long Swamp are unique wetlands, providing habitat for 95 bird species, a quarter of which migrate from Russia and China.



But it's not just the structure and clear direction in action here: it's on the ground activity that speaks the loudest.

The group takes a team-based approach to conservation with the likes of the “litter ladies”, “ferals” and “weeds”. Individuals pursue their interests in things like shorebirds, marsupials, native plants and fungi, regularly contributing to citizen science projects across their field of endeavour.



Mary takes particular pride in the Livingston Island nature walk where a downloadable audio guide accompanies interested walkers through the stunning natural beauty of the area.

“We have about 70 downloads a month which has amazed me, it's been well worth taking a digital audio approach as it really helps people understand and appreciate exactly what they are walking through.”

Funding for this ongoing work to control weeds, plant indigenous species and educate tourists and locals alike comes from regular grants.

One of the key supporters over many years has been the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority.

“They have been a very important partner and ally for us. The CMA progressed the nomination of the area for Ramsar status and continues to manage that status. But on a more practical level, if we need help they are always there and likewise if the CMA wants an odd job done we are only too happy to oblige. It's a really good relationship” Mary adds.

“This is an important part of my life and like many in our group I have a strong connection to this area. I believe it is the last area of wilderness frontier in Victoria, and we will do our best to keep it like that.”

The boardwalk across Long Swamp forming part of the Livingston Island Nature Walk.





# Uphill climb yielding results at Culla

Angus and Bobbie McLean, Culla.

## Key Outcomes

- Very steep creek and gullies of the Glenelg River catchment
- 42 km fencing
- Light loam and sandy soils, rocky outcrops
- Mixed success with tubestock plantings
- Good self-seeded eucalypt results
- Rabbit control key to stabilising banks

Farming at Kurra Myra in Culla, north of Pigeon Ponds is not for the faint of heart, but for Angus and Bobbie Mclean it has been 12 years of hard work that is starting to bear fruit.

Buying what was essentially a bare block of 1260 acres of extremely steep hills and eroded bare gullies would not be everyone's ideal investment but the couple have taken a strategic approach to turning it into a win-win for both agriculture and the natural environment.

The McLean's have taken a three-stage approach to the aim of fencing, planting and finding new water points away from the Deep Creek and its gullies.

"There is no way we could have done this without the help of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and Landcare because we simply could not have funded the fencing," Bobbie adds.

The two have had a courageous local fencing contractor knock in the posts while they have erected the wire and in doing created a much more manageable farm.

The fenced off areas have created important wildlife corridors, but removed access to half the farm, so a bridge linked the two sides with the laneway through the middle of the farm. About 6000 trees and shrubs have been planted across the first two sections with more to come for the third stage of the farm project.

Angus and Bobbie McLean stand on the bridge over Deep Creek.





Originally six species were suggested but with brutal seasons of late and not a lot of any clay in the soil, only three species have really survived that being chiefly eucalypts and blackwoods.

Where tubestock planted trees have struggled to survive, self-seeded red gums and blackwoods have emerged, proving once again that nature really does know best.

Where stock are now excluded, native grasses and poa species have moved in, stabilising the important riparian zones that were being badly eroded every time it rained.

Creating alternate water points was a challenge and even more so during the longest and driest drought in recorded history.

From two four megalitre dams at the sheds, water is reticulated throughout the property through 2-inch poly pipe. This is no mean feat when the height difference and head pressure is up to 90 metres.

But fencing off steep areas, creating new water points, establishing containment lots for drier times, planting perennials such as phalaris and cocksfoot is now reaping rewards according to Angus.

[“We can be a lot more proactive with our management of this place, helping pastures get away and improving water quality while providing much better shade and shelter is really beneficial.”](#)

One of the massive gains over the last 12 years has been the control of rabbits.

“They were everywhere when we got here, it was basically a rabbit refuge. We would have had over 20,000 rabbits and the damage they do to the sides of hills has to be seen to be believed. With enormous help and advice from Landcare we ripped and fumigated a lot of warrens and when coupled with the waves of biological control agents like calici virus it been great. You are doing pretty well to see a rabbit here now,” Angus says.

As the secretary treasurer of the Culla Pigeon Ponds Landcare Group, he enjoys being involved given it is a group with a lot of experience.

This sentiment is backed by Bobbie.

“We feel really comfortable approaching the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Group or Landcare about anything, it’s a great relationship and for us that’s really important.”

Balancing nature conservation and profitable, safe farming Bobbie says is two sides of the same coin.

“The fenced off areas are cohesive with the safety of people on vehicles as they are so steep. Keeping stock off areas that may erode, allows trees and grasses return to hold the banks together. In turn these trees provide shelter and shade for stock and all this means better water quality in the end as well.”

With water now right across the farm, including in containment lots, the future is looking a lot brighter from both a farming and nature perspective.

“We have learnt so much in these recent extraordinary years with containment areas, new dams, feed storage and pro-active management. I think Kurra Myra and us are well set up for what Mother nature wants to deliver us into the future,” Angus added.

A view looking over the very steep terrain and fenced off gullies at Kurra Myra.





# Port Fairy to Warrnambool rail trail unites and enhances communities

Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail inc.

## Key Outcomes

- 37km disused railway, 20km under volunteer management
- 50,000 trees planted since 2009
- Dozens of volunteers
- Building links across communities and land users

The Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail is improving landscapes, communities and the relationships within it.

A significant community project, it successfully links towns, land users, tourists and wildlife across 37 kilometres of disused railway line.

Over half the length of the trail, 20km, is managed by community groups who regularly meet to take care of their well-loved section. When they're not mowing, tree planting, fixing pathways or fences they're planning the next project to improve the trail.

It's symbolic that a piece of infrastructure that used to take people and farm produce to and from various towns is now enriching the lives of those within the towns as well as now bringing large numbers of tourists through the towns and regions as well.

About halfway along the trail you will find the extremely active Koroit Rail Trail group, with dozens of volunteers who meet weekly to take care of their section.

Michael Halls of the Koroit Rail Trail committee of management and Brian Trotter, volunteer and regular user are more than happy to explain what it means to be part of this now iconic part of South-West Victoria.

They are just two of many volunteers that have brought an enormous and diverse range of skills to the project.

Michael Halls and Brian Trotter, two of the prime movers along the Koroit section of the Port Fairy to Warrnambool rail trail.





“We certainly have the runs on the board in terms of management and ongoing care for this part of the world. It has taken a huge collective effort from a large number of people, but the very significant usage of the trail and what it means to generations of people shows what’s possible when people come together for a common cause,”

Michael Halls.

As a regular bike rider along the trail, Brian Trotter has also been recording the history of the Koroit section of the trail.

“Work began back in 2009 after state and federal governments funded a scoping study which found the project would need \$2.2 million dollars to turn into reality. After countless grants and ongoing support from many sectors, we now have this great resource that an increasing number of people are enjoying.”

It hasn’t always been smooth sailing as you would expect from managing a stretch of land that extends 37 kilometres across farmland and townships, over highways and country roads.

“Some people involved weren’t always on board and you can understand why, the trail cuts properties in half, create issues for road users and others. But with time I believe we have got everyone on board and the trail is now seen as a community asset that unites all of us,” Michael added.

“There are always ways through issues, some take longer than others but at the end of the day we always find a solution.”

The weekly working bees at Koroit are clearly important for keeping the area around the railway station and well beyond neat and trim, but the volunteers don’t see it as work as much as getting together and giving back to their community.

“We get enormous reward from seeing more people use this trail, whether its regular riding groups, schoolchildren, tourists or wildlife, it’s just great to be involved” Brian said.

The trail was largely bare of trees when work began but now about 50,000 trees and shrubs have been planted along its length, giving protection from wind, shade, habitat for birds and wildlife as well as improving the aesthetic of the region.

About 20000 trees are planted annually, often endemic species such as Manna Gum, Swamp Gum, Wattles, She Oak and Callistemon. Local schoolchildren have planted a lot of trees over the years, giving the next generation a direct connection to the trail.

Rescued koalas are regular users of the manna gum tree trimmings, a little example of where the trail is offering unexpected benefits.

The trail has received trees from the Moyne Shire to use as carbon offsets.

Port Fairy and Koroit riding groups are regular users, school groups of 30-50 children use the trail several times a year not to mention the large use the trail receives during the warmer months when many people from outside the region can be found enjoying a pleasant ride.

The trail has enjoyed philanthropic support from the likes of family foundations, Lions clubs, Riding and Bushwalking groups, engineering and pharmaceutical companies, Moyne and Warrnambool Shire Councils, Primary Schools and Landcare.

The Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail has not only become an iconic tourist attraction to the region but has achieved local ownership and created a sense of pride for the people and communities it passes through.





# More nature and more farming; both work at Cashmore Park

John and Brigita Keiller, Cashmore.

## Key Outcomes

- Improving both production and natural capital
- Part of Tarragal Landcare group
- Collectively Up to 100,000 trees planted over 30 years
- Patchwork of native links for wildlife corridors
- Over 150 bird species, 12 frog species observed

Finding the perfect combination of production and conservation is a lifetime quest for John and Brigita Keiller at Cashmore Park just west of Portland.

A thought leader in agriculture, John has been at the front of genetic changes in the sheep industry while closely in tune with the natural world around him, constantly observing the ecosystem that he manages.

As a 30-year member and past chair of the Tarragal Landcare Group, he has been central to significant change in the landscape in his lifetime.

Across the 1800 hectares the Keillers now run, about 10% of the land is now covered with native vegetation through shelterbelts, waterways and agroforestry as he continues to try and find the right balance of nature and farming.

“The settlers to the region cleared a lot of country to get started. In fact, we have some of the original Henty land at Bridgewater which was grazed back in 1834, making it the oldest grazing land in Victoria. But the pendulum has been swinging back to more land for nature and this is where it is important to recognise our natural capital.”



Back in the mid 1990s the Tarragal Landcare Group formed and one of their first tasks was to survey the native vegetation and animal species across the participating farms. The early vision was to protect remnant vegetation while creating north-south links to add to the existing east-west vegetation corridors.

Swamp, bog, manna and some red gum have been key to the revegetation areas, together with silver, gold and black wattles as well as woolly and prickly tea tree, planted in five to seven rows.

These are the species the Tarragal group has found to stand up to the competition from existing ryegrass and clover dominant pastures across the sandy and the rich black soils of this landscape, an area that commonly receives over 850mm of rainfall annually.

“Across three decades it’s been really interesting to watch the wildlife return but also to see the human change. We started with the early adopters and that drew its fair share of sceptics, but it was followed by farmers that were interested and then a third wave of those initially sceptical but won over by the positive changes they started observing.”

The Keillers have now counted over 150 bird species and 12 frog species across their farmland.

One of the species they can’t help but watch is the rufous bristlebird which is now spreading out across areas they haven’t been in for many years.

“It’s a pleasant surprise to see so many birds so quickly given about half of Australia’s native birds need hollows to nest in and you really only get hollows in eucalypts after the trees are about 60 years old as branches fall.”

John confirms how the benefits of native vegetation are real: for stock it’s the winter shelter and shade in summer and obviously it provides habitat for native animals for food, nesting and protection.

“We’ve put about 150 nesting boxes out for sugar gliders and they are well used. You often see gum leave nests in them in just a matter of weeks if they go out at the right time.”

The Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and Landcare have been long-time funders of work with the Tarragal Landcare Group, helping fund the cost of establishing shelterbelts but also the facilitation and expertise essential to achieving results according to John.

“My Grandfather was the inaugural president of the Portland field naturalists over a century ago and my father followed him so it’s great to be part of that lineage and see these positive changes to our environment. Passing on a legacy of farming and nature co-existing to my three sons and their families is something I find very satisfying.

We won’t stop planning, we won’t stop planting and we won’t stop learning”

John Keiller continues to work to find the right balance of farm production and conservation at Cashmore Park.







The Victorian Landcare Grants are funded by the Victorian Government and delivered by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA.

For more information visit [www.ghcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au)

