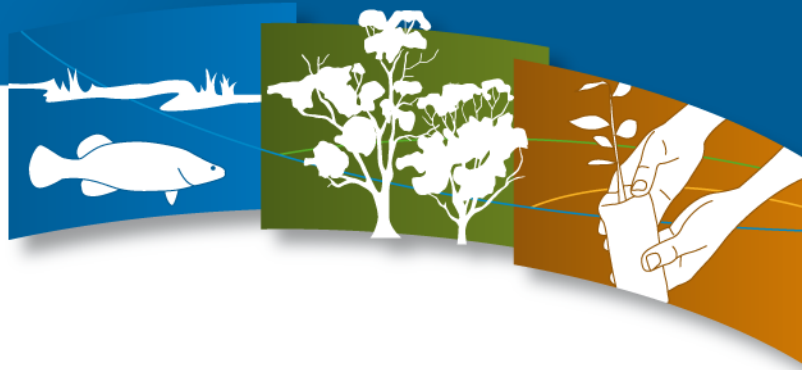


# Story of Change



Project: Caring for the Campaspe

Financial year story collected: 2018-19

Name: John Bickley

Despite being away from the land for more than 25 years, John Bickley's passion for farming never left and at the age of forty-eight he returned to his roots. John's connection with the land stems from his childhood growing up on the family farm.

When the opportunity arose, John purchased 6 hundred acres along the Campaspe River at Fosterville and the inherited farming practices of the previous owners. "When cropping finished stock crash-grazed the land for three or four months. You could see the damage to the landscape". Stock also accessed the river directly as there was no alternative watering points on the property which destroyed the vegetation and riverbanks. Something needed to change.

John first learnt about the North Central CMA's Caring for the Campaspe project through a chance meeting with Emma Wolters, Catchment Restoration Officer, over a cuppa at his father's home and registered his interest to be a part of the program.

"Traditionally farmers are very independent and avoid government incentives and support due to complex red tape but the process was straight-forward. I would definitely recommend the project to other farmers in the area," said John.

John said over the past eighteen months the health of the river and streamside vegetation has improved thanks to off-stream watering, 3kms of fencing to exclude stock access to the river and the natural regeneration occurring. "Around eight hundred new trees are growing. It didn't take long to see a difference these works have made to the landscape."

Since purchasing the property John has also made significant changes including the division of land that enables the successful rotation of cropping, sowing, stock management and grazing. John said he also has peace of mind knowing that stock can't stray on to neighboring properties.



Photo: River fencing on the Bickley property

The barren paddocks that once existed are now operating as a prosperous and healthy farm. "What we've been able to achieve through incentives from the Caring for the Campaspe project has been invaluable in terms of stock management and environmental health." John's appreciation for conservation is evolving and he's looking forward to further improvements in the landscape over the next five years.

Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People