

ground cover



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

www.nccma.vic.gov.au

Keeping you up-to-date with all the Landcare news

May 10

Get your 'Ground Cover' direct

The newsletter you are reading is for ALL members of Landcare and Friends groups in our region. If you would like to receive it directly, rather than via your group, jump on our direct email list. All you have to do is send an email request to landcare@nccma.vic.gov.au or phone reception on 03 5448 7124.

THIS MONTH'S CONTENTS

NEWS.....	page 2
EVENTS.....	page 4
COURSES.....	page 6
FUNDING NEWS.....	page 7
ARMCHAIR READING.....	page 8

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

Where is the year going? I can hardly believe that it is May already... On a brighter note we have plenty in store for you over the coming months, with training opportunities currently being planned in response to the group surveys.

The 2010-11 Second Generation Landcare Grants program is almost here. I know what you are all thinking, 'hey, but it is too early!' Yes it is early but the process has been brought forward this year as the State Government would like the program to align with the financial year. This year that won't be possible but we will be bringing the process forward. So, stay near your letterbox as application forms and guidelines will be delivered the week beginning Monday 17 May. Groups will have two months to put together their applications with the grants process closing Friday 16 July. There are three grant types this year – Major Integrated Project (\$5,000 - \$40,000), Small Grants (up to \$5,000) and Maintenance grants (up to \$500). Descriptions, limitations and examples will be provided in the guidelines that each group will receive. We will be also be hosting a number of Community Information Events with dates and venues currently being finalised. So put your thinking caps on and start formulating your projects for 2010-11.

The Landcare team is growing! Well for a short time only. North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) will be hosting a Department of Sustainability and Environment Graduate. Jessica Barnes, who is part way through her graduate program, will be working with the CMA until August. Jessica will be working on a number of projects including coordinating the training program. So if you get to meet Jessica please make her feel welcome!

Before I sign off, can I also remind you all that it is very important we have the most up to date information about your group! If you are not sure whether we have the correct details, please give either Janelle or myself a call at the North Central CMA office on 03 5448 7124.

Warm regards,

Jodie Odgers

Regional Landcare Coordinator

North Central
Catchment Management Authority
PO Box 18 Huntly, VIC 3551
Phone: 03 5448 7124
Email: jodie.odgers@nccma.vic.gov.au



NEWS

And the winners are ...

Congratulations to Kooreh Landcare Group and Upper Spring Creek Landcare Group, who are the recipients of our two prizes of \$250 worth of tools and equipment for completing our recent 'Supporting your Group' survey.

Thank you very much to all of the groups who filled in and sent back their surveys. We appreciate you taking the time to complete this extra task.

As a result of your information, we will be able to: (a) offer training over the next few months that should be relevant and useful; and (b) include some new and insightful information in our annual Landcare Report Card for the state team, to demonstrate what a great job our regional Landcarers are doing.

We will be notifying groups about upcoming training over the coming weeks.

Second Gen to open early

All Landcarers in the region need to note the very important news that the Victorian Government's Second Generation Landcare grants program for 2010 will be running earlier than usual. The changes are a recommendation of the State Government to align the program with the financial year.

Applications will be opening Monday 17 May and close Friday 16 July. As usual, all groups will receive application forms in the mail, and they will also be available on the North Central CMA web site.

North Central CMA will be running a number of community information sessions in the first two weeks of June. The purpose of the sessions is to inform Landcare groups about the changes to the Second Generation Landcare Grants and give groups an opportunity to ask questions about their projects and applications. Session locations and times will be advertised in the local media.

With the dates of the 2010 round being brought forward, this of course means that some groups will still be rolling out 2009-10 projects when the new round opens. Groups with ongoing projects due to finish in November 2010 will still be eligible to apply for the 2010-11 round.

There are still three categories; however the amounts for these have changed. The major integrated projects will be \$5,000 - \$40,000 per project. The small grants will be \$5,000 per project and the group maintenance is up to \$500. The guidelines outline the limitations of each grant type and provide examples of the type of activities that can be funded.

Groups will be receiving their paperwork for the 2010-11 program in the mail the week beginning 17 May.

For more information contact Jodie Odgers on 03 5440 1883.

Students at your service

As some groups have already found, students from the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT) Conservation and Land Management courses can add some real value to your projects and activities, and research important data that can help you leverage more funding.

Students undertake restoration and research projects, wildlife monitoring and biological surveys, run activities and events, and formulate site management plans and river management plans as part of their studies.

Course coordinator Tony Misson emphasises that this is not "work experience", but a partnership with communities, where students provide real value to groups. Project activities form part of the students' assessments.

Students who work with Landcare groups come well equipped: they already hold all those useful certificates for occupational health and safety, farm chemical use, chainsaw use and first aid. When groups offer opportunities to students, it's a win-win situation for everyone.

For more information contact Tony Misson, Conservation and Land Management course coordinator on 03 5434 1759 or email tmisson@britafe.vic.edu.au

Fox baiting underway

The Department of Sustainability and Environment's (DSE) autumn fox baiting program got underway last month.

As part of the Good Neighbour program, and in cooperation with Parks Victoria, DSE is focusing their baiting on public land adjacent to private farmland in state forests in Bendigo, Heathcote, Inglewood, St Arnaud, Maryborough and Avoca.

Specific areas that have been or will be baited include Wellsford State Forest, Toobarac State Forest, One Eye State Forest, Paddys Ranges State Park, St Arnaud State Forest, Little Tottington State Forest, Pyrenees State Forest and Glenmona State Forest. For further information, please contact DSE on 136 186.

DSE says the objective is to reduce the impact of foxes on adjoining farms and nearby livestock, as well as native animals, and to reduce fox numbers prior to the lambing season.

The North Central CMA and Parks Victoria have also been implementing a baiting program in and around Lake Bael Bael and the Avoca Marshes, Reedy Lakes, Gunbower Forest and along selected sections of Gunbower Creek.

These are some of the 'hot spot' areas identified by the local community at workshops held in Kerang and Cohuna in February.

This program is part of the Enhancing Values of the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands and Enhancing Values of the Gunbower Ramsar projects, funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country (CfoC) program.



A sticky discovery

Landcare and other conservation groups, with their in-depth local knowledge, can play a vital role in identifying and protecting rare species, as this story shows.

Friends of Kooyoora member Jim Irving has discovered a plant never before found in Victoria.

While walking in a state forest near Inglewood, Jim found a population of Sticky Daisy Bush (*Olearia passerinoides subspecies glutescens*), which had previously only been found in South Australia, where it is listed as Rare.

The Sticky Daisy Bush is a shrub that can grow up to 2.5 metres high. It has very narrow, linear leaves and beautiful little purplish daisy flowers.

Plans are underway to strike cuttings of the plant, expand the three colonies that have been found locally and to maintain a population at the State Herbarium.

Officially endangered

In good news from the perspective of funding leverage for many north central Landcarers, the Australian Government has listed Grey Box Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands of south eastern Australia as a nationally threatened ecological community.

The decision to list these plant communities as “endangered” came into effect on 1 April. Conservation will focus on the best quality and functional patches.

As most Landcarers already know, Grey Box Grassy Woodlands are characterised by the dominance or co-dominance of Grey Box trees, and an understorey that is typically grassy, with other herbs and shrubs, including saltbush, also occasionally present.

Prior to white settlement there were up to 1.6 million hectares of this plant community in Victoria, of which only about 344,000 hectares remain. Relatively few areas are intact due to the impacts of clearing, weed invasion and fragmentation. Most of what is left occurs as small and widely separated fragments surrounded by disturbed or agricultural land uses.

Listed ecological communities are priorities for funding under certain targets in the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country (CfoC) business plan, as well as being viewed favourably in many other grant schemes.

In the future, landholders who have maintained these woodlands/grasslands in good condition on their properties may well be able to take advantage of more funding opportunities, or make stronger cases for funding under existing grant programs.

Landholders should note that the listing is not intended or likely to impact adversely on routine farming activities. However, certain activities may need approval. These include permanently clearing areas of the protected community, permanently converting the area to cropping, fertilising, irrigating, sowing exotic pasture species, intensifying grazing pressure, cultivating and herbicide boom spraying.

Under national environment law, it is up to the person responsible for the activity to work out whether approval is needed. If you would like advice, talk to the National Farmers Federation environment liaison officer on 1800 704 520 or email environment@nff.org.au

For more information, including a facts sheet for landholders and a list of typical species within these woodlands/grasslands, go to www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened

Beware the tussock

While it doesn’t often feature on our “hit list” in the North Central region, we all need to be vigilant about Serrated Tussock. This weed already covers more than two million hectares in south-east Australia and has the potential to infest around 32 million hectares, including much of our region.

According to modelling by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, currently there are infestations north of Kyneton, east of Bendigo and south of Birchip. The potential for further infestation is “high” in a broad area south of Bendigo, and along the Murray between Kerang and Swan Hill; and “medium” or “likely” over most of the North Central region.

Serrated Tussock is expensive and difficult to control, and produces huge quantities of seed. It is not restricted to any soil type or rainfall pattern; is resistant to drought; and invades forests, woodlands and rocky areas, as well as pastures.

It is a regionally prohibited weed in our region, meaning that it is not (yet) widely distributed and can still be eradicated. But it is spreading! All land managers are required by law to “take reasonable steps to eradicate Serrated Tussock on their land”, according to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party is urging landholders in potential trouble zones to be vigilant and to take prompt action to remove or kill plants if they are found. Isolated plants and small patches should always be chipped out or treated with herbicide as soon as they are detected. Treated areas should be inspected twice a year for up to 10 years or until regrowth from the soil seed bank ceases.

And it’s good to know the DPI is playing its part: the owners of a property at Rockbank were recently fined \$29,000 plus \$70,800 in costs for failing to comply with a land management notice to control Serrated Tussock.

The working party says it will assist landholders with funding applications for Serrated Tussock control projects. There is plenty of useful information on the working party’s web site, including a regular newsletter ‘Tussock Times’.

To report an infestation contact the DPI on 136 186. To receive the newsletter or for project support, contact Chelsea Wardrope on 0448 537 094 or email chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au. Alternatively go to www.serratedtussock.com



Woodlands project popular

Project officer Robyn McKay reports a great response to the Box Gum Grassy Woodlands project, which offered financial assistance to landholders to protect and enhance White Box, Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodlands and Derived Grassland Remnants on private land.

While successful applicants are still being finalised, all site inspections have been done and it looks like about 20 landholders will share approximately \$214,000 worth of funding for onground works on their properties. Locations of projects ranged from Pine Grove to Denver, with actions including herbivore exclusion plots to protect highly diverse derived grasslands, pest plant and animal control, and revegetation to replace missing understorey species.

North Central CMA is running the project with funding through the Federal Government's Caring for Our Country (CfoC) initiative, to improve condition, connectivity and resilience, and reduce threats to this vegetation community, which is listed as critically endangered nationally.

Canberra is calling

For the first time ever, Landcare Australia will be making a limited number of tickets for the National Landcare Awards available for purchase to the Landcare community and the general public.

The ceremony will be held in the Great Hall at Parliament House, Canberra, on 24 June. Tickets are \$50, which buys you pre-dinner drinks, the gala awards dinner and the opportunity to have a great time with your favourite types of people!

Ticket sales close on 1 June. To book, contact Landcare Australia Ltd on 02 9412 1060 or email awards@landcareaustralia.com.au

Get on the world stage

The 2010 United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day Awards recognises those who demonstrate innovation and dedication in their work to protect, manage or restore the environment.

Award categories include sustainability leadership, green building, business sustainability, greenhouse challenge, local government, sustainable water management, education/schools, community and individual.

To mark 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is also sponsoring a new biodiversity prize, which will recognise the best company, organisation, community or individual that has demonstrated innovation and excellence in the development and management of Australia's biodiversity.

UN World Environment Day is on 5 June. Nominations close on 14 May. For entry forms and further details, go to www.unaavictoria.org.au or phone 03 9670 7878 or email office@unaavictoria.org.au

Ratbags will be the winners

Ratbags, stirrers, cranks and radicals – we have a few in our Landcare ranks! We love them because often these are the passionate people who instigate change and make things happen.

The 2010 Kookaburra Awards, supported by Westpac, will recognise those who create change, make a real difference and extend others' vision of what is possible.

There are three categories: community groups, projects and individuals. Each category winner will receive a prize pack including Our Community books, newsletters, DVDs and training, plus \$3,000 in cash, to the total value of \$10,000.

The Kookaburras are awards with a difference. The winners will not necessarily be the biggest or the best or the most successful, nor a guru or a saint. Instead, think innovative community leadership, changes for the better, projects that change people's lives, and the ability to bring ordinary people along with a movement to change their lives and ours.

You can nominate others or even yourself (it's okay for cranks to do this sort of thing). Nominations close on 12 May and must be made online. Go to www.ourcommunity.com.au/kookaburra

EVENTS

Take a bow, folks

National Volunteer Week kicks off on 10 May, so don't forget to acknowledge and thank your fellow Landcarers – and yourselves – for all your hard work, passion and commitment over the past year.

We say "good on you" to each and every one of you. No matter what your contribution, you do make a difference.

The Mount Alexander Volunteer Network has been particularly active in planning special events for the week, including a free "thank you" concert on 16 May at 2.30pm for all volunteers. Many local Landcarers attended last year's "freebie" and had a great time. Please RSVP to 03 5472 4842 or email mavn@cch.org.au

Listen in to WMA FM radio, which will also be promoting volunteers and their work, and broadcasting live from the concert.

The volunteer network will also be launching a new committee support toolkit to help groups like us with fundraising, recruitment, planning and risk management. It will be launched on 13 May at an afternoon tea at Newstead at 2.00pm; and at a volunteer supper at Maldon Neighbourhood Centre at 5.00pm.

To attend either of these events or to request a copy of the toolkit, phone 03 5472 4842 or email mavn@cch.org.au

Check out your local papers and local government web sites for information on events in your area. Enjoy!



Fly south for bird forum

Bird lovers may want to fly south (well, it is nearly winter) to Melbourne for the Birds Australia 2010 conservation forum 'Connecting the Bush: From Backyards to Landscapes', to be held in Melbourne on 29 May.

This interactive event will include presentations on the status of Australia's bird species and new approaches to their conservation from some of Australia's leading academics and conservation organisations, plus discussions on how we can conserve Australia's unique birds.

Speakers will include David Paton from the University of Adelaide, who will talk about re-constructing habitat for woodland birds; Andrew Bennett from Deakin University who will present the keynote address on understanding conservation at a landscape scale; Doug Robinson from Trust for Nature on 15 years of habitat restoration and conservation on the Longwood Plains; and Paul Sinclair from the Australian Conservation Foundation on building resilience, and making connections between people and Australia's natural life support systems.

On Saturday evening there will be a social dinner and then on Sunday participants are sure to enjoy one of two guided bird-watching excursions to either Melbourne's Western Treatment Plant or to Anglesea to search for the Rufous Bristlebird.

The venue is the Prince Phillip Lecture Theatre at the University of Melbourne, Parkville.

The cost of the forum is \$90 for non-members; field trips are \$45 for non-members. For further details and online registration visit: www.birdsaustralia.com.au/whats-on

Bats and birds talk

The third and final presentation in Connecting Country's very successful free speaker series will focus on the amazing diversity of Australian bats and woodland birds.

The 'Hidden Creatures' talk will be held at the Faulder Watson Hall, 206 Barker Street Castlemaine, on 13 May, at 7.30pm.

Australia has over 90 species of bats and the smallest weigh only ten grams and could fit into a matchbox. Wildlife ecologist Lindy Lumsden will explain that far from being creepy, bats are cute – and useful insect predators, too.

Monash University researcher Greg Horrocks has 35 years' experience in ecological surveying, and his insights and information on woodland birds are sure to be fascinating.

For further information contact Latarnie McDonald on 03 5472 1594.

Help count 'Swifties'

This year's Swift Parrot count in the Castlemaine district will be held on 15 and 16 May, and organisers would love more helpers.

Chris Tzaros from Birds Australia will be working with Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club member Deb Worland to organise the count. If you are confident you can identify a Swiftly, let Deb know and she will give you a designated site.

If you would like to be involved but don't feel totally confident in your identification skills, you will be partnered with someone more experienced. Phone Deb on 03 5472 2474 to volunteer.

The Swift Parrot, which breeds in Tasmania, is believed to migrate further than any other parrot in the world. Our north central region box-ironbark forests are critically important winter habitat for these birds.

Due to vegetation clearing, the breeding population of the Swift Parrot has declined markedly in the last decade and now comprises fewer than 1300 breeding pairs.

We have the Power

'Power Up' is the slogan for the big Communities in Control conference, which will feature an imposing line-up of speakers and presenters, all focusing on empowering communities and volunteers.

To be held in Melbourne on 31 May and 1 June, the conference is expected to attract up to 1500 people from all around Australia. Think of the networking opportunities!

Organisers invite you to "get fired up" when you feel like you are burning out, enjoy yourself, be inspired and re-energised, and be reminded of what really matters and why you do what you do.

A post-conference skills day on 2 June will focus on sustainable fund-raising and marketing. The cost of this day only is \$235.

Unfortunately this event is not free. The cost is \$298 for the conference only and \$495 for the conference plus the skills day. However, organisers say there are "substantial discounts" for groups of five or more.

The venue is the Moonee Valley Racing Club, Moonee Ponds. You can book on line, or by phone, fax, email or post. For more information go to www.ourcommunity.com.au, email service@ourcommunity.com.au or phone 03 9320 6800.

Riparian Vegetation field day

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is hosting a field day on Tuesday 25 May, focusing on the importance and management of riparian vegetation to improve river health.

The field day will be held from 10.00am until 2.00pm at Vaughan Glenluce Mineral Springs and forms part of a project the North Central CMA is currently implementing to protect and enhance priority waterways in North Central Victoria located in the upper Loddon and Campaspe catchments.



This is an opportunity for landholders to learn about the importance of protecting the health of their local waterways, incentives available and management techniques for the control of willows, gorse and blackberries, with information from both the North Central CMA and the Department of Primary Industries representatives. Priority waterways include Sailors Creek (Daylesford area), Loddon River (upstream of Guildford), Kangaroo Creek (tributary of the Loddon River), Coliban River (upstream of Upper Coliban Reservoir), Kangaroo Creek (entering Malmsbury Reservoir), Jim Crow Creek (Shepherds Flat to Strangways).

Please RSVP by Wednesday 19 May by phoning 03 5448 7124.

Diary dates

- 11-17 May: National Volunteer Week
- 5 June: World Environment Day
- 24 June: National Landcare Awards
- July 30: Schools Tree Day
- 1 August: National Tree Day
- 6-12 September: Landcare Week

COURSES

Planning for the future

You can't predict the future but you can plan for it – with the help of free FarmPlan21 nationally accredited training, held in your region and addressing your issues.

Project facilitator Kevin Moschetti, from the Department of Primary Industries, reports there has been a high level of interest in the program among landholders in North Central Victoria. A second course ran in Newstead recently, and it is likely future courses will be held in the Maldon, Baringhup and Harcourt areas.

More courses will be held in other areas according to demand, so all you need to do is make an expression of interest as soon as possible, and enrol before 30 June.

FarmPlan21 helps participants to create their own action plan, or update an old plan, to help them achieve their personal, financial, production and environmental goals.

Topics include your farm future, land use capabilities, understanding your soil, farm water management, biodiversity and native vegetation, computer based mapping, developing management plans and strategies, and implementing your plan.

The course comprises six four-hour sessions, including iFarm training, guest presenters and plenty of opportunities to share information with others.

To register your interest contact Kevin Moschetti on 03 5430 4804, 0409 351 286 or email kevin.moschetti@dpi.vic.gov.au

Useful courses at TAFE

Bendigo TAFE offers many courses that may be of interest to Landcare volunteers. These include Farm Chemicals Users Certificate, Farm Chemical Refresher and 1080 Pest Animal Control Endorsement, Chainsaw Operations, Occupational Health and Safety, and Native Seed Collection.

As well, for those who really want to get stuck into it, there are courses in conservation and land management, and the Diploma of Sustainable Agriculture.

Delivery options include full time, part time, short courses, "in the work place" and online. If you can generate sufficient interest and participants for a certain course, Bendigo TAFE can deliver it at a convenient location close to you.

Some of you will be interested to know that Bendigo TAFE will recognise many relevant skills you may have gained in the workplace, or through volunteering or other courses. This means you may receive credits for some units, thus reducing the time needed to complete your chosen course.

Farmers should note they might be eligible for Federal Government FarmBis subsidies, which cover all costs of eligible courses. The range of courses is huge.

Contact Tony Misson on 03 5434 1759 to discuss your needs, or email tmission@britafe.vic.edu.au. The website has a full list of courses, plus information about fees and charges. Go to www.britafe.vic.edu.au

Farm carbon workshop

If you are one of the many still scratching your head about carbon in farming systems, South West Goulburn Landcare is hosting free workshops this month on soil carbon, on-farm emissions and carbon toolkits.

The flier promises that attendees will "leave with the necessary tools for understanding soil carbon and on-farm emissions, and how they integrate into a farming system".

Topics will include how soil carbon affects soil health, how emissions can be reduced, how to measure soil carbon, how to incorporate carbon into your farm soil health management plan, and updates on current research and emissions policy.

The workshop closest to our region is at Kings Park Showground, Seymour, on Thursday 13 May, from 9.30am until 4.00pm. You must RSVP, particularly as this event is not technically in our Landcare region. Contact Ian Julian on 03 5734 6312 or email swglandcare@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au



FUNDING NEWS

'Cat' can do

If some corporate sponsorship would boost your next major event or activity, Caterpillar would like to hear from you.

It has established a sponsorship program, open year-round, to help the company "connect with its customers, give back to communities and improve quality of life in a more efficient, environmentally sensitive manner".

All sponsorship requests need to be submitted at least 90 days prior to your event.

Like any other sponsor, Caterpillar wants to ensure it gets good value from its partnerships. So successful applicants will positively reflect its brand values, showcase its technology solutions, and support its environmental, economic and social commitments.

If your group would like to attract sponsorship (with any suitable organisation, not just Caterpillar), the Caterpillar application form is very educational indeed. It provides an excellent overview of what potential sponsors expect, the information they might require and how Landcare groups could "sell" their activities to sponsors. Well worth a look.

For more information on the Caterpillar offer, and to access guidelines and application forms, go to www.australia.cat.com/sponsorships

Bank on labour

The National Australia Bank's Employee Volunteer Grant Program sadly cannot sign your blank cheques but it does offer something that is nearly as valuable – enthusiastic free labour.

This program, which is ongoing, is an opportunity to secure one-off additional help for a big event, or regular, ongoing help for your current project.

NAB provides each of its employees with two days of paid volunteer leave each year – nice one. This year employees around Australia have recorded 2,587 volunteer days with an in-kind value of \$928,625.

NAB is looking for volunteering activities that require unskilled labour, with a focus on participation; preferably during the working week; in locations that are not too difficult to find; which are safe and supervised; and which do not involve direct contact with children.

Please note that applicants must have public liability insurance and be able to provide a copy of the policy before an activity can be advertised to NAB employees on the volunteer planner.

NAB cannot guarantee the availability of volunteers for an activity; NAB volunteers need to register an interest in your activity before a match can be made and the spaces filled. NAB volunteers are also prohibited from working directly with children under 18.

NAB also offers a skill-based volunteer program, where groups can access specialist skills at no cost from NAB staff volunteers.

For more information on both programs and application forms, go to www.nab.com.au

Something 'fishy'

The Victorian Government's 2009-10 Recreational Fishing Grants Program could be a useful source of support if your group wants to improve fish habitat, or protect or enhance popular public fishing spots.

The small grants program, which is open all year round, offers funding of up to \$5,000 until the pool has been distributed, while the large grants program, which closes on 31 May, offers funding between \$5,000 and \$100,000.

Examples of eligible projects relevant to us include those that improve fishery sustainability and habitat; recreational fisheries-related education, information and training; recreational fisheries research; building or upgrading access paths or walkways; events and programs that promote responsible recreational fishing practices; and educational materials.

Note that the emphasis here is on "recreational fishing" and not necessarily the conservation of native fish species or their habitats. But if you've got a good idea, at least talk it over with the program people – it looks like a community-oriented, user-friendly program.

For more information phone 03 9658 4779, email: rec.fishinggrants@dpi.vic.gov.au or go to www.new.dpi.vic.gov.au/fisheries/recreational-fishing2/small-grants-program

Local climate change action

The Victorian Government's new Climate Communities grants program is designed to promote and support local actions to tackle climate change. Local groups can access information, advice and grants of up to \$50,000.

The program will help to link existing community networks centred around local councils, service clubs, schools and environment groups, and encourage and support new groups.

Funding is open to community groups, as well as local governments and schools that are supporting community action.

Examples of eligible projects include retrofitting a community hall to reduce energy use and using it as a demonstration to promote energy efficiency; establishing a shared transport scheme; community gardening workshops; training for community leaders or volunteers; and pilot projects to reduce waste at local sports clubs.

You need to contact the Climate Communities team through Sustainability Victoria to discuss your proposal before submitting an application. The team can help you develop the project, meet the assessment criteria and fill out your application. It can also help to link you with suitable project partners.



There are no opening or closing dates and the program is ongoing. There is a stack of useful information, project templates and forms at www.climatecommunities.vic.gov.au/grants

Climate Communities facilitators are also available to provide information, advice and assistance with grant applications.

Drought support projects

The Department of Primary Industries has launched a new funding program for projects that will improve drought support services for northern irrigation region farmers and also irrigation horticulturists Victoria-wide.

Applicants to the Farm Decisions Support Grant program should offer products or activities that will enable farmers to make decisions about their future and adjust to change, and support farmers who have decided to leave farming to maximise their opportunities; and/or develop and deliver products, activities or programs that will improve the capability of service providers to deliver quality services addressing adjustment and exit.

Examples of projects include development of reference materials; workshops addressing options for career change; workshops discussing alternative uses of land and water assets or exploring diversification; and related skill development for service providers.

Applicants can apply for up to \$50,000, which can be the full or part cost of the project. The total funding pool is \$500,000.

Applications close on 14 May and successful applicants must complete their projects by 17 December this year. Proposals must be submitted via email. The grants are a component of the Victorian Government's drought assistance program.

For an application form or more information contact Jen Murray on 03 5336 6694 or 0448 917 753, or email jen.murray@dpi.vic.gov.au

Water leaders

The Peter Cullen Trust is calling for applications for its leadership program 'Bridging Water Science and Policy'.

The trust hopes to attract applicants from all over Australia from a range of water management, water policy, and water science-related areas. Participants in the leadership program will work together to achieve measurable outcomes, bridging water science and policy.

The Peter Cullen Trust is a new charitable organisation which has been set up to support programs that continue the work of the late Professor Peter Cullen, a champion of our rivers who led the debate on the national water crisis and helped revolutionise how Australians think about it.

For more information go to the web site www.petercullentrust.com.au and look under programs. For an information pack, email office@petercullentrust.com.au or contact the executive administrator on 02 6206 8606. Applications close on 1 July.

ARMCHAIR READING

Why the Welcome?

You may have noticed the recent debate about whether or not "Welcome to Country" and "Acknowledgement of Country" are appropriate or tokenistic.

North Central CMA's Indigenous Facilitator Mark Pietzsch says that Welcome to Country is a right of Indigenous people and not a privilege, while Acknowledgement of Country is a respectful, yet not difficult, practice.

A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to welcome visitors to their traditional land. It can include singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies, or a speech in traditional language or English.

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. Crossing into another group's country required a request for permission to enter, and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage.

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of showing awareness of and respect for the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held, and of recognising the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their Country.

An Acknowledgment of Country can be informal or formal, and involves visitors acknowledging the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owners of the land, as well as the long and continuing relationship between Indigenous people and their country.

At a meeting, speech or formal occasion the speaker can begin their proceedings by offering an Acknowledgement of Country. Unlike a Welcome to Country, an acknowledgement can be performed by a non-Indigenous person.

There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, though often a statement may take the following form: "I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the (appropriate group) people, and pay my respect to elders both past and present."

It helps to think about how you might personalise and localise an acknowledgement to make it as meaningful as possible.

Incorporating welcoming and acknowledgement protocols into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians and custodians of their land. It promotes an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. It is a small gesture of



recognition of the association with land and place of the first Australians.

The exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from Australia's history books, flag, anthem, and for many years our democracy can never be undone – and the damage it has done cannot be reversed. What can be done (alongside efforts in health, education and employment) are practices of inclusion.

If you are wondering why we should be welcomed by or acknowledge Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people if they no longer legally own the land, consider that even though Indigenous people may not live in a traditional way on this land, they are still connected to it.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the meaning of country is more than just ownership or connection to land, as Professor Mick Dodson explains:

“When we talk about traditional ‘Country’... we mean something beyond the dictionary definition of the word. For Aboriginal Australians ... we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area, and we might mean more than just a place on the map. For us, Country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains.”

While they may all no longer necessarily be the title-holders to land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still connected to the Country of their ancestors and most consider themselves the custodians or caretakers of their land.

For advice on how to acknowledge Country check out the following link or get in touch with your local traditional owners through your local land council, reconciliation group or local Indigenous community organisations. For more information go to www.reconciliation.org.au or www.det.wa.edu.au/education/abled/docs/welcometocountryaug2007.pdf or phone Reconciliation Australia on 02 6273 9200.

North Central CMA's Indigenous Facilitator Mark Pietzsch can be contacted on 03 5440 1897.

What the Minister said

The Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, made a speech to delegates at the National Landcare Forum in Adelaide in March.

If you are fortunate enough to have unlimited armchair reading time, all the proceedings from the forum, including his speech, can now be read at your leisure online. Go to www.nationallandcareforum.com.au