

North Central chat

APRIL 2018

Keeping you up to date with all the Landcare
and Waterwatch news

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

I trust you had a safe and happy Easter break with family and friends. Judging by the banter around the CMA office, there were plenty of fish caught (and released) across the long weekend, which is always a great experience.

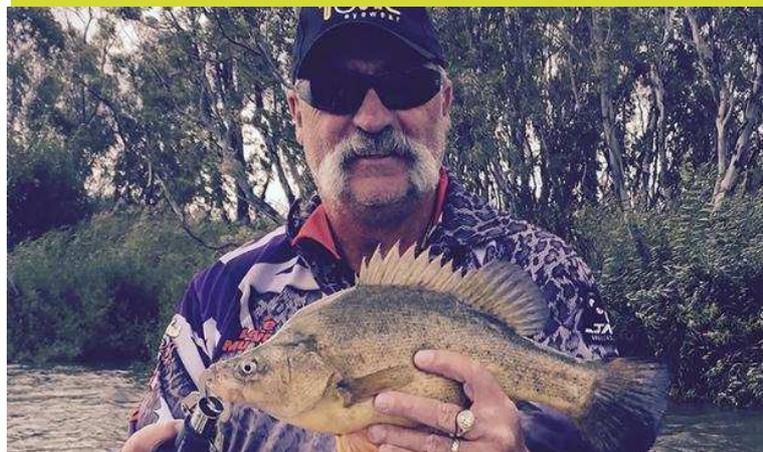
Speaking of fish, the one and only Merv Hughes, cricketing legend and keen fisherman, is hosting North Central CMA's community and family event to celebrate World Fish Migration Day 2018 on April 21 in Koondrook. For the southern catchment fish enthusiasts, a 'Fish of the Upper Catchment' presentation will be held on April 26 in Kyneton. Go fishing for details in the Events section.

March was an energising month full of conversation, collaboration and planning with landcare through the Landcare Network Facilitators and Network Chairs meetings. We were thrilled to receive several requests for letters of support and advice regarding the State and Federal biodiversity grant opportunities. We wish our Landcare and community NRM groups the best of luck in successfully receiving funding through these programs.

This year the 2018-19 Victorian Landcare Grants will be rolled out at the same time across all Catchment Management Authorities in Victoria. Applications are expected to open soon.

Applications will continue to be made online via SmartyGrants. There will be two grant categories; Support Grants (up to \$500 for assistance with insurance and for new groups) and Project Grants (of up to \$20,000). Landcare groups will be notified when the grant round is open, so project planning now is strongly encouraged for what is set to be a very competitive round.

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Darren and I are looking forward to delivering Chemical User Courses through Bendigo Tafe in April and the arrival of the reprinted [Weeds Identification Guide](#).

Finally, April 22 marks Earth Day 2018 which is dedicated to providing the information and inspiration needed to fundamentally change human attitude and behaviour about plastics. Get involved and share your local actions by visiting <https://www.earthday.org/>

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator

North Central Catchment Management Authority

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News...

Congratulations to Melissa Connors!

North Central CMA was thrilled to receive the news that local resident Melissa Connors won the prestigious 2018 Victorian AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award.

Melissa's personal story and project were a drawcard at the 2017 North Central 'Chicks in the Sticks' event at Walker's Lake. The 'This farm needs a farmer' founder and Kyneton locals' mentoring project hasn't slowed down since.



Melissa Connors in action at the inaugural *'This farm needs a Farmer'* field day in Kyneton, March 18

Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford announced Melissa Connors as the Victorian winner at a ceremony held at the Melbourne Museum on March 20.

A former Melbourne resident, Melissa and her family embraced a tree-change to Kyneton almost six years ago.

The move proved challenging but also highlighted to the Connor family that there was a wealth of knowledge among established and retired farmers that was not being passed on to new and less established agricultural professionals.

'This farm needs a farmer' aims to create stronger and more engaged farming communities by connecting tree-changers with established and retired farmers who can pass on their invaluable local knowledge to motivated newcomers.

Melissa received a \$10,000 bursary to help implement her project and will also attend the Australian Institute of Directors' Course in Canberra. Mellissa now has the opportunity to become the national award winner, which will be announced in September.

A tad more social media savvy

Fifteen Landcare members from across North Central and Goulburn Broken CMA areas took a deep dive into the world of Facebook on March 21.

Facilitated by social media enthusiasts 'Friendly Savage' the workshop covered setting up Facebook pages, planning content and scheduling posts. The workshop finished with an afternoon session of tips to create engaging videos, which are the most successful form of engagement on Facebook.

Some top tips I got out of the session were;

- **Landcare has incredible content!** We underutilise the engagement that comes from simply posting a picture of a tree, animal or group activity with a descriptive caption to educate people about the local environment.
- **People care about people;** Posting photos of groups activities, or better yet live streaming group events, invites people to your events that can't be there and encourages curiosity about Landcare.
- **Find the funding;** Landcare Groups have received enquiries and funds from non-traditional sources after posting content and tagging potential investors with images and stories that relate to their interests (e.g. Shires, local banks, corporates, Landcare Australia).
- **Get the insight;** If you have a Facebook page set up for your group, have a look into your Insights/ Analytics. It provides data on the time and day that people are looking at your content, therefore you can schedule your posts to that timing.



A great example; [Upper Campaspe Landcare Networks](#) stunning post for United Nations International Day of Forests.

The workshop was certainly a steep and swift learning curve but 70% of the attendees indicated they had certainly improved their social media skills and knowledge and would change their current use of Facebook, which is a great result.

This is where I should plug for you to go follow the [Landcare Victoria](#) and [North Central CMA](#) Facebook pages.

One year on from K5 release

Andreas Glanznig. CEO for Centre for Invasive Species Solutions- Issue #335 PestSmart flyer

This time last year, the first major output of the Centre's 20 year rabbit biocontrol pipeline strategy was delivered with the national release of a Korean strain of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus, known as RHDV1 K5.

With strong involvement from the community, this virus was released at more than 350 sites around Australia and many release sites reported seeing a decline in rabbit numbers on their property.

The national release was significant since it was the first new rabbit biocontrol agent in over 20 years, which was achieved through an Invasive Animals CRC national government-industry collaboration, following the collapse of investment in rabbit biocontrol research and innovation in the early 2000s. It is premised on the fact that the inevitable genetic resistance of rabbits to any viral biocontrol agents means that a new biocontrol agent needs to be released every 8-10 years in order to sustain long-term benefits.

This and future biocontrol wins are critical for both agriculture and biodiversity. While rabbits still reduce agricultural productivity by \$200 million every year, without biocontrol agents the loss to agriculture alone would be over \$2 billion

every year. Conservation benefits are similarly high given that rabbits impact over 300 nationally listed threatened species.

One year on, RHDV1 K5 is now very much a part of the rabbit management toolbox within Australia, and we are also pleased to see our collaboration with NZ, as they embark on a nationally coordinated release of RHDV1 K5, in March and April of this year.

To keep up to date on Centre for Invasive Species Solutions news, subscribe to newsletters via <https://www.pestsmart.org.au/subscribe/>

HAVE YOUR SAY- Soil Health Action Planning & Soil Health Survey

The North Central Catchment Management Authority and Agriculture Victoria are developing a regional Soil Health Action Plan.

Soils are the foundation of food production and food security, supplying plants with nutrients, water and support for their roots. Soils function as Earth's largest water filter and storage tank; they contain more carbon than all above-ground vegetation, hence regulation emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases; and they host an amazing diversity of organisms of key importance to ecosystem processes.

Soils are fundamental to life on earth, but human pressures on our soil resources are reaching critical limits. Careful soil management is one essential element of sustainable agriculture. Soils also provides a valuable mechanism in climate regulation and a pathway for the safeguarding of ecosystems services and biodiversity.

An important component is to get valuable feedback from the community, including those that work in the area of soils and agronomy.

The Soil Health survey takes around 10 minutes and there is a random prize drawn for someone who has participated - a penetrometer.

The survey is open during April after which workshops around the catchment will take place to discuss further what communities believe are the priorities for soil health and to explore the CMA's Draft Guiding Principles for soil health. See Page 9 for details or visit our website. <http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/projects/agriculture#node-1780>

To complete your survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/32BRTG6>



If you have any questions or concerns on Soil Health, please contact Suzanne Johnstone at the North Central CMA on 03 5440 1868.

Don't be a Jeff!

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has launched a new community-focused biosecurity webpage and series of short animated videos entitled 'Don't be a Jeff', which aim to engage the public on what biosecurity is, why it matters and what their role is in the system.



The videos follow the story of a well-intentioned but hapless character, Jeff, in scenarios that compromise biosecurity. Jeff is shown mishandling farm biosecurity, improperly disposing of fish and not declaring a souvenir when re-entering the country from overseas. The videos are another way we can increase awareness around biosecurity. They are presented in a fun and engaging way and we are encouraging the sharing of the videos through social media channels.

You can visit the page, watch the videos and share the content through agriculture.gov.au/dontbeajeff

I had a giggle at this one which I think is for the Landcarer in everyone, 'Don't take a chance, leave your plants'.



Rotary's call to action- 1.2M trees to be planted internationally.

Did you know that Rotary International president 2017-18, Ian H.S. Riseley, challenged every Rotary club to make a difference by planting a tree for each of its members between the start of the Rotary year on 1 July 2017 and Earth Day on 22 April 2018!



Environmental degradation and global climate change are serious threats to everyone, Riseley said, "they are having a disproportionate impact on those who are most vulnerable, those to whom Rotary has the greatest responsibility. Yet environmental issues rarely register on the Rotary agenda.

The time is long past when environmental sustainability can be dismissed as not Rotary's concern. It is, and must be, everyone's concern," he said.

Landcare and Rotary's vision, are well aligned, so if you have planting sessions coming up, particularly in preparation for National Tree Day in July, get more hands-on deck by contacting your local Rotary Club:

<https://my.rotary.org/en/search/club-finder>

Remember this critter from last month's Chat?



My trusty colleagues at Agriculture Victoria advise me that it is a Goliath Stick Insect (*Eurycnema goliath*) and it turns out they also frequent the Huntly Kinder across the road which the kids love!



Farming for Sustainable Soils Conference

Phil Dyson, CMA Project Manager

Following six months of planning the North Central CMA's Farming for Sustainable Soils (FSS) conference was held in Bendigo on Thursday 8 and Friday 9 March.

Attracting 125 participants, the fourth FSS conference kicked-off with sixty-two people travelling to Bowenvale for lunch prepared by the Timor West FSS and Landcare groups. The day at Dunluce provided the opportunity for attendees to learn about some of the work the FSS group has been doing in an effort to improve soil health in their difficult granite terrain.

On the Wiseman property Dianne Mullins, Secretary of Timor West Landcare, and Merron Ipsen local FSS facilitator, spoke of the historical efforts her father and mother Alex and June Wiseman (who were present) and of their protracted battle against both salinity and soil erosion. Those in attendance discovered the problems stemmed from the hydrological challenges afforded by a surficial highly siliceous soil that forms a barrier to root penetration. In the words of Dianne Mullins 'it turns to concrete in the summer and becomes waterlogged slush in the winter'.



On Thursday evening conference attendees gathered for dinner at the historic Capital Theatre. Here they heard from Western District farmer and regenerative agriculture advocate Suzanne Lewis. Suzanne spoke of her experiences on the farm at Werneth. She looks after the sheep in very non-traditional animal friendly ways whilst husband Evan runs their cropping enterprise. The presentation was very well received.

Master of Ceremonies, Cr. James Williams, officially opened the conference on Friday and

was joined by Major General, the Honourable Michael Jeffery the National Soils Advocate, and a previous Australian Governor General who spoke of the needs of farmers in terms of approaches that increase soil organic carbon, and of his national approach and effort in attempting to capture more investment in soil health. He was followed by well-known Pine Grove farmer Grant Sims. Grant was the Weekly Times farmer of the year in 2015 and is the current president of the Victorian No-Till Association. Grant spoke of his efforts in regenerating the productive capacity and integrity of the soils of the family farm.



"You should be Australian of the Year" was the comment from Major General, the Honourable Michael Jeffery after Grant Sims engaging and passionate presentation.

The afternoon was filled with reports from FSS groups from Wycheproof-Glenloth, Timor West and Pyramid Hill with presentations from FSS facilitators Craig Cossar, Merron Ipsen and Adam Twigg respectively. There was strong agreement with the community-based approach that has local farming communities building an understanding of the condition of their soils, growing their knowledge of soil science, and conducting their own farm-scale trials and demonstrations.

The conference was a great success and provided the time and opportunity for participants to hear from high profile speakers and to understand and learn from a range of FSS groups. The networking and sharing of common interests was also a highlight of the two-day conference.

Conference presentations are now available on the North Central CMA's website under the [Farming for Sustainable Soils page](#).



Hello everyone,

I hope you have been enjoying this month's edition of the North Central Chat.

Back in February we hosted our River Detectives professional development workshop, trialling a new method for the educators which seemed to work well. Throughout the day we focused on different elements of the program, the water science activity, habitat assessments and waterbugs. The idea was to dive deeper into the program and give educators a hands-on experience in learning each of the different aspects of the program and to think about how they can deliver activities to their students.

We are now looking for volunteers to get on board and monitor sites on Gunbower Creek as part of the Native Fish Recovery Plan. If you live in the region or are interested in visiting the region monthly then this could be a great opportunity for you to get involved and monitor waterway health as part of this project.

Saltwatch Week is fast approaching, keep your eyes open for the 'how to' guide! We are planning to make it a lot easier this year for you to upload your data and will be encouraging volunteers to get their data in so we can map salinity across the region.

A gentle reminder to all our River Detectives and Waterwatch volunteers to do your testing and upload your results in April!



I hope you all had a wonderful Easter break.

Cass Davis

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Water Storage - update

The table below indicates the current storage levels in our water storages and is updated daily, this information is taken from Goulburn Murray Water: www.g-mwater.com.au

| Catchment | Storage name | % full 2018 | % full 2017 |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Campaspe | Lake Eppalock | 67.56 | 89.31 |
| Loddon | Carin Curran Reservoir | 61.42 | 82.79 |
| | Tullaroop reservoir | 60.89 | 86.04 |
| | Laanecoore Reservoir | 36.13 | 47.05 |

Did you know - broad-shelled turtles nest during March and April?

Each year a team of dedicated volunteers assist Turtles Australia to undertake surveys of nesting broad-shelled turtles in the Gunbower region. The aim is to inspect known nesting sites and make and find new nesting sites so turtles can be protected from predators such as foxes. To find out more visit or how to get involved go to: www.turtlesaustralia.org.au



International Compost Awareness Week Australia

Better Soil, Better Life, Better Future

Sunday 6 May – Saturday 12 May 2018

International Compost Awareness Week Australia (ICAW), is a week of activities, events and publicity to improve awareness of the importance of compost, a valuable organic resource and to promote compost use, knowledge and products. We can compost to help scrap carbon pollution by avoiding landfilling organic materials and helping to build healthier soils.

ICAW Australia is an initiative of the Centre for Organic Research & Education (CORE), a not-for-profit organisation conducting year-round organic research, education and awareness activities.

CORE also organises National Organic Week Australia (NOW).

Within these two programs CORE promotes and manages the key aspects that lead to community change towards organic products and practices.



To find out how to get involved or more information go to:

<http://www.compostweek.com.au>

25 years of Waterwatch!

Waterwatch Victoria is celebrating 25 years of Waterwatch.

Wow - can you believe this wonderful citizen science program has been going for that long? We are so excited about this achievement, and I will begin planning a little get together soon. I am hoping to host something (lunch or dinner) during May 2018.

We will be celebrating the achievements of all our volunteers and will have a special guest along for the event. In addition, I have mentioned a few

times that we have been working on the North Central Waterwatch; Water Quality Data Report, a report that reviews 20 years of data to understand the current condition of the region's waterways using citizen science. I am planning on sharing the finished product with you all at the 25 years event.

If you have any suggestions on how you would like to celebrate 25 Years of Waterwatch please let me know!

River Detectives across the state

Across the state educators have been trained to run the River Detectives program in their own schools and groups just like in the North Central CMA region. There has been lots of enthusiasm to get out and explore local waterways. This year we have about 100 groups across the state monitoring and learning more about their local waterway. Keep your eye out for 'Ask the Expert' sessions that will be run for all River Detectives groups across the state throughout the year – the first one locked in is highlighted below.

Upcoming Waterwatch events

May 7 - Pop up training workshop.

Did you miss the chance to learn about monitoring as part of the River Detectives program in Term 1?

Or would you like to get a refresher for the term. We will be running an afternoon session on Monday 7 May in Castlemaine. Please email riverdetectives@nccma.vic.gov.au to receive more details and register your attendance.

New opportunity

Loddon Mallee Student Sustainability Summit, Thursday May 24th at Chewton Primary School.

The summit is an opportunity for students from your school to share their sustainability stories, projects, and ideas with students from other schools. It's about *students learning from each other*, through a range of mediums and activities. Registrations are almost full so please contact resourcesmart@lmwrrg.vic.gov.au or call 0409013448 ASAP to receive the forms to complete.

Attendance at the forum is FREE. The event will provide fruit and water only, so please bring your own lunches. *Casual relief teacher cover of up to \$250 is available for eligible schools.*



'Ask the Expert' virtual session with Tiana Preston on platypus



We invite schools to join us and learn more about the amazing platypus on World Environment Day. Join Tiana (Melbourne Water), who works with the community to monitor, raise awareness and protect platypus in Melbourne's waterways.

When: June 5. 12pm (30–45minute session)

Where: Virtual session (you join in from your school)

Who: School groups (primary and secondary)

Register: email riverdetectives@nccma.vic.gov.au

CHALLENGE prior to session with prizes: details on River Detectives website under the What's happening tab (www.riverdetectives.net.au).

Please register for the virtual session by Monday 28 May 2018.

Celebrate National Science Week

The Australian Science Teachers Association, with funding support from the Australian Government, provides small grants of up to \$500 for schools to hold activities and events during National Science Week. Applications are now open through to 23 April. Applications can be made [via the online form](#). Your school may like to run a special monitoring day of your local waterway and use the grant to support purchasing equipment.



SAVE THE DATE

2018 National Landcare Conference and Awards

10 - 12 October
Brisbane Convention
and Exhibition Centre

This project is supported by Landcare Australia, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Taking place at the Brisbane Conference and Exhibition Centre between 10-12 October, the 2018 National Landcare Conference and Awards offers three days of knowledge sharing, insightful discussion, as well as informative presentations by pioneers, leaders of NRM bodies, scientists, academics, government, and environmental, climate and biodiversity experts.

The conference and awards are delivered by Landcare Australia through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Keep up to date on the program and conference details via:

<https://landcareaustralia.org.au/our-programme/national-landcare-conference/>





Events...

World Fish Migration Day with Merv Hughes- Koondrook

Join cricketering legend and keen fisherman Merv Hughes at a FREE community and family event to celebrate World Fish Migration Day 2018

Kicking off at 9am with a fishing competition hosted by Barham Angling Club, the fun will continue at Apex Park from 12 noon to 4.30pm with a free sausage sizzle, kids colouring competition, Waterwatch activities and native fish displays.

Meet Merv and hear from fish expert Ivor Stuart and the North Central CMA about the Native Fish Recovery Plan. All welcome - there will be something for everyone.

When: Saturday 21 April. Fishing comp from 9am, other activities from 12:00-4.00pm

Where: Apex Park, Koondrook.

RSVP: Registrations close 5pm Wednesday 14 April. Phone the North Central CMA on 5448 7124 or register online at <http://bit.ly/nativefish>

The event is funded through the Victorian Water Investment Framework and is part of the Victorian Government's \$222 million investment to improve catchment and waterway health across regional Victoria.



Fish of the Upper Catchment

Come along and find out more about the presence of native fish species in the Campaspe and Coliban River systems.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) is a non-invasive sampling technique that detects genetic material from a target species secreted into its surrounding environment (water). Come along to hear the results of recent eDNA sampling from Josh Griffiths, Senior Ecologist - Biodiversity Conservation with EnviroDNA Pty Ltd. Waterways sampled include the Campaspe and Coliban Rivers upstream of Lake Eppalock and their tributaries.

The main objectives were to identify areas of high biodiversity and improve understanding of the distribution of several threatened fish species, to help inform management strategies. The data also provides a valuable baseline to assess the effectiveness of current and future management actions.

Afternoon tea provided and children are welcome.

When: Thursday 26 April from 4:30-5.30pm

Where: Kyneton Mechanics Institute, 81 Mollison Street, Kyneton

RSVP: North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or self-register via <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/fish-of-the-upper-campaspe-catchment-tickets-43689612808>

Autumn Workshop Series 2018- Monitoring Healthy Habitats

Connecting Country is hosting an incredibly interesting workshop series over the coming weeks.

Workshop topics include Birddata with Birdlife Australia, Caring for old trees with Mt Alexander Shire Council; and Nestboxes for wildlife with Miles Geldard.

Dates and further details on the workshop series are online via the Connecting Country blog: www.connectingcountry.org.au



Soil Health Planning sessions

To support the regional Soil Health survey, three community meetings are being delivered across the catchment.

CMA Project Officer Suzanne Johnstone says that the purpose of the meetings are to:

- o Confirm the draft guiding principles for Soil Health:
<http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/guiding-principles-soil-health>

- o Set a vision of the catchment for the next ten to twenty years – also discussion on immediate goals.

- o Understand the communities priorities for action

- o Discuss how the community want these services delivered to them – e.g. Landcare and the Farming for Sustainable Soils groups etc.

The meeting is not a function to explore soil health issues as such or to solve individual soil health issues!

Meeting 1- Kerang

When: Wednesday April 18. 5.30pm – 7:30pm with a light supper.

Where: Kerang Golf Club, 193 Kerang – Koondrook Rd Kerang.

Meeting 2- Kyneton

When: Friday April 20. 5.30 until 7.30 pm with a light supper

Where: Mechanics Institute 81 Mollison Street Kyneton.

Meeting 3- Charlton

When: Tuesday April 24. 5.30 until 7.30pm with a light supper

Where: Charlton Senior Citizens Club

For further information and to register phone Suzanne Johnstone on 5440 1868

Farms for Wildlife Field Trip

Join the Kara Kara CMN for a field trip to the property of Landcare Award winners, Bill and Gwen Twigg.



Hear how Bill and Gwen have used natural farming methods to nurture soils and feed and shelter livestock while creating habitat for wildlife, including turning a dusty bare paddock into a 3ha wetland brimming with life.

This FREE event includes a light lunch and return travel from St Arnaud. Buses will depart the rear of the St Arnaud Town Hall at 9.00am, returning at about 3.30pm. Numbers are strictly limited.

Where: Private property at Bears Lagoon, near Serpentine

When: Sunday, 8 April 2018 (9.00am sharp ex St Arnaud)

RSVP: Book your seat, noting any special dietary requirements, by calling Deb on 0419 550 226, John on 0428 160 297 or by emailing karakaracmn@gmail.com.

Gunbower Island turtle nest protection project

Turtles Australia are hosting another field trip.

President Graham Stockfeld said that “with any luck we will be on site for the nesting of the broad-shelled turtles (*Chelodina expansa*) as they nest during March and April.”

The group invites you along to check out known nesting sites and to search and identify previously unknown sites.

If you are interested in volunteering with Turtles Australia or for further details about the monitoring event, accommodation and group setting visit: <http://turtlesaustralia.org.au/page-1363189>

Courses and Resources...

Upskill and Invest Young Farmers Scholarship Program

The Victorian Government is backing Victoria's next generation of food and fibre leaders, with applications now open for round four of the Upskill and Invest Young Farmers Scholarship Program.

Since the launch of the program in 2015, Young Farmers Scholarships have helped a diverse range of young farmers grow their careers by upskilling, implementing new on-farm initiatives and boosting their professional networks.

Over the course of the program, 38 young farmers working across the agriculture supply chain have received scholarships, funding study in areas such as primary production, business management, research and technology.

The program recognises that in the future, young farmers will need a broad range of skills so they can embrace new technologies, respond to a range of challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

The program is part of the Labor Government's ongoing investment in attracting and retaining the next generation of farmers, and ensuring the future prosperity of Victoria's \$13.1 billion agriculture sector.

Up to \$10,000 is available for farmers and farm workers aged 35 years or under to help them with professional development and career progression.

This includes \$5,000 for study, backed by a further \$5,000 to invest on-farm or in professional development activities to help put new skills into practice.

Applications close on 24 April 2018. To find out more, visit www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers.



Launch of the Fluker Post Mobile App

The Victorian community can now help monitor some of Victoria's most iconic waterways on their phones via a new app – the Fluker Post App.

This app is a collaboration between Victoria University and the Victorian Government to

encourage the community to capture photos of the waterways and landscapes love and use, and immediately upload them into the app to provide a permanent visual record of the location. The app includes an archive of historical photos and allows users to see what the location looked like under different weather or management regimes.

The *Fluker Post App* includes photos from newly installed Fluker Posts on some of Victoria's most important waterways. Across Victoria there are 10 flagship waterways, each with new Fluker Posts. The flagship waterways are about working with community towards healthier rivers, estuaries and wetlands so more Victorians can enjoy the environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits that waterways provide.

The Fluker Post Project is a long-term citizen science project that allows the community and land managers to contribute towards the ongoing care of various natural environments by taking repeat photographs from fixed photo-points, the Fluker Posts. The *Fluker Post App* brings together 10 years of photo monitoring across Victoria in a new and accessible way for the Victorian community to enjoy.

The Victorian Government is committed to improving the health of waterways and catchments, and new tools such as the *Fluker Post App* will support this investment by capturing information from the community about the changing environment. The Victorian Government has funded the development of this app, through the \$30 million Regional Riparian Action Plan, which is part of the \$222 million committed to improving the health of waterways and catchments in Victoria.

The Fluker Post App can be downloaded via: iTunes <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/the-fluker-post-project/id1312700267?mt=8>

Did you know...There are five of these Fluker posts installed along the Campaspe River (a flagship waterway) and three in Gunbower Forest.

New weed brochures from the Cactus Warriors

Lee Mead President, Tarrangower Cactus Control Group Inc

The Tarrangower Cactus Control Group (TCCG) has recently completed a project producing some new weed control brochures for the Mt. Alexander Shire region.



Five brochures were created, one specific for each of the five wards within the Shire. The brochures highlight the most problematic weeds specific to each ward and provide information and contacts to encourage landowners to manage their noxious weeds.

The idea for these brochures was seeded by the problem TCCG has with some non-compliant property owners. Most of the landowners that don't control Wheel Cactus infestations are absentee owners, weekenders or new owners who are unaware of their weed responsibilities. The Cactus Warriors have problems connecting and engaging with these landowner categories because, as a volunteer group, they do not have access to postal address records and have limited time.

Recognising that these problems are not unique to wheel cactus, and that there are control problems with many different weeds within their Shire, TCCG invited all local Landcare groups to contribute by voting for their "top 10" weeds. This method revealed the most serious weeds in each of the five wards and these were highlighted in the brochures.

The Mt. Alexander Shire has agreed to include a brochure in the 'Welcome Kit' sent out to all new ratepayers. This will hopefully capture the problem groups, helping to educate new landowners as soon as they purchase a property and reaching the ones that don't live in the Shire.

The brochures provide information about the responsibilities of landowners to manage weeds, identification and best control methods to use and where to find more detailed information. They also stress that not only rural properties should be involved in weed control, but urban properties also have the same legal responsibilities, emphasizing that most noxious weeds are escapee plants from private gardens.

TCCG thanks the many local Landcare groups who participated in this project by voting for weeds and contributing photos of their local weed infestations. The brochures include the contact details for these groups and will hopefully lead to future new enquiries and members. Thanks also to Connecting Country and North Central CMA for support and photographs, and to Mt. Alexander Shire Council for funding the project.

The brochures will be available to download from the Mt. Alexander Shire, Connecting Country and TCCG websites, and hardcopies will be available from the Shire office, Connecting Country and local Landcare groups. Contact the TCCG via their

website at www.cactuswarriors.org if you have any queries.



Floodplain Ecology Course

Registrations are now open for the Barmah based course, October 8 - 12, 2018.

The purpose of the Floodplain Ecology Course is to promote awareness and greater understanding of these complex ecosystems in a drying climate, their ecological importance and values, and the intimate connections of floodplains and rivers.

The course aims to give participants:

- A better understanding of the geomorphological, hydrological and ecological processes of floodplain ecosystems;
- An understanding of flooding dynamics and the impact of human use on this process, past and present
- Provide examples of practical skills in observation, description, survey/assessment, analysis, interpretation, and assessment, of geomorphological features, hydrological regimes, soils and flora and fauna on floodplains.

The focus of the course will be on the floodplains of the Goulburn - Murray system in the region of Barmah. Full course fee is \$1760 (GST Inc)

Contact the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network via email: gmln@iinet.net.au or Ph: (03) 5821 3530 or 0407 552 663.

Funding opportunities...

Solar Communities Program

The Solar Communities Program will provide \$2.2 million in grants to community organisations in eligible regions to undertake small-scale renewable energy generation and energy storage projects, including purchase and installation of solar photovoltaic systems, battery storage for solar photovoltaic systems and solar hot water systems. The program will fund up to 100 per cent of eligible expenditure.

The minimum grant amount is \$2,500

The maximum grant amount is \$12,500.

If your total budget costs are greater than the maximum grant amount of \$12,500, you will have to meet additional costs yourself.

To be eligible to apply you must be located in one of the regions, which align with electorate boundaries (this program is inclusive of Bendigo and Ballarat electorates in Victoria). You can check the region of your project site address at aec.gov.au.

Grant applications close on May 31 at 5:00pm.
To apply, go to www.business.gov.au/solar-communities

Campaspe Shire Council Community Grants

Council offers financial support to not-for-profit community organisations for projects, events, exhibitions and more, which contribute to the municipality, supporting council's vision "We are strong, supportive, vibrant and sustainable".

Community support grants are available for up to \$4,000. Successful grant applications often have one or more of the following benefits:

- encourage and support collaboration, networks and partnerships
- build creative communities and boost the local economy
- promote community safety and healthy lifestyles
- maintain and restore Campaspe's natural assets and enable enjoyment of the local environment
- celebrate Campaspe's multicultural diversity

- encourage local participation in community life
- respect and value the contribution of young people
- promote a strong sense of local identity
- are easy to participate in, providing recreation and leisure opportunities
- have a vibrant and diverse arts and cultural component.

Applications are now open and close on Friday 13 April.

Application forms are available from Council Customer Service Centres and online at <https://www.campaspe.vic.gov.au/live/community/grants-and-funding/community-grants-program/>

Young Farmers Scholarship Program

Young farmers in Victoria can access scholarships of up to \$10,000 to help boost skills and implement new on-farm initiatives.

Up to \$10,000 is available for farmers and farm workers aged 35 years or under to help them with professional development and career progression. This includes \$5,000 for study, backed by a further \$5,000 to invest on-farm or in professional development activities to help put new skills into practice.

The Victorian Government's Young Farmers Scholarship Program aims to support young farmers to build productive and profitable careers in agriculture. The Program recognises that in the future, young farmers will need a broad range of skills so they can embrace new technologies, respond to a range of challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

Applications close: 24 April 2018

For more information and to apply visit: <http://www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/grants-and-assistance/young-farmers-scholarship-program>