

Rejuvenation of the Axedale River Reserve



Project name: Caring for the Campaspe
Financial year story collected: 2013-14

Caring for the Campaspe is a four-year (2012-16) project delivered by the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) aiming to protect and enhance 400ha of vegetation along the Campaspe River, improving aquatic and riverside ecosystem health.

Communities in towns along the river increasingly recognise it as a natural asset to be enhanced and promoted.

The Axedale River Reserve (public land managed by a Committee of Management) is one such example. The rejuvenation of the reserve was identified by the community as one of six key goals, focusing the efforts of local group *Axedale Our Town – Our Future* in the Axedale Community Plan (2013-16).

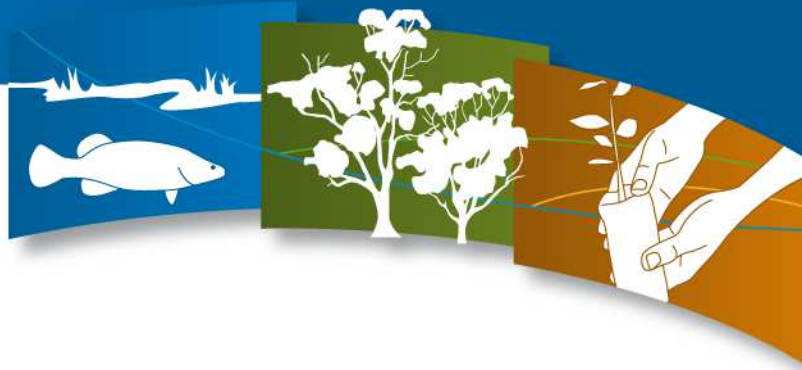
Axedale Our Town – Our Future President Yvonne Wrigglesworth said the community wanted to make so much more of a reserve with so much potential.

“The river reserve was under-utilised and perceived by many to be inaccessible. The reserve was not known to have ready access to the river’s edge for recreational purposes such as fishing and exploring. The reserve was only maintained via a grass cutting contract with the City of Greater Bendigo and many weed species existed on the river banks,” Ms Wrigglesworth said.

“*Axedale Our Town – Our Future* was fortunate enough to have an approach from Angela Gladman as the project manager of the North Central Catchment Management Authority’s Caring for Campaspe project.

“The suggestion of assessing the site for potential removal of noxious willow was well received as *Axedale Our Town – Our Future* embarked on the new ‘Project Platypus’, which encompassed rejuvenating the river reserve area.”

In August 2013, the North Central CMA engaged skilled contractors to remove several Crack Willows (a Weed of National Significance) along a 600m section of river bank to the south of the Mclvor Highway.



“The removal of the willows has made a tremendous difference in the way the river reserve looks and can now be used. Clearing of the willows opened up river bank access, revealed the beauty of the glorious river red gums and natural landscape that we trust will attract native species including the platypus population,” Ms Wrigglesworth said.

“With the recent extension of the O’Keefe Rail Trail (which winds its way through the river reserve) both the north and south sides of the reserve have now been linked by a tunnel to allow pedestrians and cyclists to pass under the highway safely.

“The work of *Axedale Our Town – Our Future* with ‘Project Platypus’ has also resulted in new picnic tables, benches and seating through other funding opportunities. Visitors can also view interpretative signage installed as part of the Caring for Campaspe project,” Ms Wrigglesworth explained.

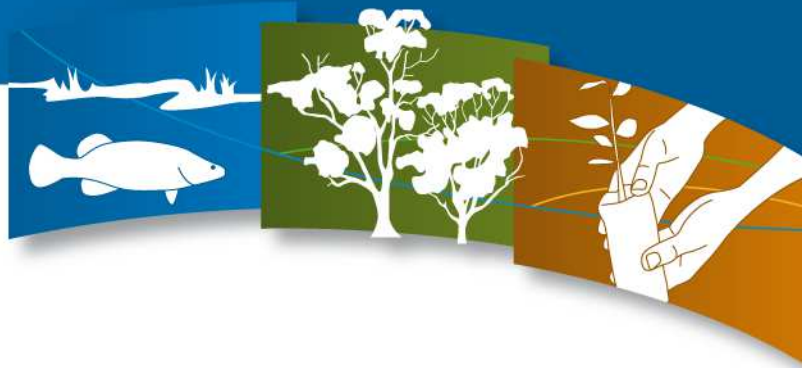
“Visitor numbers are ever increasing. The recent Easter holiday period (2014) saw the reserve at almost full capacity every day with all seating and tables occupied and other areas with camping chairs and blankets.

“Fishing is also on the increase as the river is now more accessible to families and youngsters since the willows were removed. A recent school excursion of Axedale Primary School students to the reserve for a walking trip, spotted a platypus frolicking in the river. We expect platypus sightings to increase,” Ms Wrigglesworth said.

Ms Wrigglesworth elaborated on the positive working relationship with the North Central CMA during project delivery, emphasising the collaborative nature of the work.

“Our interactions with the project staff and Project Reference Group were most productive and enjoyable. The project manager provided timely expert advice based on a thorough knowledge of similar work in other areas along the Campaspe,” Ms Wrigglesworth said.

The \$3.73M Caring for the Campaspe project is funded by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.



Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



Before willow removal



After willow removal



Before willow removal



After willow removal