

# North Central Waterwatch Story of Change

Terri Williams 2018



## Bendigo TAFE and Waterwatch Partnership

Terri Williams is the program coordinator for Conservation and Land Management (CaLM) with Bendigo TAFE and a Waterwatch volunteer.

Two years ago, Terri introduced a 'collect and test a water sample unit' to the CaLM course *"I was able to do this because I already knew about water quality and macroinvertebrates from when I studied at TAFE"*.

Although Terri had some knowledge in water quality and macroinvertebrate testing, she found that getting back involved in the Waterwatch program was a good opportunity to revisit her skills, refresh her knowledge and understand what new research is happening and how the environment has changed *"it had been several years since I had been involved in water quality monitoring programs, so it was good to jump back in and re-learn all the methods, and of course there is lots of new equipment to learn about too! waterway health has always been an interest of mine, I love water and always have."*

Being involved in the Waterwatch program has added a whole new aspect for teaching students, it has provided Bendigo TAFE with opportunities to link their learning activities to real research programs such as the Native Fish Recovery Program (NFRP) and supports students to participate in monitoring programs where they learn new skills and knowledge about river health through collecting scientific data and working with experts industry leaders, this is true link in Bendigo TAFE's statement *"Bound to industry"*, this added value to the course.

*"Through the 'collect and test a water sample unit' I was able to build it around sampling and testing water, which I have found is an area of interest for most of our students and is a key reason for*

*'signing' up to the course because no-one else is doing it."*

The 'collect and test a water sample unit' is an area of interest for students who are looking to go down a career path that provides students with opportunities for their future. The program highlights to other students how the terrestrial landscape connects to the aquatic landscape and the importance of how they can affect each other.

*"We have also found that for some student (a large portion), there is an interest in fish and when this unit is introduced to these students, there is often a shift in their appreciation of waterway health. Through Waterwatch and the North central CMA, our students have had wonderful opportunities to participate in the Native Fish Recovery Plan by monitoring river health".* Through this project, students gain an insight into understanding why and how logs (Instream Woody Habitat) are put back into the waterway and the impact this has on fish, they have a better understanding of waterway management and why water quality and macroinvertebrates are so important.

*"Connecting the students to the project managers helped them understand the importance of what they were being involved in."*

Once the students have that understanding of water quality and macroinvertebrates they go out to different sites across Victoria (such as the Great Otway National Park) where they discover a whole new world with a different perception of waterway health. It's an opportunity for them to see the difference between water quality and macroinvertebrates in one part of the state and then to visit a completely different ecosystem.

*"It's not about us just learning it's about real-life experience and Waterwatch has helped us to provide students with that opportunity"*.