

# North Central Chat

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



March 2024

## A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

As I write this, we are keeping a close eye on the fires over at Mount Cole and thinking of everyone who has been impacted. It was a slow start to the fire season, but it has certainly been concerning with the loss of houses and other infrastructure in the current fires and recently at Pomonal further west. There are resources available for those who have been impacted by fires. The [Fire Recovery Resources](#) page on the Victorian Landcare Gateway site contains practical land management recovery information for private landowners and managers. Please reach out for further information or support should you require it.

I was fortunate to attend the Victorian Biodiversity Conference in Melbourne in February. It was wonderful to hear about the various research projects happening across different institutions. We heard about fantastic urban projects such as floating wetlands in the Yarra and nature strip gardens for insect and bird habitat. We also heard about the high conservation value of small habitat fragments on private land and that the failure to conserve them would have huge impacts on Australia's biodiversity. This highlights the importance of the work so many of you, our private landowners, are doing. Protecting and conserving those small fragments is far more important than we think. Keep up the great work!

During February, I also finalised the reporting for the 2022 Victorian Landcare Grants. It was wonderful to read about the incredible work that has been completed throughout the catchment. Nearly 25 hectares of land was protected through the grants, contributing to those small fragments that are so important. There was also nearly 140 hectares of revegetation completed and 98 hectares of weed control undertaken. An impressive 104 engagement events were delivered to more than 3,000 participants. More than 1,400 volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours to these projects. Congratulations to the grant recipients on completing these works. I'm looking



Epsom Primary School planting trees as part of the Northern Bendigo Landcare Group's Victorian Landcare Grant. Photo: Nicole Howie

forward to getting out to see how the 2023 grant recipients are going over the next few months.

Finally, I wanted to highlight the opportunity for the Landcare community to contribute to the review of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. If you are a member of a Landcare group or network I encourage you to complete the [online survey](#). DEECA is keen to hear your thoughts on what makes the program great or what can be improved. See page two for more information.

Stay safe,

Happy reading,

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Connecting rivers, landscapes, people

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the region, their rich cultures, spiritual connection to Country.

[www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au)



## Have your say on the future of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program

Consultation is now open for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)'s review of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.

The Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program is an important part of supporting Landcare and environmental volunteers around Victoria. To ensure the program continues to deliver effective and efficient support for the Landcare and environmental volunteer community, DEECA want to hear about what makes the program great, and what can be improved.

Online workshops are being held in March to explore what is working well with the current program model and what can be improved. The workshops will inform the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA) review of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.

Reserve your place by registering through the links below.

Workshops for current Landcare facilitators funded by the VLFP:

- Session 1, Wednesday 6 March, 1pm to 3pm: [Register for session 1](#)
- Session 2, Monday 18 March, 5.30pm to 7.30pm: [Register for session 2](#)
- Session 3, Tuesday 19 March, 9.30am to 11.30am: [Register for session 3](#)

Workshops for groups or networks supported by a Landcare facilitator and employers of a Landcare facilitator:

- Session 1, Thursday 7 March, 9.30am to 11.30am: [Register for session 1](#)
- Session 2, Wednesday 13 March, 5.30pm to 7.30pm: [Register for session 2](#)
- Session 3, Tuesday 19 March, 5.30pm to 7.30pm: [Register for session 3](#)

We also encourage you to [complete the online survey](#) before 20 March.

For more information about the review, visit [www.engage.vic.gov.au/vlfp-review](http://www.engage.vic.gov.au/vlfp-review)



## New AI-powered app set to transform weed management in Australia

**WeedScan, Australia's first artificial intelligence (AI) weed identification, notification, and management app, was launched in December 2023 to help farmers, land managers, local councils, Landcare, and people across Australia better manage our national and local weed burdens.**

The mobile and web-based app is supported by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, Australia's national science agency – CSIRO, the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the South Australian, Queensland and Victorian Governments and was funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. It allows users to identify, report and map priority weeds simply by uploading a photo of the suspected weed.

Andreas Glanznig, CEO for the Centre, said the app, which has been trained on more than 120,000 weed images, has the potential to make weed identification, notification, and management more efficient. A key feature is the weeds identifiable by the app include many new and emerging priority weeds that may not be known to most people.

"Weed management is notoriously difficult because weeds can be challenging to identify," Mr Glanznig said.

"Correct identification is the key to effective weed management. Knowing what weeds are present in our environment and where they are located informs strategies to reduce the economic, environmental and social impacts of weeds.

"WeedScan will provides graziers, farmers, bush regenerators, communities, natural resource management bodies and governments with a free, easy-to-use digital tool that enables priority weeds to be identified quickly while providing access to best-practice management information."

Dr Alexander Schmidt-Lebuhn, Senior Research Scientist at CSIRO, said WeedScan is a powerful tool, driven by a world-class CSIRO AI identification model.

"Our AI model has been trained on weed images captured by botanists who travelled the length and breadth of Australia, and then tested across Australia by

a range of users such as farmers, community groups and agronomists," he said.

"The AI has the smarts to identify hundreds of priority and other weeds to give us the edge we need in the fight to protect our natural environments and agricultural landscapes.

"Users simply take a photo of a suspected weed and upload it to the app. The AI model assesses the photo against verified images of weeds. Within seconds, WeedScan suggests possible plant identifications, with degrees of confidence for each suggestion."

WeedScan can be downloaded from the Apple Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android). The tool can also be accessed via the website at [www.weedscan.org.au](http://www.weedscan.org.au) with supporting resources including user guides and an introductory 'how-to' video.

**This article is an extract from the [Centre for Invasive Species Solutions website](#).**

## Volunteering Naturally report 2023

Volunteering Naturally 2023 is the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA) fifth annual snapshot of environmental volunteering across Victoria. The report includes the collection and collation of data on volunteer numbers and hours, economic contribution, and stories of change, as well as regional data. In the Loddon Mallee, there are 194 groups, 3581 volunteers and nearly 95,000 volunteer hours.

[Volunteering-Naturally-2023-Report-FINAL.pdf](#)  
([environment.vic.gov.au](http://environment.vic.gov.au))

## Renew your group's membership of Landcare Victoria

**Membership of Landcare Victoria gives your group access to Landcare Victoria's services, including insurance cover.**

Membership of Landcare Victoria is renewed annually on **1 July** each year. Prior to renewal, each Member Group must check and update its information (such as contact information) and provide its latest annual financial figures to Landcare Victoria, which are necessary for us to determine each group's membership and insurance fees and obtain insurance cover on behalf of our Member Groups.



1. Complete the **annual Membership Renewal Census**, conducted between February and April each year. Data provided by your organisation is checked and combined with the data from all other Member Groups and provided to our insurer to ensure appropriate cover is arranged for the association in the coming year. Please keep an eye on your inbox after submitting your census in case we have any follow-up queries.
2. Look out for an invoice in June if you're the sole contact for your organisation or let your billing contact know to expect it.
3. Pay your fees in full by 1 July 2024 to ensure your membership and insurance is active from 1 July onwards.

**The 2024 Membership Renewal Census is now open and must be completed by all Member Groups wishing to renew their membership for the 2024-25 year.**

[Membership renewal \(landcarevictoria.org.au\)](http://landcarevictoria.org.au)

## Unlocking Natural Capital Opportunities in the North Central CMA Region



Join us at the upcoming Natural Capital Forum on Thursday 13 June 2024 in Bendigo, where we'll be delving into the crucial balance between nature, productivity, and people.

Natural capital refers to the world's stocks of natural assets, which include geology, soil, air, water, and all living organisms. These resources provide a wide range of services that benefit humans, from food and raw materials to clean air and water, and even recreational opportunities. Learn how you can make natural capital on your property work for you.

This event is tailored for land managers, primary producers, farmers, Landcare members, and support organisations eager to explore the wealth of Natural Capital opportunities in the North Central CMA region.

Throughout the forum, we'll emphasise farm-scale natural capital accounting, strategies for enhancing productivity, making the most of marketing opportunities, fostering environmental stewardship, and delving into nature-based solutions, including environmental markets for biodiversity and carbon.

Save the date and stay tuned for more details on speakers, key topics, and agenda refinement. Stay tuned for more details at <https://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/media->

events/events/natural-capital-forum-balancing-books-between-nature-productivity-and-people or to request an invite, please email [info@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@nccma.vic.gov.au).

Don't miss out on this invaluable opportunity to connect, learn, and find out to how to maximise on natural capital. Join us in balancing the books between nature, productivity, and people at the North Central Natural Capital Forum.

### Opportunity for young people to have their voices heard

**Griffith University and La Trobe University are conducting research with young people for a Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) project.**

*Article by Landcare Australia*

Young people are often omitted from research and policy consultations and their perspectives are often not heard in decision-making. This is not just specific to climate change adaptation but a major gap across research on sustainability and environmental issues.

This research specifically aims to understand how young people think about the future of the Murray Darling Basin in a changing climate, what adaptation actions and strategies they see as having value and should be prioritised, what questions they have for the future and what a thriving Basin looks like for them. The research seeks to engage younger people, between 16 and 25, across the whole Basin. The research aims to expand the diversity of views and experiences of the future of the Basin by targeting the future decision-makers and generations that will live with the decisions made now in regarding the management of the Basin.

The research methods include an online Miro Board accessed via Qualtrics survey link [https://griffithuw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eWhSEwxtlnljUFM](https://griffithuw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eWhSEwxtlnljUFM) with 4 different questions, and online focus groups with board participants who are interested in discussing these issues further.

For more information, contact The Principal Investigator of this project, Associate Professor Johanna Nalau at Griffith University [j.nalau@griffith.edu.au](mailto:j.nalau@griffith.edu.au)



### Stories to Action video competition

**Young people invited to create inspiring short videos about environmental issues**

Stories to Action is a free video storytelling program run by the Bendigo Sustainability Group. The project supports youth to create inspiring short videos about environmental issues and the positive actions they're taking in response. Just launched is a new video competition for young people (11-29yo) to contribute videos. There's more than \$1000 worth of prizes to be won. The competition runs until 30 April.

For more information and to enter head to the [Stories to Action website](#).







## WaterWatch Victoria

### Welcome to our newest WaterWatch recruits

#### Mclvor Creek monitoring group, Heathcote

A new WaterWatch group has begun monitoring the health of the Mclvor Creek at Heathcote.

Mclvor Creek starts in the rolling hills of Baynton East, flowing through predominantly cleared farmland to Tooborac and Argyle, past the forested foothills of the Heathcote-Greytown National Park before passing through the Heathcote township and flowing into Lake Eppalock.

The passionate group is keen to raise awareness of the condition of the creek, highlighting both its values as well as its problems.

“We’re all keen to see the ecological health of the creek improve from its current condition,” group member Leon said.

“We know many of its problems are hard to fix, such as weeds and land clearing, but if we don’t start measuring it now, we won’t know if its improving or not. There are good elements of a healthy creek there already. It just needs to be given a chance.”



Some group members have professional backgrounds in aquatic ecology and are keen to apply their knowledge to their local creek.

“We’re starting small with just two sites being regularly monitored but have plans to add another two sites in the future, at the top and bottom of the catchment,” Leon said.

“This will give us a broader snapshot of the creek’s overall health”.

The group is keen for others in the community to be involved, especially kids, and is hoping the local schools will also sign up to River Detectives (a WaterWatch sister program aimed at connecting young people to nature). At a recent waterbug monitoring session, the two most eager waterbug enthusiasts were a couple of two-year-olds, so we reckon the group is off to a good start with engaging local children.

### A WaterWatch volunteer’s story

#### David Tiller – Kangaroo Creek, Spring Hill

David has been a valued supporter of the WaterWatch program for more than 15 years. With a decade’s-long career as an aquatic scientist with the EPA, David has been key to assisting staff with improving the program and developing WaterWatch guidelines and reporting processes over the years.

David was initially engaged in 2008 by WaterWatch Victoria to assist with developing the program’s *Interpreting River Health Data* manual, and again in 2012 for EstuaryWatch, a WaterWatch sister project, on *Interpreting Estuary Health Data*.

Since retirement, David has become a WaterWatch volunteer himself, monitoring the lovely Kangaroo Creek as part of the Healthy Coliban Catchment project, of which he is also an active member of the project’s Community Reference Group. His site is halfway between Kyneton and Daylesford and, being at the top of the catchment and originating in the Wombat Forest, has excellent water quality.

David admits due to the high quality of the water coming straight out of the forest, he doesn’t see much variation in his results throughout the year.

“It’s an isolated pool and usually flows intermittently. The only changes I ever really see are due physical variations in the catchment, such as occasional fires or logging or such,” David explained.

With his science background, his professional contacts, and an interest in helping people to understand science, David is passionate about helping the WaterWatch community to better understand the data they are collecting.

“Data is data, but information is more important. Information gives people understanding”.

He is a valued participant at WaterWatch workshops, helping other volunteers understand their water quality results and their broader meaning.

David has also been heavily involved in helping North Central WaterWatch to develop and publish annual river health snapshot reports, as well as the 20 years and 30 years of data reports, all with great interpretation to ensure anyone can understand them. He also hosted a workshop for North Central water quality monitors to learn more about the science behind the data.

When asked about the impact WaterWatch has had on him, David explains “by contributing and participating, I’m able to not only keep learning about the system myself, but also help improve others’ understanding of waterways and catchments. I enjoy seeing how we can best take the data and turn it into information, which I can then share with others. Since retirement, it’s also a way to give my brain some exercise”.

As an active member in his local Landcare Group and the Healthy Coliban Catchment Community Reference Group, it’s clear David is passionate about a healthy environment and contributing to his local community.

We would like to acknowledge and thank David for his ongoing contribution to WaterWatch, not only as a water quality volunteer, but for dedicating so many hours to helping staff and other volunteers to turn data into more valuable information.



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**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

**River Detective schools abound!**

**Schools are as keen as ever to connect their students with waterways and catchments**

We have had a wonderful response once again during our registration period for the 2024 River Detectives program. Just over 100 schools and youth groups have signed up to participate across the program’s five delivery zones; North Central CMA, Wimmera CMA, North East CMA and Corangamite CMA regions along with the Melbourne Water area.



Schools see the program as the perfect vehicle to embed concepts of sustainability, culture, and community while gathering meaningful data to learn about the waterways and catchments in their local area.

In the North Central CMA region, we’ll be supporting more than 30 enthusiastic groups; primary schools, secondary schools, youth groups, and online learners.

They will engage in citizen science investigations at their adopted waterway; water quality testing, macroinvertebrate sampling and habitat surveys.

Pesticide Watch is being offered again this year as an opt-in addition with groups collecting water samples for analysis in Deakin University’s laboratory.

I’ve already been out and about visiting three schools during February to deliver sessions about the waterbirds of our precious wetlands as part of North Central CMA’s February Takes Flight celebration; an extension of World Wetlands Day on February 2.

Students have enjoyed doing a waterbird birdwatching treasure hunt activity with laminated life-size birds hidden around the school yard.

They've been busy trialling the efficiency of eating with various beak styles in a Beak to Belly activity and accepted the challenge of testing their knowledge of bird calls with Bird Call Bingo.

Our program adopts a train-the-trainer model. Workshops will be rolled out this month to upskill educators and increase their confidence to implement the program, whilst understanding the raft of support that we offer throughout the year.

It's going to be a busy but fabulous 2024.

**Introducing our 2024 participants**

<b>Bendigo Creek Citizen Science project</b>
Camp Hill PS
Kalianna School Bendigo
Girton Grammar School
St Killian's Primary School
Weeroona College Bendigo
White Hills Primary School
Epsom Primary School
<b>RiverScan project</b>
Murrabit Primary School
St Joseph's Primary School Kerang
Mallee District Aboriginal Services Youth Group
Pyramid Hill College
<b>Healthy Coliban Catchment project</b>
Trentham District Primary School
Malmsbury Primary School
<b>Schools along the Campaspe River</b>
Woodend Primary School
Kyneton Primary School
Langley Primary School
Redesdale Primary School

St Joseph's College Echuca
<b>General schools</b>
Bullarto Primary School
Daylesford Dharma School
Bridgewater Primary School
Lockwood South Primary School
Taradale Primary School
Donald High School
Marist College Bendigo
Victory Christian College Bendigo
St Francis of the Fields Primary School
Castlemaine Steiner School
Chewton Primary School
East Loddon P-12 College
Heathcote Primary School
Haileybury Pangea online school

If you would like to know more about the River Detectives program, check out the recently released [2023 Annual Report](http://www.riverdetectives.net.au) on the River Detectives website [www.riverdetectives.net.au](http://www.riverdetectives.net.au) full of inspiring stories and photos of school participation, student action and community collaboration.

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**Water Storages Update**

Region	Water Storage	% full 15 Feb 2023	% full 23 Feb 2024
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	98.20	96.72
	Hume Dam	97.62	79.33
	Reedy/Middle Lk	94.56	97.11
	Kangaroo Lake	93.17	96.60
	Ghow Swamp	76.61	90.52
	Lake Boga	88.66	85.98
	Lake Charm	91.31	92.15
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Res	96.11	85.47
	Tullaroop Res	96.83	93.36
	Laanecoorie Res	62.25	48.25
Bullarook Storages	Newlyn Res	87.32	65.87
	Hepburns Lagoon	78.60	62.42
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	97.94	96.15
	Waranga Basin	81.52	83.71
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	95.66	97.68
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Res	98.6	98.0
	Lauriston Res	92.4	92.0
	Malmsbury Res	60.5	57.0

Source:  
<https://www.g-mwater.com.au/water-operations/storage-levels>  
<https://coliban.com.au/about-us/our-reservoirs>

**Upcoming Events and Special Days**

March	
<u>Schools Clean Up Day</u>	March 1
<u>Clean Up Australia Day</u>	March 3
<u>World Wildlife Day</u>	March 3
<u>International Women's Day</u>	March 8
<u>Parks Week</u>	March 2-10
<u>National Groundwater Awareness Week</u>	March 4-12
<u>International Day of Forests</u>	March 21
<u>World Water Day</u>	March 22
<u>Earth Hour Schools Day</u>	March 22
<u>Earth Hour</u>	March 23
<u>National Eucalypt Day</u>	Mar 23
April	
<u>Sustainable House Day</u>	21 April
<u>Earth Day Planet Vs Plastics</u>	22 April
May	
<u>International Composting Awareness Week</u>	5-11 May
<u>World Bee Day</u>	20 May
<u>National Volunteer Week</u>	20-26 May
<u>International Day for Biological Diversity</u>	22 May
<u>World Turtle Day</u>	23 May
<u>National Reconciliation Week</u> <i>Now more than ever</i>	27 May – 3 June



## Sustainable Ag Snippet...

### New Soil Health Guide Carbon Edition Launch

The North Central CMA in partnership with Agriculture Victoria will be launching the new Soil Health Guide Carbon Edition at Pyramid Hill on March 21 at the Bowling Club.

The new guide is complemented by an eBook, which provides a range of information relating to soils. The eBook also contains videos of each of the tests in the soil health guide. These provide a visual aspect and steps you through the practical components of the tests.

There will be several speakers on the day including Rebecca Mitchel from Agriculture Victoria who was heavily involved in the development of these tools. Rebecca is a passionate soil advocate and has spoken at many events sharing her knowledge on soils.

Local farmer Jo Bear from Canary Island will provide a farmer perspective of the soil health guide. Jo and her husband Greg have been farming for many years and are passionate about the environment. They have invested many hours to improve the function and aesthetics of their property with creating wetlands, revegetating many hectares, and fencing to protect remnant areas.

To conclude the day, we have Dr Kate Burke. Kate is an agri-strategist, author and keynote speaker with 30 years of specialist knowledge and experience in the science and strategy of broadacre farming and direct investment in farmland. Kate connects the dots between people, productivity, and profit to build better farmers, better farms and healthy thriving families and communities.

This will be an opportunity to hear some great speakers. More details will follow, so keep an eye out in your local newsletters and on social media. If you would like further information, please contact me on the details below.

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## Courses & Resources...



### Media engagement for Landcare and environmental organisations

#### Part 2: Media engagement and building relationships

In the second part of this webinar series, we will have a closer look at effective ways of engaging the media. Landcare Victoria collaborates with the Climate Media Centre to shed light on how to successfully tell your story to the media.

Whether you're promoting an upcoming event, raising awareness about a threatened species in your area, or eager to share the success of a recent event with your community through local media, this webinar is tailored to address your needs.

**When:** Tuesday 5 March 5.30pm to 7pm

**Where:** Online

**Cost:** Free

**[Register here now.](#)**



### Volunteer Safety Risk and Insurance Workshop

This interactive online three-hour training session delivered by a lawyer from Justice Connect covers the key legal obligations you have to protect the people (volunteers) in your organisation and helps you to identify and manage risks before they become problems.

#### You will learn about:

- Why safety is important.
- Effect of Incorporation on legal responsibility
- Work health and safety duties
- Child safety requirements
- Risk management processes
- Insurance and protections available
- Safety and risk tips

**Who should attend:** Board / committee members, employees and volunteers.

**Date:** Wednesday 6 March 2024, 10am to 1pm

**Cost:** free but registrations essential as places are limited.

**To register** contact the Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre via email at [byrchub@bgovolunteers.org.au](mailto:byrchub@bgovolunteers.org.au) or by phone on 5441 1404.

## Social media and the law

Social media has become an indispensable tool for not-for-profit organisations. It helps us expand reach, connect people, start conversations. and grow awareness. But along with those benefits comes legal risks which, if poorly managed, can impact negatively on an organisation and its people.

In this popular social media and the law webinar we'll step you through some key legal risks for not-for-profit organisations that engage with social media, as well as our top tips for managing these risks.

### What will be covered:

- Legal considerations when curating content, including confidentiality and intellectual property
- Defamation laws
- Personal information and privacy issues
- How to manage social media use and content posted by others
- Top tips and further resources

**Who should attend:** anyone involved in the use of social media in their not-for-profit organisation.

**When:** Tuesday 12 March, 12.45pm to 2pm

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** \$49-\$85

**Register** online at the [Justice Connect Not-for-profit Law website](#).



## Nature Stewards Program

Would you or someone you know, like to:

- Connect with nature
- Gain knowledge on native plants and animals
- Learn practical skills on how to care for the environment
- Meet like-minded others
- Discover environmental volunteering opportunities?

Nature Stewards is a six-week program that connects curious people with their local and wider environments through a combination of classes and field trips.

**When:** Saturdays, 13 April to 18 May 2024, 9:30am to 4:30pm

**Cost:** \$250 full fee or \$65 concession\*

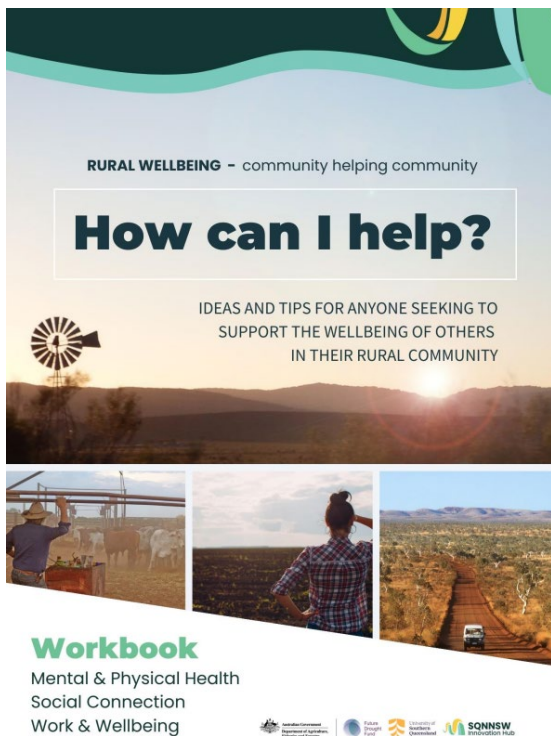
\*Full time students, health care and pension card holders

We are welcoming applications from anyone in the community who is interested, **however preference will be given to people aged 18 - 29 years.**

North Bendigo Landcare Group is offering \$250 sponsorship for local young people to participate. If you are interested or would like to offer sponsorship, please email [l.spinks@bendigo.vic.gov.au](mailto:l.spinks@bendigo.vic.gov.au)

**Applications are open now and close Sunday 31 March, 2024.**

**For more information and to apply head to the [Nature Stewards website](#).**



Find out more about the [Rural Wellbeing Toolkit here](#), where you can:

- Download the Rural Wellbeing Toolkit workbook
- Download the Facilitator Guide for Toolkit workbook
- Access Rural Wellbeing Toolkit in an online and interactive format.

## Rural Wellbeing Toolkit

### Ideas and tips for anyone supporting the wellbeing of others in their rural community

You are an important part of a community. There are many ways to help others, and giving of your time and skills is one of the most rewarding ways to give back.

Whether you're volunteering with a local organisation, or you personally want to help out someone you know in the community, these resources help you consider the best strategies for doing so. The resources will help you learn how to **recognise** when people need help, **connect** people to resources needed, and give ideas for how you can provide **support**.

- **Recognise** - Listen, understand, and identify what a person is needing
- **Connect** - Assist people in finding qualified and appropriate support
- **Support** - Provide ongoing support as a friend and community peer

This work was developed by Dr Jennifer Luke of the Southern Queensland and northern New South Wales (SQNSW) Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, in collaboration with Dr Sonja March and Dr Peter McIlveen from the University Southern Queensland, funded by Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.



## Events...



### LPLN Bird Day Out

Come along to the Loddon Plains Landcare Network's annual Bird Day Out event. Presenters include watercolour artist Terry Jarvis and author and wildlife sound recordist Andrew Skeoch.

**When:** Saturday 2 March 12.30pm until late; Sunday 3 March for early morning bird walk.

**Where:** LPLN Inglewood Goods Shed and out in nature

**Cost:** free

**Register** via email including your name and dietary requirements to [lpln.facilitator@gmail.com](mailto:lpln.facilitator@gmail.com) or via phone 0490 412 430.

David Hardwick of Soil Land Food will also be joining to share his insights on how biofertilisers can help to build healthy and resilient soils.

The workshop will be held at Carol and Brian's farm in Waitchie, Victoria on Tuesday 12 March from 8:30am to 2pm. Lunch and morning tea will be provided.

This workshop is delivered in partnership with Vic No Till as part of Soils for Life's Cropping Resilience Project.

This project is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and Soils for Life.

**When:** Tuesday 12 March 8.30am to 2pm

**Where:** Waitchie, Victoria (address provided on registration)

**Cost:** \$30 for VNT members, \$45 for non-members

**Register** for the event [here](#) or use the QR code in the above image.



### Young Farmer Network Ball

**Join us for a night of dancing and entertainment, delicious food and drinks, and even better company.**

Don't be fooled by the name, you don't need to consider yourself *young* or a *farmer* to attend. Come solo and meet some new friends or bring a group and dance the night away. Everyone 18+ is welcome. We can't wait to see you there!

Please advise of any dietary requirements or ticket name changes. Tickets are non-refundable.

**When:** Friday March 15, 6.30pm to 11.30pm

**Where:** Bridgewater Hotel (2 Main Street, Bridgewater)

**Cost:** \$70pp, includes canapes and happy hour.

**Dress code:** Strictly formal or optional black tie

**Tickets** can be purchased via the [BCG website](#).

A poster for the 'Brewing Biofertilisers at Scale' event. At the top, logos for SoilsforLife, VicNoTill, and SOIL LAND FOOD are displayed. The main title 'Brewing Biofertilisers at Scale' is in large white text. Below it, it says 'Delivered in partnership with VicNoTill'. A white box contains the text 'Waitchie, Victoria | 12 March'. The bottom half of the poster shows a photograph of two men, Brian and Carol Fitzpatrick, working with a large white bucket. A QR code is in the bottom left corner, and the text 'Bookings at events.humanitix.com/brewing-biofertilisers-at-scale' is in the bottom right.

### Brewing biofertilisers at scale

Farmers Brian and Carol Fitzpatrick will walk through how they brew their own biofertilisers and apply them in their broadacre cropping enterprise.

You'll learn about the Fitzpatrick's methods and recipes, the equipment they use including their liquid inject system, and the tips and tricks they have learnt along the way.





## Bendigo Sustainability Festival

The [Bendigo Sustainability Group](#) is celebrating the 10th festival this year, and you are invited to the sustainable garden party!

This annual event aims to showcase the absolute best in sustainable living products, programs, goods, and services that are active here in Central Victoria.

Highlights include **Craig Reucassel**, best known for his work with The Chaser, The War on Waste, CNNNN and The Chaser's War on Everything.

**When:** Sunday 17 March, 10:00am to 3:30pm

**Where:** Garden for the Future, Hamelin Street, White Hills

**Cost:** Entry is by gold coin donation

**More information:** [Bendigo Sustainability Festival 2024](#) — [Bendigo Sustainability Group \(bsg.org.au\)](#)



## Gorse control demonstration day

Join the Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) for practical demonstrations of best practice gorse removal. Network with environmental representatives and meet some contractors from the area.

This event is a collaboration between the VGT, Macedon Ranges Shire and Pipers Creek Landcare.

Nibbles and refreshments provided.

**When:** Sunday 24 March, 10am to 12.30pm

**Where:** Rock House, Kyneton (end of Lavender's Lane off Wedge and George Streets).

**Cost:** Free but limited

**Register:** Via trybooking

## Spotlight on Axedale's platypus

The platypus is one of the world's most amazing animals.



This furry, warm-blooded mammal lays soft-shelled eggs like a lizard, uses its bill to find food underwater, and sorts out arguments with the help of venomous spurs.

The platypus is also among the most popular of Australia's animal icons - a great flagship species for freshwater conservation. But what about the platypus's own environmental needs?

How is the species faring in the wild? And what needs to be done to ensure that the population survives in the Campaspe River?

Axe Creek Landcare Group has arranged for Geoff Williams from the Australian Platypus Conservancy to share his knowledge of this fascinating monotreme.

**When:** Tuesday 19 March, 7pm

**Where:** Axedale Tavern

**Cost:** Free

**Registrations** via [Eventbrite here](#).

## Funding opportunities...



### Woolworths Junior Landcare Grants now open

**Landcare Australia has a partnership with Woolworths to manage the Woolworths Junior Landcare Grants program.**

Now open for applications are \$1,000 grants to help engage students in projects that support the environment. Open to primary schools and early learning centres across Australia, the Woolworths Junior Landcare grants program gives children across the country an opportunity to get hands-on with environmental and sustainability projects, learn new skills and knowledge, connect with their peers, and enjoy the wellbeing benefits of time spent outdoors in nature. Since 2018, nearly 5,000 projects, involving over 400,000 children, have funded hands-on outdoor learning about the natural environment.

Apply here: <https://juniorlandcare.org.au/grant/2024-woolworths-junior-landcare-grants/>

### Other grants

Refer to the February Chat for other grants available. Grants listed below are new since the previous edition of the Chat.

Remember to check for grants from your local council.

#### Emergency Management Victoria

Disaster Ready Fund (VIC)

Closes 20 March, 2024

[The Disaster Ready Fund: Round Two, 2024-25 | Emergency Management Victoria \(emv.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Eligible to State/Territory Governments, Businesses, Universities, Not-for-Profits & Local Governments

Funding: Total pool: \$200,000,000 (approx)

#### Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (VIC)

Bushfire Recovery Planning and Building Assistance Rebate Scheme

Closes 31 March, 2024

[Planning and building assistance rebate scheme \(water.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Eligible to Individuals

Funding: Amount (max): \$5,000

#### AgriFutures Australia

AgriFutures Agritech Event Sponsorship

Closes 1 March 2024

[AgriFutures Agritech Event Sponsorship Program | AgriFutures Australia](#)

Eligible to Businesses

Funding: Total pool: \$625,000

#### Loddon Shire Council

Event Promotion Scheme

Closes 31 May, 2024

[Council grants \(loddon.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Eligible to Businesses & Not-for-Profits

Funding: Amount (max): \$1,000

#### Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), Gardiner Dairy Foundation

Community Grants Program

Closes 21 March, 2024

[Gardiner Foundation Community Grants Program | FRRR](#)

Eligible to not-for-profits

Funding: Amount (max): \$5,000, Total pool: \$120,000

#### ETREA Foundation

Capacity building grants

Closes 31 March, 2024

[Apply For A Grant | ETREA Foundation](#)

Eligible to Not-for-Profits

Funding: Amount: \$2,000 to \$10,000

#### Australian Communities Foundation

Hamer Sprout Fund

Closes 30 September, 2024

[Apply for Funding — The Hamer Sprout Fund](#)

Eligible to Unincorporated Groups, Individuals & Not-for-Profits

Funding: Amount (max): 10,000, Total pool: \$25,000