North Central Chat

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



May 2020

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

We have just ticked over our first month working from home and adjusting to a workday full of videoconferencing, phone calls and instant messaging to get things done.

Whilst we appreciate that Landcarers are keen to find way to continue their favourite activities, it is vital that everyone follows the directions of the Department of Health and Human Services and carefully considers the 'Stay at Home' policy, asking ourselves if our reasons for being out of the house are in fact one of the four reasons to leave.

I have been thrilled to hear of the innovation groups have shown in adapting to the times were working through.

Groups are hosting meetings online and undertaking planning using online tools such as GoogleDrive, which allowing multiple members to work on the same document at the same time.

A particular joy over the past month was seeing the Annual Maldon Easter Fair Grand Parade conducted virtually. In its 143rd year, the committee organised a compilation of highlights from the past 142 years, posted to their Facebook page. A huge congratulations to the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group, who were awarded the 'Best Community Entry' for 2020.

We are now hosting a monthly videoconference with the North Central Landcare Facilitators for the foreseeable future to ensure we remain as connected and supportive of one another as possible.

I am also working across CMA regions with colleagues from Goulburn Broken and Corangamite to look into how we can deliver the planned training events for Landcare members & Network facilitators using online presentations and webinar sessions. These training methods, whilst not able to be as interactive as a usual workshop, enable more access for more people to



Cactus Warrior Frances Wade's winning costume entry at the Maldon Easter Parade. How could such happy volunteers and fabulous costumes not win?

engage with the topics on their own terms, at a time and location suitable for them. The materials will be recorded, enabling people to refer back to them or easily pass them onto other people who may be interested. So, the reach can be much greater than a face to face session in a meeting room. We hope to see many of you join in these activities as we bring them to you over the coming months.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator North Central CMA

Phone: 03 5448 7124

Email: tess.grieves@nccma.vic.gov.au



News...

Victorian Landcare Program & Community Programs (DELWP) - Frequently Asked Questions (COVID-19)

The Environment & Community Programs Branch team at DELWP have provided an update which details about the impact of COVID-19 on the various grants programs that their teams help deliver, including the possible variation of projects that have been delayed due to COVID-19.

The FAQ also includes a list of ideas for staying involved in Landcare and environmental volunteering while at home and following government COVID-19 measures.

"We hope this list provides some useful ideas for ways to stay connected with your Landcare and environmental volunteering communities, and some helpful suggestions about how you can continue to do your work. If you have any other ideas or suggestions please share them with us and we will add them to future updates, so that others can try them too."

Please read through the FAQ for more details, which is available on the Victorian Landcare Gateway via <u>FAQ</u>.

Landcare and Community Programs Contact Details:

- DELWP's Victorian Landcare Program staff <u>landcare@delwp.vic.gov.au</u> and your email will be sent onto the appropriate staff member.
- DELWP's Community Programs and grant staff enviro.grants@delwp.vic.gov.au.

Regional Catchment Strategy and Biodiversity Response planning goes online...for now

PIN-POST-PIC to win!

Prior to the COVID-19 shut down, the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) had been planning five Regional Roundtable sessions. These were to inform the renewal of the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) and regional Biodiversity Response Planning (BRP).

Due to COVID-19 and at the last minute, the Regional Roundtables were postponed. When it is safe to do so, we intend to reschedule the Roundtables. In the

meantime, we will be continuing to develop the RCS and BRP, engaging our stakeholders online where practical.

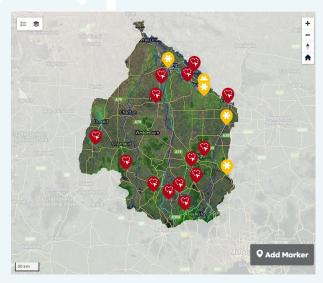
So for now we are encouraging all community members to get online and have their say. Both the CMA and DELWP have Engage Victoria sites for each of RCS renewal and regional BRP (links below). We have had hundreds of people visit these sites, but not many have completed the surveys. Even if you're intending to participate in the workshops (when rescheduled), we encourage you to have your say online now. When the workshops are rescheduled, we can review and discuss the feedback collected online.

The RCS website also has an interactive map, showing draft priority places for the RCS. We are running a competition; to be in the running for a \$100 voucher to a local business, you need to PIN your favourite place, POST a comment telling us why you love it and upload a PIC (photo).

The surveys and map will be **open until 1 June 2020** so please jump online now

- Regional Catchment Strategy renewal via: <u>https://engage.vic.gov.au/north-central-regional-catchment-strategy-2021-27</u>
- Biodiversity Response Planning via
 https://engage.vic.gov.au/loddon-mallee-biodiversity-response-planning
 https://engage.gov.au/loddon-mallee-biodiversity-response-planning
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And lastly, we are committed to hearing from our communities. We will keep you informed of our process and any further engagement opportunities, including when face-to-face workshops are rescheduled.





Rabbit busting around Lake Bael Bael and beyond

Loddon Plains Landcare Network Facilitator, Danny Pettingill, has reported great success with the networks GOANNA project rabbit baiting program.

"Following on from hosting a Chemical Users and 1080 course in February, LPLN coordinated a 'One-for-One' Baiting Program with landholders in March. The program has included significant private land surrounding Lakes Bael Bael and Elizabeth, the Marshes, Wandella Forest and also takes in all privately held land (except publicly accessed caravan parks) around Lake Charm.

In all LPLN has been able to facilitate:

- Chemical handling and baiting training to 18 individuals and facilitated appropriate qualifications through Agriculture Victoria.
- Facilitated the delivery of nearly 100km of baiting on private land in the above areas
- Supply of over 1 tonne of product as part of the project
- Assisted and provided planning support to 30 landholders around the areas to take up the program offer.
- The project directly impacted 1800Ha across 12,000Ha of private land.
- Total In-kind contributions have amounted to over \$5,000 in bait
- Total LPLN project contribution \$5,700, total project cost \$10,801
- In-kind time contributions from landowners total over 220 hours of on-ground works, equal to \$6,600.
- Due to the significant community uptake, we decided to add another \$1000 to this element of the project.

In addition to these fantastic on ground achievements, Danny notes that "This project and works program has had a significant effect on the local LPLN member group, Fairley Bael Bael - Sandhill Lake Landcare."

Nest boxes in Victoria

In 2018, we featured an article in the Chat which sought input into a project aiming to understand the use of nest boxes in Victoria, run by Wildlife ecologist, Phoebe Macak (Arthur Rylah Institute).

The findings from this research have now been published in The Victorian Naturalist.

Many north-central community groups and organisations contributed to this research, for which the research team are very grateful.



Phoebe noted that "We received details for nearly 10,000 nest boxes across the state:

- 81 respondents provided information on 98 programs that support 9986 nest boxes
- Programs installed from 1 to 1100 nest boxes
- 43 community/interest groups had installed 72% of the nest boxes
- Reasons nest boxes were installed included: to support wildlife, particularly threatened species; as a response to a lack of hollows; to contribute to habitat connectivity; to engage the community with nature.

We hope you find the detailed of this paper interesting:

Macak, P.V. (2020) <u>Nest boxes for wildlife in Victoria: an overview of nest box distribution and use.</u> The Victorian Naturalist 137(1): 4-14.





Landcare Australia, together with the Landcare State and Territory organisations, have agreed to change the date for Landcare Week to be held the first week of August for 2020.

This new campaign date for Landcare Week has been changed to align with the activities of a large number of active groups in South East Australia, in particular groups involved in revegetation projects and community planting events. Moving the date to August will provide groups with an opportunity to engage the wider community and increase participation.

For further information and to register go to https://landcareaustralia.org.au/landcareweek

Australia's Environment in 2019: scorecard for the North Central region

The Australian National University recently released *Australia's Environment in 2019*, which you may find interesting and useful in your activities.

The aim of the report is to annually report on the condition and trajectory of our natural resources and ecosystems. It is based on analysis and interpretation a large volume of satellite, station and survey data.

The report comes in different forms: a national summary report, a 30min webinar, a visual data explorer and environmental scorecards for all regions across Australia. All can be accessed via http://www.ausenv.online.

The link to the environmental scorecard for your NRM region is:

http://wenfo.org/aer_pdf/NRM_Regions_2017/North%20 Central.pdf

You can also access scorecards for any other region, including any National Parks, catchment, bioregion, Ramsar site or local government area within your region, via this link

CONNECT Greater Bendigo

During 2019 residents and community organisations have been suggesting that Greater Bendigo needs a virtual place for community, groups and clubs to connect, increase awareness and share opportunities to get involved.

The City has secured funding to build a new, bespoke, online community hub called CONNECT.

CONNECT will be a place where residents and visitors can discover the community and get involved. From community activities and programs, sport groups and clubs, to events and volunteering opportunities, this online community hub will lift the lid on all Greater Bendigo has to offer.

CONNECT is for you and our community, so we invite you to help design it......which can be done from the comfort of our homes!

There are three ways to get involved; (i) complete a survey (ii) join the focus group, or (iii) do both.

Survey

Telling the COGB about yourself and your experiences will help provide valuable information on how our community searches online, what they look for and identify any gaps/opportunities. In addition, community clubs and groups often are seeking ways to promote their activities, increase membership and volunteers.

Please complete one of the following surveys that best describes you:

Community Survey

Community Groups and Clubs

Focus Group

A virtual focus group representing our community, clubs and groups will be established. Members will 'e-meet' three times to (i) prioritise what functionality/design CONNECT must have, and what would be nice to have (ii) test the CONNECT prototype and (iii) codesign and test a user guide for registering and using CONNECT. The time commitment will be about 1hour per session spread over three months. If you have never tried online meetings, no problems its easy and the council will provide a tutorial.

To express your interest to be involved as a focus group member, please contact Fiona Jemmett at communitypartnerships@Bendigo.vic.gov.au



Sustainable Ag Snippet...

Embracing video technology with our farmer groups

It has been an interesting few weeks engaging with our farmer groups. The current COVID 19 situation has made us all get familiar with video meeting technology. It has taken a small amount of time to adjust but I have finally embraced the technology and am encouraging the farmers we work with to do the same. The first meeting with the Holistic Management farmer group didn't go so well with a few technical issues, but the next meeting was a huge success. Colin Seis joined the Mount Alexander Regenerative Agriculture farmer group from his property at Gulgong on the central slopes of NSW to farmers in the North Central CMA region. His presentation on cover cropping demonstrated the advantages this technology has. Farmers participated from their own farms and they were able to post questions at any time. This was highlighted with more than 20 questions being posted.

The session was well received with comments from participants such as "thanks for an informative webinar" and "congratulations Deane & Darren for pulling this off with the presenting --absolutely brilliant, well done".

Farmers in our region are still eager to stay connected with each other for support and conversations. This technology provides methods to do this and also supports opportunities for increasing knowledge, skills and awareness.



Colin will be doing another session with the Regenerative Agriculture farmer group discussing seed mixes and how to establish your own winter cover crop. Let's hope it goes as well as the first session. There will be more opportunities to participate in these video discussions, keep an eye out on our website and social media posts.

Darren Bain

Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator North Central CMA

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Australian Farmer of the Year nominations 2020

The Australian Farmer of the Year Awards are designed to celebrate and applaud the outstanding achievements of those individuals and families making a significant contribution to Australian Agriculture.

There are seven awards categories to apply for, nominations must be 200 words or less. To read the awards guidelines, vist:

https://www.farmeroftheyear.com.au/static/register-now

The timelines for these awards are planned as follows:

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April 1 Award nominations open

May 24 Nominations close

July Independent judging panel confirmed

August Ticket sales open

September Shortlisted nominations sent to

independent judges. Award winners and

finalists decided

October 15 Awards announcement event

Nov Awards feature in Farming Ahead

magazine



Look out for Louis Rogers in a Farmer of the Year award ceremony in the years to come!



North Central Chat May 2020



Communities Caring for Catchments

Hello,

Can you believe we have been working from home in isolation for just over a month! For me it's only been a week and a half as I had two weeks of leave over the school holidays. I did spend this time at home, in the garden setting up our veggie gardens with automated irrigation systems, turning our beds ready for our winter crops and making homemade pasta!

Britt and Nicole have been very busy working with the statewide River Detectives team creating online resources for our River Detectives program. You can find out how to get involved below.

Since returning to work, I been focussing on writing project proposals, attending lots of online meetings, working with Nicole on our Monitoring and Methods Manual and tidying up our database, which has been long overdue and desperately in need of some love.

We had some great plans over the next couple of months, all which have been postpones or cancelled, including the launch of our first ever Bendigo Creek Citizen Science River Health Report 2019 and the Castlemaine Urban Waterways River Health Report 2019. We were hoping to celebrate the Reports with our volunteers in mid-June, however it looks like this will have to be postponed until later in the year.

We had also made plans to catch up with most of our volunteers to undertake our annual shadow testing as part of our Quality Assurance / Quality Control procedure, unfortunately we had to cancel these sessions. Britt and I will start to plan how we can make sure we can stay connected with you all until stage 3 restrictions are lifted.

And last but not least, please continue to practice self-isolation, there is no need to undertake monitoring activities during this time. If you can stay, stay home.

Please stay safe and enjoy this edition of the North Central Chat.

Cass Davis

Regional Waterwatch Coordinator

North Central CMA

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Celebrating our wonderful Volunteers!

In May each year volunteers are recognised across Australia as part of National Volunteer Week.

National Volunteer Week (NVW) is the annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution of our nation's volunteers.

The theme for National Volunteer Week 2020 is "Changing Communities. Changing Lives"



The North Central Waterwatch program would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for volunteering your time to help us monitor the condition of Land, Water ad Biodiversity resources across north central Victoria.

Our volunteers actively care for their environment by participating in programs that monitor and report on the health of our region.

Since 1993, Waterwatch Victoria has been a successful community engagement program connecting local communities with river health and sustainable water management.



We support community volunteers to become custodians of our local waterways by increasing their knowledge and skills in waterway related issues.

The data collected and interpreted by our community provides us with the information and knowledge about the ecological health of a waterway. This helps waterway managers make important decisions about our environment.



North Central Chat May 2020

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers!



Ken Laing, Spring Creek

Ken became involved in Waterwatch to gain a better understanding of the health of our local environment and to contribute to the body of knowledge about water in Victoria.

Ken says, "I have a greater appreciation of the network of people involved around Victoria in monitoring our water systems".

When we asked Ken what he loves about being involved in the Waterwatch program, Ken said "the pleasure of visiting the monitoring sites on the local waterways; collecting and testing the water samples; the satisfaction of contributing to our knowledge base of water in Victoria."



Caitlin Laing, Spring Creek

Caitlin became involved in Waterwatch so she can help the community and gain a better understanding of her local environment..

Caitlin says, "I have learnt a lot about the scientific side of water and the processes that go into understanding the process and functions of small rivers."

When we asked Caitlin what she loves about being involved in the Waterwatch program, she said "Knowing that the information is being used for the greater good and it is providing valuable information."



Melanie Watts, Avoca River Mel became involved in Waterwatch 2005 as a Waterwatch facilitator. Shortly after starting this job she took on water quality monitoring at several sites along the Avoca River.

Mel says, "I have learnt so much about water quality, the importance of good riparian zone management, and the impact of various land uses on our waterways."

When we asked Mel what she loves about being involved in the Waterwatch program, Mel said "I particularly enjoy the connection Waterwatch provides me with other passionate people who care for their local waterways. I enjoy monitoring the changes in the river following large rain events, and my children now love to help me do the testing."



Keith Neaves, Campbells Creek

Keith became involved in Waterwatch because he was interested in monitoring the quality of water in Campbells Creek over time. His testing point is just a few kilometres downstream of the Wastewater Treatment Plant discharge outlet.

Keith says "the quality is relatively consistent, affected mainly by heavy rainfall events causing general runoff into the creek. At other times, the main parameters of interest are the relatively high salinity and phosphorus levels".

We asked Keith what he loves about being involved in the Waterwatch project, Keith said "I enjoy going to the Creek, observing the immediate environment, doing the sampling, testing and being able to explain any out of the ordinary test results. Also, being able to provide data to assist with the overall Waterwatch monitoring program which helps to assess the overall health of our Waterways!". North Central Chat May 2020



George and Anne Perkins, Castlemaine
As members of Castlemaine Landcare Group, we had
been working on revegetating Forest Creek in
Castlemaine and we wanted to do long term
monitoring to see whether our revegetation work
resulted in improvements to the quality of the water
in Forest Creek.

Anne says "We found that the quality of the water in Forest Creek is generally quite good, but we have problems with high salinity in summer when the water evaporates. We've also found that long term monitoring is very valuable. You need to keep collecting data for many years in order to be able to identify trends and patterns. For Forest Creek, the seasonal variations in water flow are the most dominant factor affecting water quality."

When we asked Anne what she loves about being involved in the Waterwatch program, Anne said "we like getting out in the open air and spending a couple of hours just walking along the creek, observing the birds and the vegetation. It has been fantastic to see how the environment along Forest Creek in Castlemaine has improved over the years, thanks to the efforts of the Landcare group."

CITIZEN
SCIENTISTS ARE
CHANGING THE
WAY WE
COLLECT
INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
HEALTH OF OUR
REGION





Rowan Laing, Spring Creek

Rowan became involved in Waterwatch to better understand the local environment, and gain knowledge on the history of Bendigo and how ecosystems work.

Rowan says, "I have learnt a lot about the important role small rivers and catchments play both in the local environment as well as farming."

When we asked Rowan what he loves about being involved in the Waterwatch program, Rowan said "I love being a part of the community and helping obtain valuable knowledge which can be used to monitor and hopefully improve the local ecosystem."



Rob Loats, Little Murray River

Twenty-five years ago, keen fisherman Rob Loats was frustrated the fish were not biting at the Donald angling club's long-term favourite spot in the lower Avon-Richardson River. Locals kept telling him the water looked fine, so all must be good. He wasn't so sure.

Rob says "I took a couple of samples of the water along to the Wimmera Mallee Field Days and had it tested at the Waterwatch tent. "It was the highest salinity level they had seen for the entire field days. I have been monitoring ever since"

When we asked Rob what he loves about being involved in the Waterwatch program, Rob said "I love getting out and doing my testing, It's always interesting. You always observe what is going on. In now monitoring the Little Murry River as part of the Native Fish Recovery Plan and love being involved in both projects."



River Detectives at a Distance

Changes to Support Teaching and Learning Remotely

The River Detectives team of facilitators have come up with a plan to help support teachers to continue connecting their students to our natural environment.

Due to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we understand the challenges teachers are facing and hope to provide a range of simple activities to assist in engaging your students with the natural world around them, while learning remotely.

Each month, we will have a different theme and will provide a selection of activities in a matrix based on Bloom's Taxonomy and Multiple Intelligences (please search online if you are unfamiliar with these). We hope this format will help cater for the various abilities, skills and interests of your students. The activities won't suit everyone (particularly upper secondary) but use it as an inspiration for adaption to your unique situation.

We encourage you to use this matrix in any way that is helpful to you and your students. You may suggest to students which or how many activities are completed or allow students to select for themselves; you may like to hold onto the matrix yourself and pick activities to include in your own planning for various areas of the curriculum; or activities can be used as part of core work and/or suggestions for downtime.

Feel free to use the activities as much or as little as you like.

Please know that there is no need to continue with your monthly water quality monitoring activities at this time. This is deemed a non-essential activity and we reiterate, in-line with government directive, if you can stay home, you must stay home.

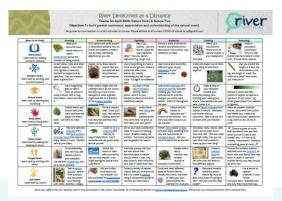
Please keep in touch with your local River Detectives facilitator via email. We are here to support you and help make this journey a little easier. Let us know if you are finding this helpful or suggest any topics you would like us to cover. We would also love for you to share snippets of some of the activities your students are participating in – photos are especially appreciated! You can either post

these on Billabong Banter or email them to your regional facilitator to upload.

We will provide a new theme and a variety of activities to River Detectives schools each month. This will be emailed to you, posted on Billabong Banter and the matrix will be loaded onto Resource River Bank

We aim to make activities simple, fun, engaging, using basic materials from home, achievable for students independently and ones that can be done in the backyard or during the family's exercise outings.

We hope to provide a variety of activities to suit different remote learning models (online, shareable by email and printable for teachers to share with their students). Go to: https://www.riverdetectives.net.au/

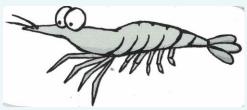


We are currently adding new resources to the River Detectives website too, so have a look at the Resource River Bank for additional activities and resources.

Stay safe and all the best during this challenging time.

~ The River Detectives Team ~

What bug am I?



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Courses and Resources...



2021 National Landcare Conference

The National Landcare Conference was scheduled to be held this year from 11 to 13 November 2020. Due to COVID-19, the National Landcare Conference Steering Committee has announced the conference will now take place on 10 to 12 March 2021 at the International Convention Centre, Sydney.

The committee would like to take this opportunity to extend the deadline for the Call for Abstracts to **1 July 2020**.

The 2020 National Landcare Conference Steering Committee would like to ensure that the program is inclusive and that we have a diverse range of abstracts from landcare and community, famers and landholders across Australia.

There are four conference streams for 2020:

• Sustainable Agriculture

Innovation and technology, soil health, adaptation to climate change, integrating productivity and conservation.

• Environment & Climate Change

How to encourage individuals to take positive action to mitigate climate change with Landcare?

• Community Partnerships in Action

Building community capacity and resilience, communication and storytelling, volunteering, partnerships, building and sharing knowledge.

Landcare Impact

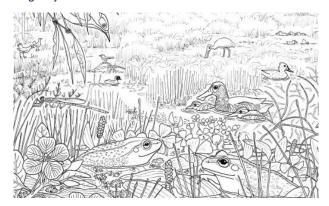
Landscape, biodiversity, community resilience, mental and physical health of individuals, community wellbeing, agriculture productivity, economy.

For more information or to submit an abstract please visit the web page here: https://landcareaustralia.org.au/call-for-abstracts

Free froggy colouring book to download

Artist Paula Peeters of the Paperbark Writer invites you to follow the Southern Bell Frog's journey, from tiny egg, to tadpole, to a young frog, in this beautiful colouring book. Yours to download for free!

Paula writes on her blog that "Back in 2018 I spent some winter weeks exploring the habitat of the Southern Bell Frog in southern NSW. Black box and River Red Gum wetlands. Tangles of lignum swamp, rice paddies and irrigation channels. I tried to see the landscape from a frog's eye view."



There is so much more to discover on Paula's website, including the beautiful *Riverina Grassland Ramblings* featuring the critically endangered Plains-wanderer:

https://www.paperbarkwriter.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Riverina-Grassland-Ramblings-2016-illustrated-by-P-Peeters.pdf

These amazing colouring book projects are free to download, funded through the NSW Government 'Saving our Species' program (2018) and Office of Environment and Heritage, New South Wales (2019).

Landcare in Focus June 25

The next print edition of Landcare in Focus will be published on June 25.

This magazine is circulated in the Australian Community Media rural and regional weekly newspapers. If you would like to submit content to this edition, please email Landcare Australia by May 1 at digital@landcareaustralia.com.au



How to take a video resource developed for Landcare and community

Landcare Australia has created a video on 'how to take video' that can be used by landcare groups to share their project on their social media and websites. If you are interested in using this resource, LAL can provide you with the video file for your website, social channel or newsletter. The video is here:

https://landcareaustralia.org.au/news/learn-how-to-film-your-landcare-project/



Events...

Mushroom identification workshops now online



Axe Creek Landcare Group alerted us to the upcoming online workshops series with photographer and natural historian Alison Pouliot.

Alison is conducting 'Fungus Discovery Workshops' throughout May for participants to discover the diversity, ecology and curiosities of the Kingdom Fungi.

During an interactive session you will then work through your own specimens and identify and discuss them with Alison.

Each 1.5 hour workshop costs \$20. Click here to book: https://alisonpouliot.com/workshops-events/

Funding opportunities...

News Corp Bushfire Fund Grants

News Corp has partnered with FRRR to enable the delivery of the News Corp Bushfire Fund Grants.

This support is for local not-for-profit organisations and community groups that are delivering locally led projects and activities to assist people in their recovery as a result of the 2019-20 bushfires.

Grants of up to \$25,000 are available to support projects addressing a wide range of needs including:

- Community infrastructure and equipment that strengthens volunteer community groups and their activities;
- Emergency equipment and facilities (excludes individual aid);
- · Mental health and wellbeing; and
- Rebuilding communities from infrastructure repairs or upgrades, to governance, capacity building or operational support.

Applications for Round 1 close 5pm Tuesday 5th May 2020.

For further details and to apply go to https://www.frrr.org.au/NC_Bushfire_Grants

