



Castlemaine Landcare Group
Annual General Meeting 12 May 2022
Committee Report

The year 2021 was a year of mixed success. COVID came, went, came again and had us wrestling once more with safe practices to suit the behaviour of the latest variant. Zoom remained our friend, not only for our own committee meetings but for many opportunities to participate in learning events that we would otherwise have needed to travel for. The reduction in our carbon footprint was no doubt miniscule but the time saved could be dedicated to more landcare work. No need to change socks between activities!

Although our work was stop-start, we managed to dedicate the equivalent of more than 8 months of a full time position to direct, on-the-ground work – just not at the same rate of pay. Your committee thanks everyone who kept the faith despite the changeability under COVID. The students from Castlemaine Secondary College brought their usual youthful enthusiasm to a working afternoon and passed it on to the grasses they were planting. We have noticed, though, as have other landcare and wider community groups, that regular participation has been down compared with pre-COVID.

Weeds, on the other hand, have enjoyed the good rain and limited attention they have received. While we are progressing on getting rid of top dominants, the next rung on the weeds hierarchy is enjoying its day in the sun. Nevertheless, the Indigenous Food and Fibre Site (IFF), now in the third year of a four-year Mount Alexander Shire Council landcare grant (thank you MASC), has been transforming with our hard work and the plants supplied by Newstead Natives. We were lucky enough in late October to be gifted 200 Themeda triandra plants (Kangaroo Grass - grown by Neangar Nursery) that are now thriving at IFF. We trialled some planting of Murnong (*Microseris walteri*) tubers and some direct seeding using guidance from several sources, but without success. We can grow them in pots but our ground might lack the appropriate mycorrhiza. We will persist in 2022.

We requested assistance with our weeds from the Landmate team at Middleton (Loddon Prison), but the local management was concerned about the crew bringing COVID back, so our working areas were considered ineligible because of their closeness to walking tracks. However, DELWP kindly funded some weed management from its limited budget, for which we are grateful. Mount Alexander Shire also geared up with the appointment of a new Environment Officer and has begun to help tackle weeds such as periwinkle on our sites.

We made some minor contributions to the arts world when renowned film maker Alex Kelly came and recorded some landcare sounds for a speculative, documentary audio artwork set in 2029. We were also approached by Allie Hanley for material for a Saltgrass podcast on landcare. Over January, we made a small video for a Landcare Linkup and thank all who put their hearts and voices into

attempting to cheerfully regale our audience with the challenge that weeds present us. The gentle, euphonious voice of Terry White lifted the spirits.

Mid-year kicked off the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and also kicked off 2 Victorian Landcare Grant applications from us through the North Central Catchment Management Authority. Both were subsequently approved, for which we thank NCCMA and DELWP, the financiers and guiders. One is for restoration of a Biolink along Moonlight Creek, titled *Linked by Moonlight*, and the other is for the development of a design for the revitalisation of the channelised section of Forest Creek from Ten Foot Bridge to Barker Street.

The *Linked by Moonlight* Project has the primary aim of enhancing the qualities of both the land and waterway as a biolink between Kalimna Park (within the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park to the north), and Forest Creek to the south of the site through reducing Phalaris and restoring biodiversity. Phalaris offers two threats in that area: first as a toxic food for kangaroos, with the end result the possible death of 'roos; and second, as a fire risk during summer to nearby residents. Its strong clumped growth also restricts the ability of native seed to re-establish. Phalaris is a valued pasture grass but not helpful in the spaces we work on. *Linked by Moonlight* includes a community event in Spring 2022 with Dja Dja Wurrung titled a *Wartaka* – people getting together with purpose.

The Revitalisation Project along the channelised section of Forest Creek aims to achieve a more natural stream flow, diverse habitat and wildlife, reduced weed and reed proliferation with deeper pools as appropriate but without removing all vegetative filtration. The historic stone walls will be protected and walking paths will allow community enjoyment. The Victorian Landcare Grant will enable consultants to seek and report on community visions for that section of the creek and to scope the works that would be required to achieve desired outcomes.

Both projects have to be delivered by November 2022 and kept us busy in the later stage of 2021. They also lifted our finances considerably and we set in place processes to ensure we meet our obligations, including establishing a sub-committee for the Revitalisation project.

We farewelled Environment Officer Kylie Stafford from Mount Alexander Shire Council and thanked her for her great support to our work, particularly the introduction by MASC of a four-year grant for landcare. With the arrival of the new Environment Officer we were able to meet again with MASC and Friends of Campbells Creek in the Castlemaine Urban Waterways Forum, where the focus is on delivery of actions under the Castlemaine Urban Waterways Management Plan.

We also supported the wider work of landcare with our particular perspective as an urban, rather than agricultural, group. Our President was reappointed to a 3 year position on the Members Council of Landcare Victoria Incorporated and also continued to support the work of the Landcare Facilitator hosted by Connecting Country as a member of that Steering Group. We farewelled Asha Bannon from the Landcare Facilitator role but were pleased that she moved to a position at the North Central Catchment Management Authority. Local resident Hadley Cole was welcomed enthusiastically into the big shoes left by Asha.

We revised our health and safety policies, learned about the value of iNaturalist for monitoring change and started work on a new website. All of these, and our capacity to hold committee meetings via zoom, depend upon the skills and generosity of our members. Special dedication was

shown again by the teams who monitor our water quality and birdlife. They are quiet achievers who deserve more acknowledgement than they are given.

Your committee continued unchanged except for the March 2021 departure of Tim Grey who provided a very valuable and energetic contribution to our work. Thanks Tim. We hope to see you back in the fray some time soon.

And we looked for a shed. We have done this for many years but are still awaiting a suitable solution. Perhaps 2022, the 20th year of our landcare operation, will provide an option.

The year had its own points of loss. Our beloved long-term and dedicated Treasurer, Jack Carolan, was farewelled with stories and music that showed the breadth of his enjoyment in and love of life. Jack had many precious "communities" of interest, and Landcare was up there with music, arts, sports, family, friends and the rest, all showered in his generosity and humour.

The year also saw the loss of John Reid, a dedicated environmentalist, creator of Red Beard Bakery, son of lifelong contributors to the environment and community, Alan and Wendy Reid, and husband of the talented Thais Sansom – all of them involved at one stage or another with Castlemaine and its landcare.

Farewell, special people.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Kilmarin'.

On behalf of Committee

21 / 04 / 2022