



## **NEWHAM SUSTAINABILITY EXPO**

As one of the four community groups sponsoring our recent Sustainability Expo, the Landcare Group played a very important role.

Apart from an impressive display of our Group's activities and achievements, many of our members were involved in the whole program. This is hardly surprising since the whole endeavour of 'landcare' is the promoting of and working towards the sustainability of our environment.

Highlight speakers contributing to the program included David Holmgren, Tim Sansom (of the Digger's Club) and Simon Rickard. They inspired us to think seriously about future problems resulting from our affluent western life-style and how nurturing the land and getting involved in our own food gardens can be of enormous benefit.

Other speakers addressed issues of energy sources (other than the burning of fossil fuels) and the ways in which we can make changes to our homes to reduce the consumption of electricity for heating and cooling.

To review the Sustainability Expo, go to the Newham Website <[www.newham.vic.au](http://www.newham.vic.au)> where talk summaries and other information is available.

### **Where to from here?**

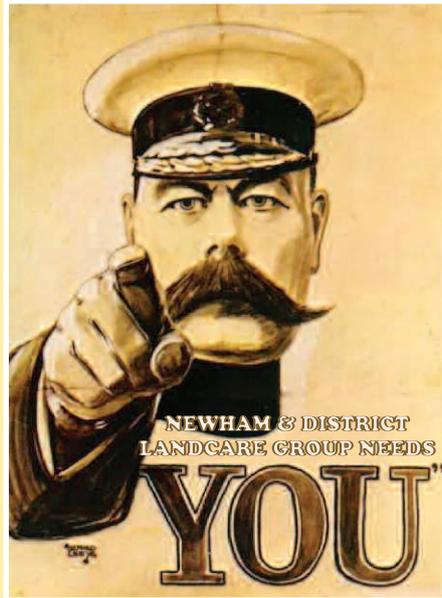
Members who wish to become more involved in sustainability issues can join the very active Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group <[www.woodendweb.org/mrsg](http://www.woodendweb.org/mrsg)>.

The Newham Landcare Group remains committed to the sustainability of the local landscape through on-going mapping and weeding of our roadsides, rehabilitating of our creeks and their surrounds, and improving native habitat along ridgelines and other key landscape features.

The Community Planning Group has floated the idea of a 'Speaker Series' in the Hall where important sustainability issues may be examined in more detail.

***Jim Sansom***

## President's Message



Newham and District Landcare Group needs you to become a committee member.

All members are encouraged to consider joining the committee that sets the agenda and activities for the year. All volunteer groups need reinvigorating and reenergising from time to time and Newham and District Landcare Group is no different. Now is a time of change with many opportunities to contribute.

Becoming an active committee member is a positive experience. Joining the group gives an opportunity to expand your contacts with other like minded groups, gain knowledge and be part of a movement that is aware of our environment and sets goals for productive land management both for agriculture and sustainable management of our natural landscape.

I urge people who are interest to attend one of our monthly committee meetings (held first Monday of each month at 159 Dons Road) to gain an insight and/or contact me on 0417 378 777 for an exploratory discussion.

**Nick Massie**

## Group contacts

**President:** Nick Massie. **Treasurer:** Hilary Roberts.

**Committee members:** Penny Roberts, Don Lang, Sue Massie, Jim Sansom, John Luckock.

**New members, general queries:** Penny Roberts; 5427 0795.

**Roadsides:** Sue Massie; 5427 0665.

**Newham Primary:** Jenny Waugh; 5427 0408.

**Animal pests:** John Luckock; 5427 0909.

**Wesley Park:** Fran Spain; 5427 0661.

**Flora, library, small tools, grants:** Penny Roberts; 5427 0795.

**Spray trailer:** Chris Wiggett; 5423 5279.

The committee meets on the first Monday of the month [February to December] between 7.30 – 9pm in Newham. All members are welcome to attend the Committee meetings to become more involved or raise specific matters. Please advise a committee member if you wish to attend. Meetings start and finish on time... and we enjoy them!

# DIARY OF EVENTS

## MAY

**Saturday 15th**

### ***Planting/maintenance at Newham Primary School***

10am – 12noon. Cooee! from the carpark if you can't see us, then adjourning to the store for refreshments. Contact Penny: 5427 0795.

## JUNE

**Friday 4th**

### ***Mammals***

*Bruce is back!!* Those of you who attended his bird talk in 2009 will no doubt remember his entertaining style and be as delighted as I am that he has agreed to return and talk about another of his interests.

The mammals of the Macedon Ranges – an illustrated talk based on observations of the forty or so mammals that occur locally, or may occur locally.

7.30pm start, supper to follow.

Newham Hall, members free, non-members gold coin donation.

**Saturday 26th**

### ***Winter Dinner – South American theme***

Carlos and Naomi Lopez are our salsa guides for the evening, so dust off your dancing shoes!

7.00pm for 7.30pm at Newham Hall. Limited numbers, so booking essential.

RSVP Friday 18 June to Penny: 5427 0795.

BYO wine/soft drink and glasses. Bring a casserole or dessert for communal table.

## AUGUST

**Friday 6th**

### ***AGM. Speaker Kerry Marsh***

## SEPTEMBER

### ***Spring planting – date/venue tba***

Are you interested in hosting this event? 2-3 hours planting labour usually sees 300 – 500 plants in the ground.

There are two corporate groups interested in planting in Spring. Same deal – planting done by volunteers and you provide a feed. One of these groups is coming back for the 3rd time.

Contact Penny: 5427 0795.

## OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

**TBA**

## DECEMBER

**Saturday 4th**

### ***BBQ at Wesley Park***

Annual end-of-year event at Wesley Park – *put it in your diary.*

# TreeProject tubestock available for Autumn planting

As in previous years a selection of local species, grown by volunteers, will be available to members at 30c per tube *ie.* material costs. The range of plants is limited and the quality varies, as some growers have little or no prior experience

## To purchase plants...

*Sale day is Saturday 1 May. 8am–noon and 2-5pm*

*159 Dons Rd., Newham*

*Otherwise call Penny on 5427 0795 to arrange a time.*

*Sales are made on a first in first-served basis and must be taken on the day (I'm running out of space!)*

<i>Species</i>	<i>Common name</i>	<i>No.available [approx]</i>	<i>Ready</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<b>Under 1m</b>				
<i>Carex appressa</i>	Tall sedge	400	Now	Great for drainage lines, stabilizing dam walls
<i>Dianella amoena</i>	Matted Flax Lily	200	Now	600mm, dense mat; dry sites
<i>Dianella tasmanica</i>	Tasman Flax Lily	300	Now	1m, clumping, around dams, gullies, understorey
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Spiny Mat-rush	300	Now	1m clumping, wet sites to dry shade
<b>Shrubs – small trees</b>				
<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>	Black Wattle	50	Now	Dry sites, Small-med tree, wildlife food, wood
<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	Blackwood	100	Now	
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle	250	Now	Widespread, including gullies and creeks
<i>Acacia retinodes</i>	Wirilda	300	Now	Excellent in windbreaks, small tree, bushy habit
<i>Cassinia aculeata</i>		200	Now	2-4m, dry sites, windbreak component
<i>Gynatrix pulchella</i>	Hemp Bush	100	Now	2-3m, understorey plant
<i>Leptospermum obovatum</i>	River Teatree		Now	2-3m, low areas, gullies; bird and butterfly food
<i>Leptospermum continentale</i>	Prickly Tea-tree	200	Now	2-3m, wider range of sites than river tea-tree.
<i>Solanum lanciniatum</i>	Kangaroo Apple	120	Now	
<b>Tall Trees</b>				
<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>	Swamp Gum	50	Now	Gullies, low lying areas. Koala food.
<i>Eucalyptus aggregata</i>	Black Gum	50	Now	Frost pockets – low hills
<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>	Manna Gum	50	Now	

Some other species being grown will only be ready for Spring planting – a list will be sent out in late Winter advising you of what is available then. Anticipate the usual locals plus Tea-tree, Bottlebrush, Common Tussock Grass, Wallaby Grass, Weeping Grass, Drooping She-oak, Hedge Wattle, Sweet Bursaria and Tree violet [if they ever germinate...]

## Batty Evening !



The Batty pm at the Rock on 27 March was a wonderful evening. The weather was kind to us, Dr Lindy Lumsden was in fine form and the trapping exercise on the previous night had been successful.

59 adults and 36 children participated – learning a great deal about native bats and a little about those few foreign vampire ones that like to bite big toes!

There are 11 species of insectivorous native bats in the Macedon Ranges – and they are farmers friends, consuming up to half their body weight in little critters each night. The role they play in reducing insects is particularly important around sparsely scattered trees as insect eating birds prefer a woodland setting.

Bats will use any tree – even a single paddock tree – but as the density of trees decreases so does the number of bats. They are also my friends, since mosquitoes are on their menu!

A few important /useful things we learnt:

- holes in their wings self heal rapidly but they will starve to death very quickly if they cannot fly, because they catch their food 'on-the-wing'. Caring for an injured bat is relatively simple – contact a wildlife carer if you find one.
- If a bat is inside your home, open up the doors and windows and put on a light outside to attract insects so that it makes its own way outside for a feast.

- Cats are natural hunters and are collectively responsible for the deaths of many native animals, including bats. Lindy would like to see all cats contained all of the time... but a good start would be to keep them indoors at night.

One of the highlights of the evening was releasing the bats at dusk, and listening to their sounds. Forty six had been caught in a Harp trap on the previous night – everyone attending was given the chance to hold and release one – a very, very special opportunity.



## Horses,Horses,Horses

On Saturday 10 April I attended a seminar by Jane Myers on *Managing on Small Properties*, sponsored by Melbourne Water and supported by our Newham Landcare Group. The focus was on the connection between good pasture and healthy horses and proved to be one of the most fascinating seminars I have attended. With 60 people, mostly horsey, with me being a non-horsey, it was interesting to gain some very practical information which included why:

- horses need large amounts of low quality feed over an extended time – *because they have no gall bladder.*
- horses prefer short grass to long grass – *because it is sweeter.*
- do many horse people collect manure and sell it at the front gate rather than recycling it into pasture?
- horses do better if they graze with head down for 10-12 hours per day rather than from raised feed bowls.
- they do better in groups rather than in solitary paddocks – *because they are naturally herd animals.*
- they need to be encouraged to move by good facility design – *otherwise they will just stand around and not exercise.*
- hay is soaked in water – *to reduce sugar content and dust.*

Many of these observations may be well known to horse people, but I did speak to many attendees and they universally loved the day as being intensely practical and full of sound advice which could be acted upon in all sizes of property for the benefit of their horse and the environment.

### Useful stuff

Jane has a website <[www.equiculture.com.au](http://www.equiculture.com.au)>

Safe grasses <[www.safergrass.org.au](http://www.safergrass.org.au)>

A small booklet summarizing key points is available from the Roberts household (ring 5427 0795) – there are now several copies in the Landcare library and Hilary has a small stock-pile to give away.

## Clean Up Australia

Newham Landcare participated in the Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday 7th March 2010.

Some twelve Newham and District residents broke in groups of two and removed rubbish from Rochford Road to Anderson Road, Colwells Road from Rochford Road to Romsey Road and South Rock Road.

Over 30 bags of rubbish were retrieved from the roadside, ranging from tyres though drink bottles/cans fast food containers, to paper and plastic. Kathryn Nicholson is thanked for organising the day and I am sure all those who noticed the difference are appreciative.

### **Landcare suggestion:**

***If all those who walk around the area with their animals, walk alone or in a group, pick up rubbish as they see it, the contribution to improving Newham's amenities will be a great benefit.***

## Native grasses for lawn

Do you remember surveying an expanse of browned-off grass in Summer?

Well, fear not you CAN have it all – a green lawn, unwatered, with less maintenance required.

Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipioides*) and Wallaby Grass species (*Austrodanthonia* sp.) are two local grasses that can be used as an alternative to the species commonly used.



Think about it... our local grasses have deep root systems, are adapted to our low fertility soils and climate, remain green over Summer (or, if affected by extreme weather, recover much faster), cope with shade and can manage with as few as 2-3 mowings per year.

In September 2008 I started establishing a lawn of Weeping Grass and now, some eighteen months later, it looks much less like a vast green hair-transplant. Expansion of the original tube-stock and self sown seedlings are rapidly filling in the gaps.

I have mown it only three times in that period. Whilst it would probably be a better looking lawn for a few more clips, I wanted to harvest all the seed I could in order to try a patch of direct seeding next Spring.

Initial preparation of the area consisted of digging it over and dealing with the weeds that subsequently germinated. Weeping Grass doesn't like competition when young and will grow better/faster if you take the time to prepare carefully. Had I been more patient and fastidious I would have dug it over several times, each time waiting for weeds to germinate and depleting the seed bank in the soil.

Alternatively, you could cover the area with old carpet or black plastic to kill the weeds. However you do it, it is worth the time invested to clear as many weed seeds from the soil as your patience allows – a better lawn will be the result, with less weeding during the establishment phase.

The area was raked over to give an even surface and seedlings in Heiko cells and forestry tubes were planted carefully, watered well, given a light forest mulch and then left to strut their stuff. Minor surface irregularities were not considered important – they could always be top-dressed at a later stage. This was, after all, not a bowling green and being Weeping Grass, it wouldn't cope as a cricket pitch.



The progress has been slow, limited by the supply of plants, but hopefully direct seeding will see the lawn expand rapidly in the next year.

If you already have a lawn but are bothered by bare patches, try filling these with Weeping Grass and see how it goes – there will be 50 tubes amongst the TreeProject stock available this year.

# Exploring the social landscape of community landcare through social network analysis

## Project background

Recently two Victorian Landcare groups were involved in a social research project that was undertaken by the DSE Landcare and Community Engagement unit and researchers from the Landscape Sociology Group at the University of Melbourne's School of Land and Environment (September 2008-December 2009). The project aimed to examine the social landscape in which community Landcare (LC) currently operates using concepts found in resilience thinking and viewing the landscape as an integrated social ecological system. In particular, we chose to pilot the usefulness (or otherwise) of Social Network Analysis (SNA) as a potential tool to inform community engagement and understand how LC groups were connecting with their membership and the wider community within a landscape experiencing ecological and agricultural change, demographic shifts and land use diversification.

In total there were 35 LC members who participated in the pilot (Landcare Group A=15 people/Landcare Group B=20 people). SNA pilot participants were generally employed non-farmers living on residential blocks of less than 100 acres used for grazing stock (horses, cattle, goats, alpacas and sheep). Five properties were part of local biolink projects with one landholding under a conservation covenant. Both LC groups contained a wealth of professional expertise and non-professional skills for use in community Landcare as indicated by an aggregated skills inventory of participants.

The diversity of skills found in both pilot groups illustrates that there are Victorian LC groups holding skill sets to tackle both NRM and organisational issues – a highly valuable social asset.

The key SNA question posed to participants was: *"Who do you talk with about your most important natural resource management issue?"*

This question was developed to 'see' how LC members in peri-urban areas were networking around their own priority NRM issues to indicate a sense of social structure and functionality i.e. group cohesion, community reach and engagement with government agencies.

### Examples of specific professional skills

Aquaculture, GIS/GPS mapping, landscape design, water quality monitoring, civil engineering, financial reporting

### Examples of generic professional skills

Bureaucracy knowledge, strategic planning, communications, formal presentations, writing and editing

### Examples of experiential skills

Pest plant and animal management, customising training programs, working botanical knowledge, trialling tree lines

### Other NRM concerns

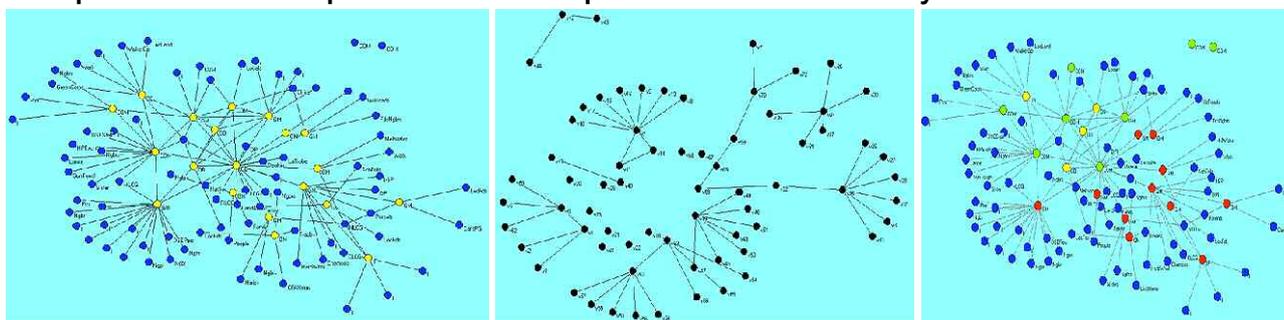
bushfire management, soil health, proposed quarry site, riparian revegetation, rain patterns, water, biolinks, sustainable land use, landscape planning and funding of Landcare works

### Most common NRM priority

Management of pest plants and animals

## Key findings

### Examples of network maps of Landcare Group A and B from SNA survey



Based on discussions with both Landcare Groups, the network maps/SNA process has been interpreted to indicate:

- the community networks of Landcare Group A and B form self-organised/self-regulated/complex systems where network members tend to generate unique sets of social contacts for communicating and information gathering around their NRM issues
- based on the range of contacts people had from Landcare Group B, four types of personal networks were observed, some people had a mostly place-based network (people living in local area, neighbours), while

others had a social-based network (family, friend circles), activity-based network (work colleagues) or a knowledge-based network (communities of professional practice e.g. government agencies)

- evidence of a network hub forming around LC members (particularly certain committee members) contributing towards overall group cohesion
- sense of fragility of LC network if certain members left the group

*I think it made me realise the fragility of the network and the fact that even though we have the notion that we are very interconnected, in fact we're not as interconnected as we think. Certainly not with the wider community. Or, if you take out the central people, so that potentially you could lose half a dozen people and the whole thing would collapse* (Quote 4: SNA Participant [18] Follow Up Interview, 2009)

- even though people are likely to step into new roles if certain LC members left, the network maps indicate the importance/value of current network activity generated by members who help to keep landholders connected around NRM issues

### **Project learnings for Landcare groups**

1) The SNA tool helped to confirm and clarify what participants anecdotally or intuitively thought about how their group was structured and functioning. Comments were made that the network diagrams provided a 'focus', 'stimulus' and 'tangible connections' for people to begin understanding what it meant to be part of a social network.

2) SNA process opened up communal space to discuss issues of succession planning, group dynamics and community outreach during feedback sessions held with each group. This includes defining what links were missing from the pilot groups i.e. farming community, CFA.

3) The SNA process helped to identify where there were opportunities to change organisational practice. Two common themes were: their group should broaden their membership base/make more connections, while at the same time more members need to become involved in the core activities of the group in order to share the workload and to take advantage of member's skill sets and contacts.

4) Almost all participants involved in the follow-up interviews (12 out of 14) would recommend the SNA process to other LC groups or community organisations.

*I think that it does put a sharp focus on things like succession and things like where the leadership's coming from, where the expertise is coming from, and raising that awareness of the need to spread it more widely* (Quote 16: SNA Participant [16], Follow Up Interview, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Government agencies engaging with Landcare Groups A and B have an opportunity to communicate not just with key Landcare members but to make indirect contact with people beyond the Landcare community through member's social networks. This is an important acknowledgement of the depth of community engagement that is often neglected in routine extension practice and points to an important use of SNA.

The organizational vulnerabilities perceived by SNA pilot participants in their Landcare networks stresses the importance for the DSE Landcare and Community Engagement unit to follow up with these groups about their concerns with succession planning, how to keep their membership engaged and the reallocation of responsibilities.

The social resilience found in Landcare Groups A and B must be acknowledged. Data collected during the project indicates that both groups are redefining their Landcare identity away from primary production and towards a more environmentally and socially sustainable peri-urban community. This involves pulling the Landcare group together (providing appealing social events/community projects for members to participate in) and linking in with other organizations (instigating collaborative work across local government jurisdictions e.g. inter-local biolink projects). It would seem Landcare Groups A and B in this instance, are providing a fundamental service to us all by helping to create landscape cohesion as both a physical and social reality.

An important project outcome is the opportunity to publish a peer reviewed journal article based on the SNA pilot process and results. Furthermore, the project research team will present the SNA Project to DSE personnel in early 2010.

On behalf of the project team, we would like to sincerely thank all of the Landcare group participants who gave their time and thoughts to the research process. Your willingness to participate was very much appreciated.

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