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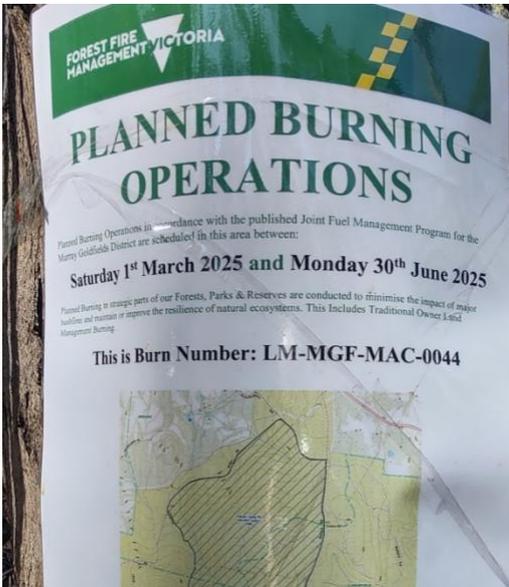
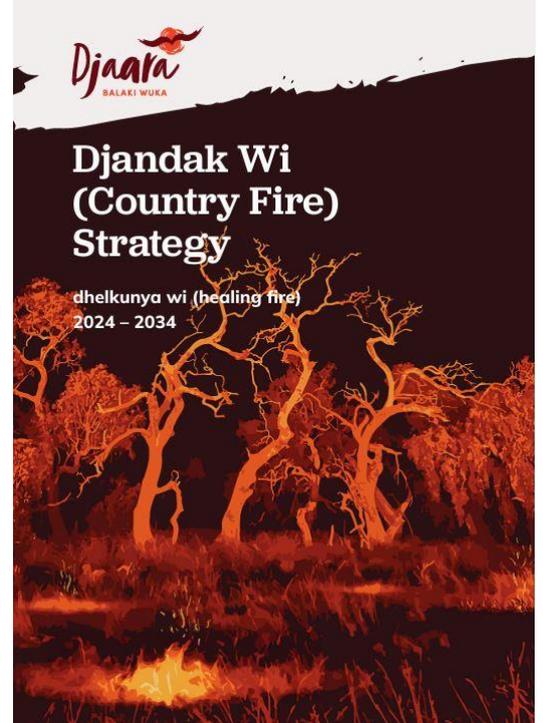
Winter 2025

# Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a  
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



## Cool Burning...



## Group contacts

### New Committee for 2024-25:

President – Karl Kny karl@kolora.com, 0409 543 061

Treasurer – Howard Stirling, howardjanine01@gmail.com, 0432 809 314

### Ordinary members:

Paul Carter millhouse@aussiebroadband.com.au, 0477 271 199 (newsletter and Biolinks)

Bruce Hedge bruceahedge@gmail.com, 0427 888 122(rainfall)

Penny Roberts penroberts@bigpond.com, 0418 396 837 (new members and general enquiries)

Helen Scott orseda@outlook.com, 0412 582 526 (website)

Jess Szigethy-Gyula info@jess-szigethy.com.au, 0408 678 355

Trish Thorpe trishthorpe49@icloud.com, 0403 920 828

Jane Trikojus trikojus\_j@fastmail.com, 0413 499 252 (Wesley Park and Jim Road)

### Other Contacts

Roadside Management Group (the Weedies) - Sue Massie 0407 029 392

Anderson Road Triangle - Karen Hunt 0408 135 243

Spray trailer and cameras - Howard Stirling 0432 809 314

Website <https://newhamlandcare.info>

The committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month (Feb-Nov) between 7.30-9pm at the Newham Hall. All members are welcome to attend, become more involved or raise specific matters. If you do wish to attend, please advise a committee member. Any articles you wish to submit to the newsletter, or even suggestions for articles, please email to Paul Carter.

## Upcoming activities

- Saturday 5th July - Bush dance in Lancefield, an invitation from Willomavin Landcare Group, book at <https://events.humanitix.com/landcare-bush-dance>
- August - NDLG Dinner and Dance. Stay tuned for further details.
- Friday 12 September – NDLG AGM followed by a discussion with David Holmgren (the co-founder of Permaculture) on Permaculture in Landcare.
- Spring - Tube stock will be available this coming spring, and an email will be sent out in due course advising when and which species will be available.



# From the ground up

## The Maribyrnong's Water Think Tank

Dr Ross Colliver  
23rd May 2025

The Earth is living. It organises itself around water.  
What if we worked with that?



The Water Think Tank (WTT) is a network of people from around the Macedon ranges, in the headwaters of the Maribyrnong, who have been meeting regularly for the last two years or so, and whose purpose is to understand the problems facing local waterways - how these waterways are being managed, looking into how they are used, investigating how best to ensure their ongoing good health, and deciding which options will secure the best future.

Dr Ross Colliver has been a consultant in natural resource management since 1986. His specialisation has been the social processes needed to support decision making, for the common good, on environmental matters. His PhD research supported two peer groups from the Landcare community in Victoria to investigate why Landcare had lost influence in regional decisions on natural resource management spending, and what could be done about it. He is President of Riddells Creek Landcare, on the committee for Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork, and a member of Landcare Victoria Inc's Members Council, which considers policy issues in which Landcare has a

stake. He has played a leadership role in the Riddells Creek response to the Amess Road development.

Dr Colliver has been helping organise that network and WTT events since its inception. On Friday 23rd May, he kindly gave a talk to the Newham and District Landcare Group on the work of the WTT.

Dr Colliver explained that in the years ahead, the Maribyrnong catchment area will have more people but less water. The Think Tank was started by people from the local environment who decided that they wanted to understand how waterways and water supply are being managed and began organising seminars to come to grips with the future into which we are heading. Population in the region is projected to double between 2016-2050, but water for creeks will fall. Surface water in the catchment has fallen 21-25% from 1970-2020. The science says we will see drier, warmer conditions in the future, with less streamflow overall but more extreme events with rare very high flows. The prediction is for 20-40% less surface water by 2060. We are starting with a deficit in environmental flow of 11 Gigalitres/per annum, and that means there's trouble ahead for our creeks.



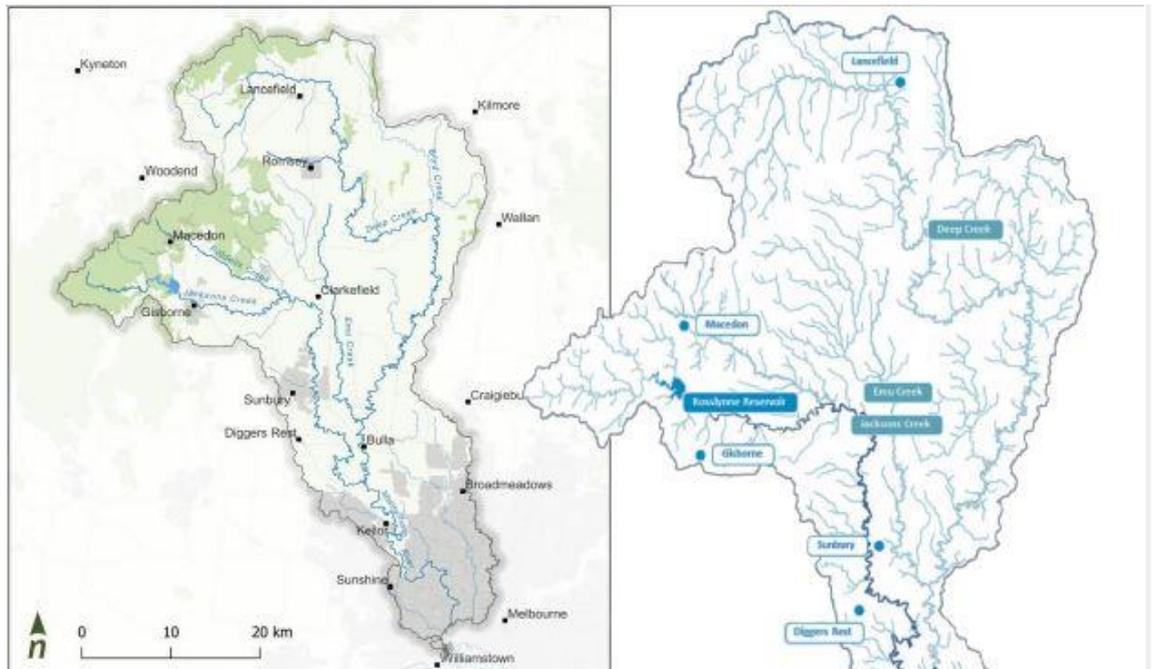
Water Think Tank 'Thinking'

There is pressure ahead as well for water supply. From 2010 – 2070 projected water use in the Greater Melbourne area will rise from 400GL to 980GL, requiring much more water sourced from, as yet, unknown

sources. With supply available from river catchments, recycled water and current desalination, Melbourne will still have a water shortfall of 62% of its needs by 2070. That probably means more reliance on manufactured water.

The small reservoirs built to supply each of the towns around the Macedon Range have served their purpose. We can now get water from the integrated water supply of Greater Melbourne, so perhaps the reservoirs should be decommissioned and the water allowed to flow down the creek system.

Flow is a fundamental necessity for creeks. The Maribyrnong system has no legislated allocation for environmental flow, and with the take of surface and ground water poorly controlled, the creeks have to make do with what's left. That's



Rivers & Creeks of the Macedon Catchment Area

okay when there is plenty of water to go around, but as the climate dries, creeks will die.

Dr Colliver pointed out other problems for waterways. Treated wastewater is okay for irrigation is not good enough for creeks. Growth of towns means more stormwater, but stormwater is often colder than streams, which shocks the stream biota, and storm water is also loaded with sediment and contaminants which disrupt stream ecology.

Dr Colliver then pointed out that there is, of course, a great deal of planning going into securing water supply and for managing waterways. The problem is that all the decision making is top down, being made 'inside silos' where technical experts define the options and political expediency narrows the choices – after

filtering through a maze of steps and departments, the community is only invited in when the big options are already on the table. It is time, Dr Colliver suggested, to create a style of governance fit for the 21st century, one where communities understand and have an opinion on the way water and waterways are managed. Business-as-usual will have to change,



and communities become informed about the pressures on water supply and the need to support necessary changes. Creeks are in crisis and people are sick of 'tick-box, hit and run' consultation, but there's another motivation behind the Water Think Tank, that's not often spoken about but has a big impact –it is a network of people who come have fallen in love with creeks!

Sometimes, Dr Colliver suggested, all that time weeding and planting and fencing and maybe just gazing around whilst taking a break or simply walking down to see how the creek is doing, leads a person to fall in love with a creek and understand that creeks don't just need practical help now, but also people who can think ahead about what is needed to keep them healthy into the future.

Dr Colliver supplied no easy, simple answers to the problems we face with water and waterways but suggested that the WTT was a good first step. It is a bridge to the big decisions ahead. If water agencies invested in water literacy through groups such as the WTT then they would get

community support faster and work out solutions which meet community needs and concerns. 'So here we are,' Dr Colliver finished by saying, 'Knowledgeable environmentally motivated people from around the range. Can't we do better? We want a chance to hear what we each think and to push things back and forth. We want a long conversation, we want to understand what is happening with water and its management. Why don't we head in that direction?'

Perhaps you would like to become a part of the WTT by contacting

Ross Colliver:

[ross.colliver@bigpond.com](mailto:ross.colliver@bigpond.com)

0411 226 519

*To host the new is not to plan for it.  
It is to become hospitable to the otherwise.  
To ritualise insufficiency.  
To allow your expectations to ferment.  
...the most urgent responsibility is not to lead the new, but to notice when you are being led by it  
The new is not forward, it is awkward.*

Bayo Akomolafe

## What is going on with Newham?

Newham's Climate Trends. What is happening and what can we expect?



Karl Kny

With acknowledgements to The Water Think Tank (and AI)

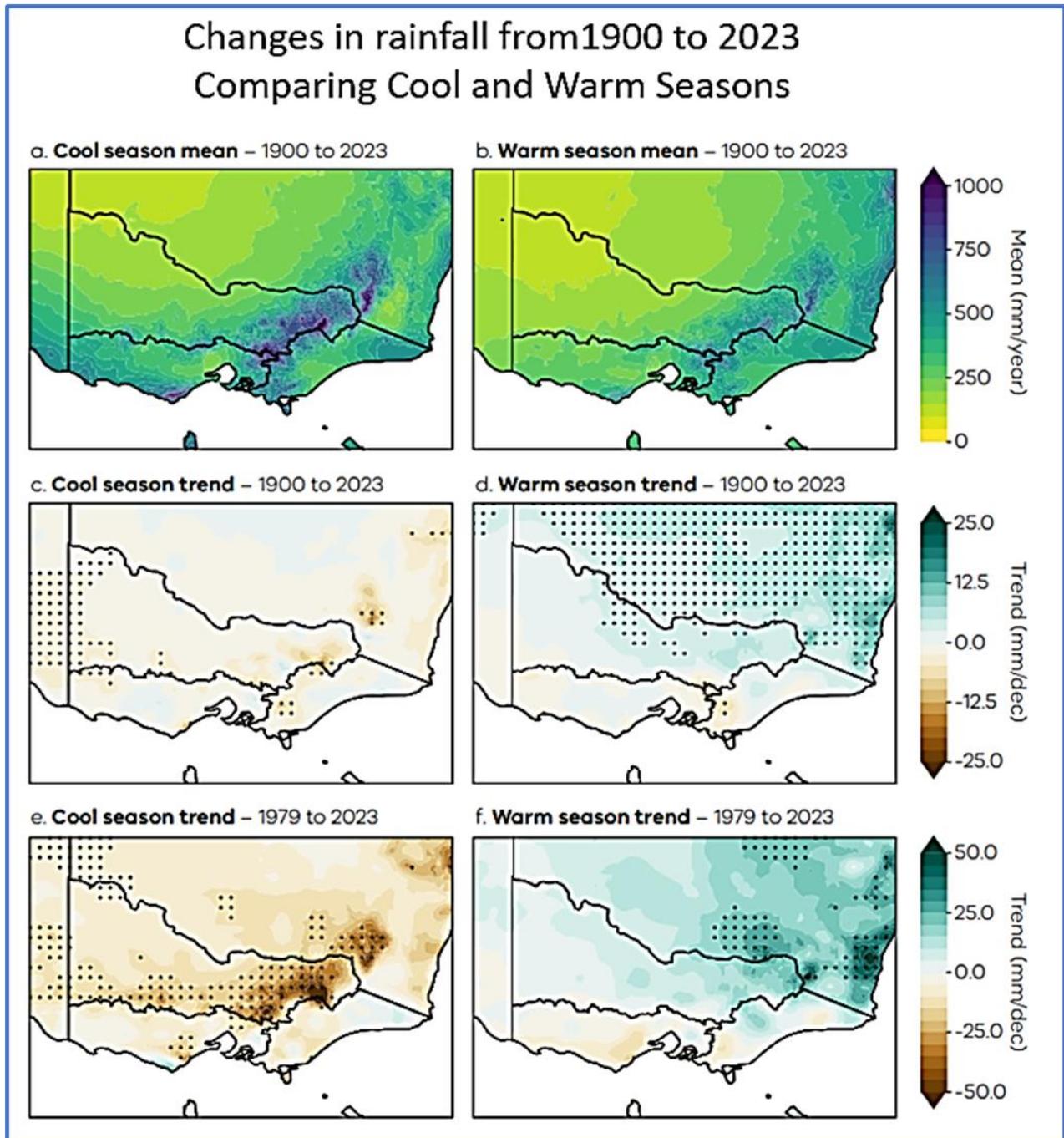
At the Water Think Tank in May there was an excellent presentation from Geoff Steendam - the Senior Manager in the Hydrology Climate and

Energy team of DEECA. Finally. There was also a presentation specifically focused on the Upper Maribyrnong Catchment and hence the likely climate trends relevant to our area.

But first a confession. I have been a bit skeptical and uncomfortable with past climate change presentations which left you feeling that the Earth

is going to get drier. I have been interested in geology for a long time and from the geological record I know that as the Earth gets warmer it gets WETTER. This makes sense as 70% of our planet's surface is water and as the planet warms there is more moisture and energy in the atmosphere – hence more rainfall and more extreme weather events. Or so I thought.

- Increasing temperature
- Increasing heat waves
- Sea level rise
- High Confidence
  - More intense rainfall
  - Declining winter and spring rainfall
- Medium Confidence



Now back to Geoff's presentation.

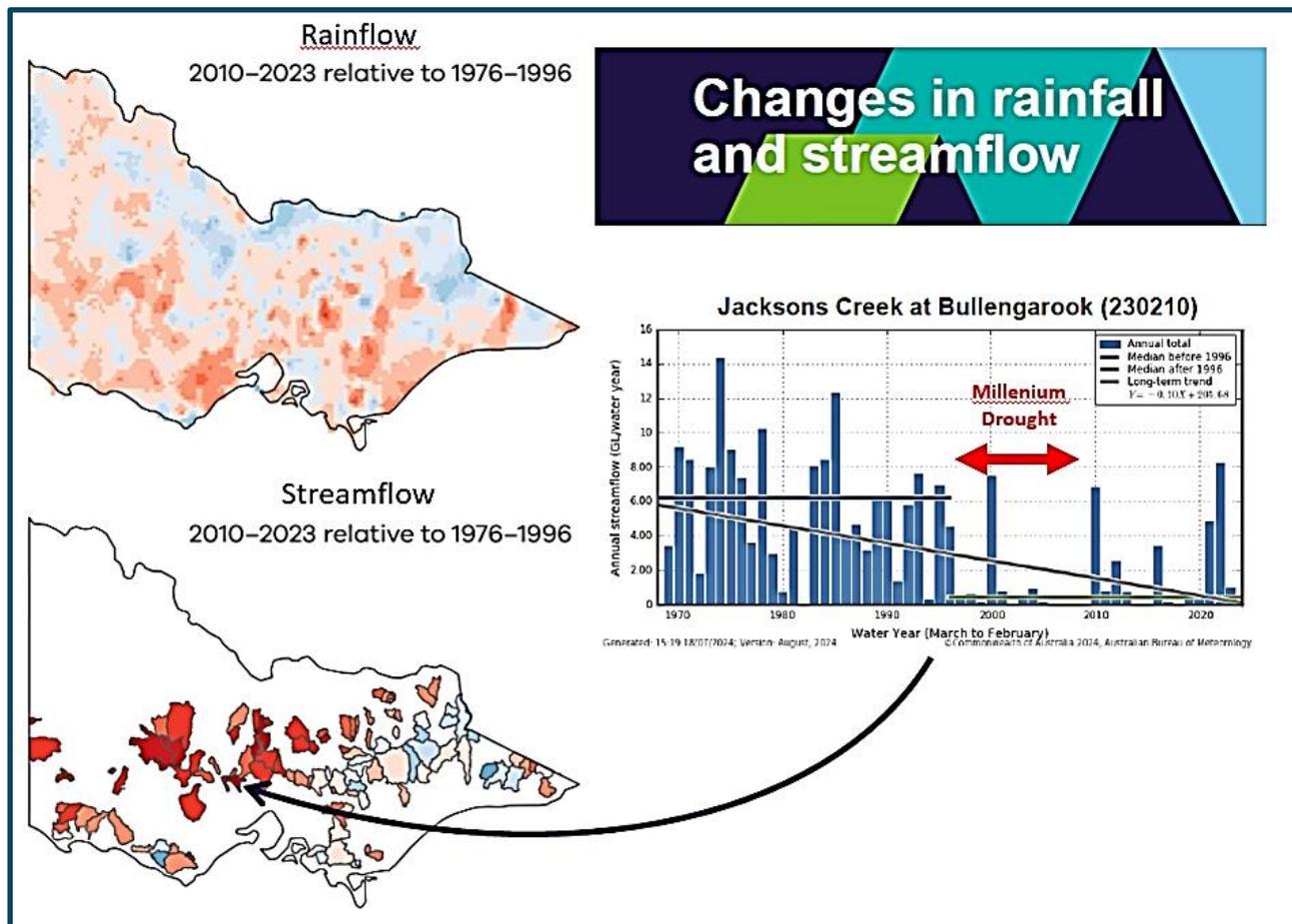
There are different levels of confidence about climate change impacts for our region:

- More droughts
- Longer fire seasons
- Low Confidence
  - Increasing extreme winds

- Very High Confidence

Over the long term, when analysing the changes in rainfall in our region from 1900 to 2023, the rainfall in the Cool Season (winter and spring) dropped but the rainfall in the Warm Season

The factors causing the significant change in streamflow are presented in the third slide, such as:



stayed around the same. On the other hand the rainfall north of the Divide and in particular into NSW increased in the Warm Season. Refer the first slide.

To assess the changes in stream flows, Jacksons Creek at Bullengarook, upstream of the reservoir, was analysed. There is a streamflow gauge here and its catchment is predominantly undisturbed forest (eg. no farm dams built during the analysis).

The Millenium Drought occurred from 1997 to 2009. While the rainfall has recovered after the drought, stream flow hasn't. This is graphically shown in the second slide.

(On our farm, we have also noticed a significant drop in streamflow in Garden Hut Creek and a number of our old large trees have died- probably due to lack of moisture in the subsoil.)

- Sustained reductions in rainfall for 10+ years
- Less recharge of ground water due to lower rainfall
- Evaporative demand is higher due to higher temperatures
- Ground water is too deep on hillsides for tree roots to reach
- Slow sustained drainage of the subsoil due to deep fractures

We then had a discussion on Climate Change impacts and the key take away was that the likely outcome is that we can expect a significant ongoing reduction in rainfall and streamflow. It was a great presentation and very relevant but I still wanted a bit more information on climate trends. So I asked my pal ChatGPT. This is what I got.

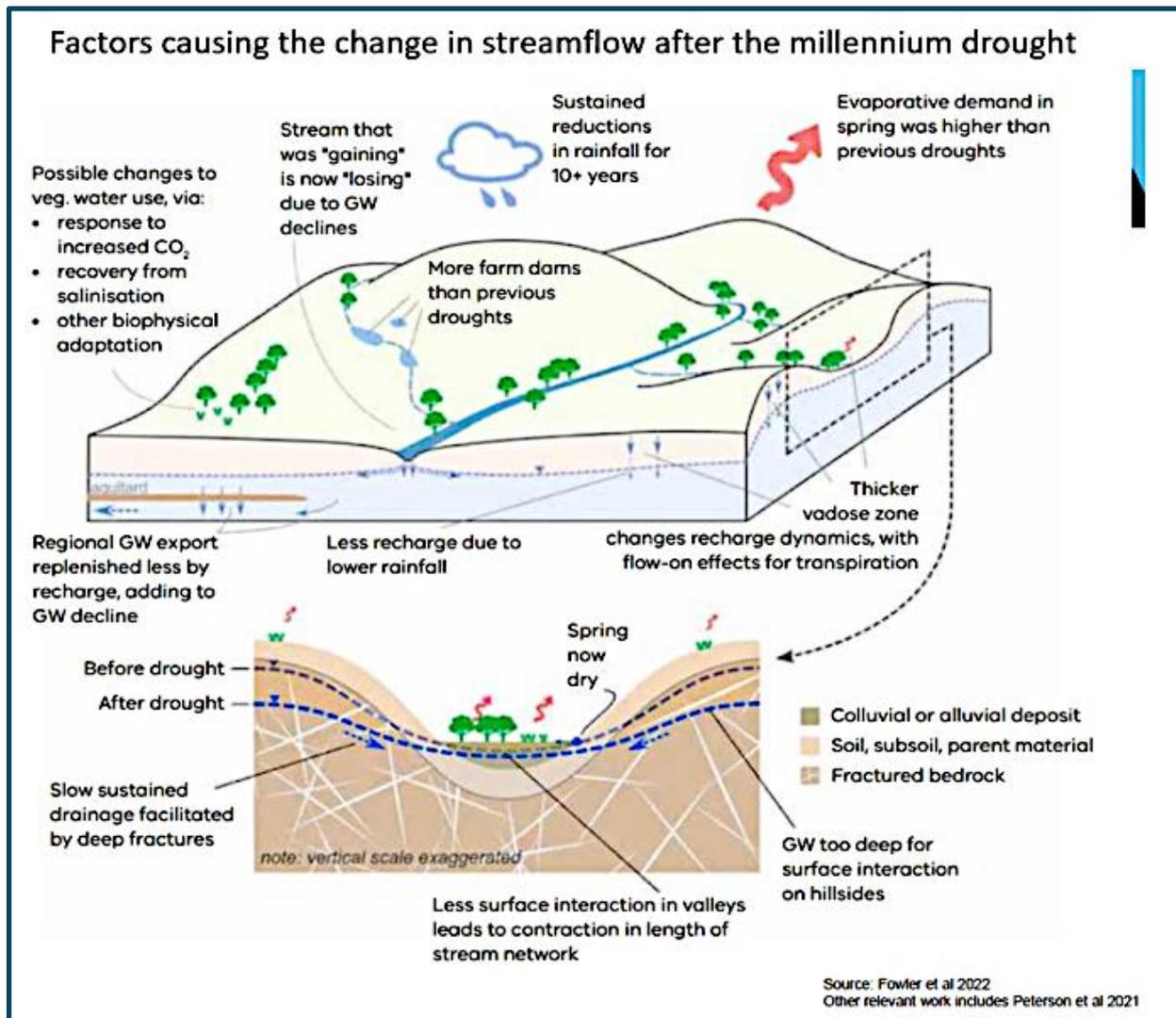
KK: With climate change we know that as the earth gets hotter there will be more rainfall overall. So why is it expected that southeast Australia will get drier with less rainfall?

ChatGPT: Great question – it’s true that global warming generally increases overall atmospheric moisture and global rainfall, but regional patterns vary a lot. Southeast Australia is expected to get drier despite the overall global increase in rainfall, and here’s why:

*Nino, reduced winter and spring rainfall and provides state government and BOM references]*

I asked a few more questions hoping that there may be the possibility that we become subtropical (hotter and wetter) like northern Australia but not much luck. Finally, I asked what could be the expected rainfall in our area where we have around 700mm of annual rainfall. This is what I got:

*Using the Victoria’s Future Climate Tool, you can*



**Shifting weather systems.** One of the key drivers of rainfall in southeast Australia is the **westerly winds** that bring cold fronts and rain-bearing systems. As the Earth warms, these westerlies are **shifting further south**, away from the Australian continent. That means fewer rain systems reach the southeast. [She then goes on to talk about changes in high-pressure systems, stronger El

*select your specific location within Central Victoria and view projected changes in annual rainfall. For instance, under a high emissions scenario by 2050, some areas may experience a reduction in annual rainfall by up to 10 to 20%. This would translate to a decrease from 700mm to approximately 560-630mm annually. [I went there and checked. Looks about right.]*

So, there you have it. Bummer. Just our luck. The world and northern Australia is expected to get more rainfall but we will most likely get less (plus more extreme events – floods and droughts).

percentage of our purchases from nurseries north of the Divide where the plants are used to lower rainfall.

Every year we plant 100 or so trees and shrubs on our farm. Looks like we will need to increase the

## Burning insights Fire in the Landscape



Martin Roberts, 20 June 2025

Martin Roberts, previously the Shire’s Bushland Reserves Officer, has recently started as Project Manager – Djandak Wi with Dja Dja Wurrung. This two-year position is focused on delivering the Djandak Wi Fire Strategy for Djaara, and he reiterated that people have many different attitudes and experiences of fire.

Mr Robert’s wide-ranging talk began with an introduction to Cultural Burning, via a short video by MRSC with Uncle Dave Wandin, a Wurundjeri Elder with mention of the Djarra Djandak Wi (Country Fire) Strategy (available via the link:

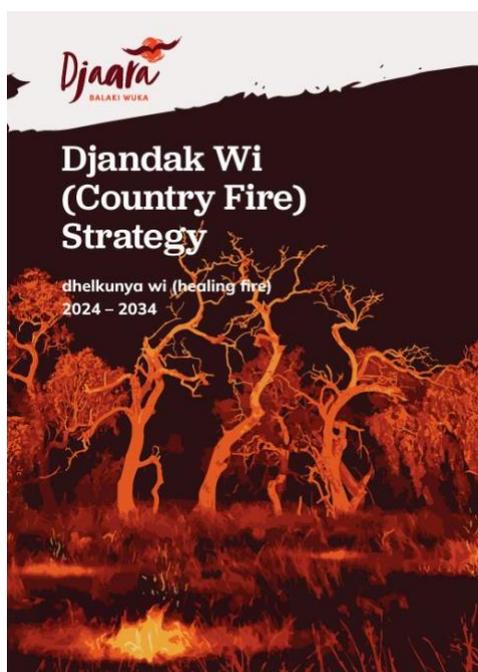
<https://djadjawurrung.com.au/dja-dja-wurrung-fire-strategy-a-tool-for-change/>

Mr Roberts emphasised that cultural burning has two main objectives: firstly to enhance biological features such as

encouraging biodiversity, abundance, resilience, the promotion of pollinators and increasing breeding and feeding opportunities. Secondly to enhance cultural connection to the land.

He then talked about Ecological Burning and Local Government burn processes, with examples

including the precious Woodend Grassland Reserve. He went over the steps required before lighting a fire (which are all listed in the later article in this newsletter ‘Ecological Burns for Beginners’), and he then went into detail on further issues to be considered before lighting a fire including the correct arrangement of the fuel load within a fire, assessing the moisture content of fuel, and the desirability of fire breaks and mineral earth borders. Mr Roberts talked of “fire as your friend”, of “healing fire”



and of “right fire”. He offered us a path to learning more about using fire on our own patches and encouraged us each to “know your



patch’, to use the SMEACS (Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration, Command) Briefing sheet, and strongly advised to always do a test burn.

He ended his talk by discussing that the frequency of burns should be solely dictated by the vegetation, and the rate of recovery of inter-tussock spaces, and finished by saying that after cutting, baling grass was preferable to leaving it on the ground and allowing it choke those inter-tussock spaces.

The talk attracted a large number of questions, and it was obvious that the ‘fire literacy’ among the audience was high, judging by the quality of the discussion that was generated. In addition to NDLG members, Mr Roberts’ talk attracted members of other Landcare groups, some of whom asked to be included on the NDLG mailing list.

As a result of the level of interest evident at the meeting with Mr Roberts, it has been decided to include two further articles on fire in the newsletter, one relating to cultural burns and one on ecological burns.

## Cultural Burns

For thousands of years First Nations People have been using fire to hunt animals, maintain ecosystems and manage the land. In a practice called Cool Burning, often referred to as Cultural Burning, small blazes are set alight to clear the underbrush. This process generates patchy habitats preferred by small animals and prevents lightning and wildfires from consuming the land. Further, fire holds great spiritual meaning in First Nations’ culture, with many stories, memories and dance being passed down around the fire. Fire also connects Indigenous people to the land, with children as young as four learning about the healing powers of fire for the land and it’s symbolic significance in First Nations’ culture.

Unfortunately, with centuries of Euro-Australian suppression of First Nations people and culture, the practice of Cool Burning has diminished. Early settlers saw fire as a threat and were unable to perceive of Cool Burning as a landscape-management practice. This has since exacerbated ecosystem degradation and put much of our land at risk of wildfires. The potentially catastrophic consequences of this shift in land management became apparent during our recent bushfire season, which consumed more than 18.626 million hectares of land and killed 1.25 billion wild animals. There has since been a surge of interest from farmers, landowners and communities wanting to learn about these traditional burning

practices and how they could be implemented nationwide.

The central idea of Cool Burns is fire management using a 'cool' fire. Night times and early mornings are ideal for these fires as nightly dew helps cool down the fire and the winds are often gentle. The

vulnerable canopy animals from ground predators, reducing carbon output (as large canopy fires release mass amounts of carbon into the air).

- Triggering seed germination on the ground which helps hold soil together and provides a



practice involves lighting low fires in small areas on foot, with matches or, traditionally, with fire sticks. These fires are closely monitored, ensuring that only the underbrush is burnt. Cool Burns not only clear areas of land, they also ensure that seeds and nutrients in the soil are not baked and destroyed. In addition, cool fires assist in changing vegetation structures by reducing the density of risk factor plants such as Bracken Fern, Casuarina or Stringy bark which can lead to extreme fuel loads.

There are many environmental and cultural benefits to using Cool Burns for the management of the land. Some of these include:

- Preventing life threatening wildfires
- Rejuvenating local flora and protecting native animal habitats.
- Preserving the tree canopy, which is important for maintaining shade in the bush, protecting

source of food for native animals.

- Providing natural medicinal benefit for animals, such as wallaby's and birds who bathe in cool ash to cleanse themselves to get rid of lice.
- Restoring First Nations' kinship to the land
- The practice encourages elders to share their knowledge with younger generations. This ensures that the cultural practice grows stronger and gives longevity to not only the land, but the people who rely on it.

In light of recent destructive bushfire seasons, there has been a national shift in consciousness about land management and bush fire prevention. It is now recognised that integrating First Nations' fire management practices into the national bushfire response may be the only hope for the future.

# A Beginners Experience with Ecological Burns

Karl Kny

On our property Kolora for the last 30 years we have been very reluctant to work with fire, after a burn-off of poisoned gorse got out of control. (We have been ardent supporters of Newham CFA ever since!)

But we had a number of areas that were in need of further management. We had built two rabbit and kangaroo exclosures where we are trying to create native wildflower meadows, as well as a number of exclosures where we are assessing the impact of kangaroo grazing. There are hundreds of seed balls of beautiful native wildflowers in the meadow enclosures but over the last two years none of the seeds seem to have germinated. Also, our kangaroo exclosures have become quite overgrown with high grass levels demonstrating very well the impact of kangaroo grazing compared to the mowed look outside of them.

OK. So Brigitte and I finally agreed that it is time to trial some “sensitive ecological burns” or perhaps better named “single ignition-point cool mosaic burns”. We realise we should not use the term “cultural burns” as this should be reserved to one match style burns started by an Elder of the Traditional Owners applying Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

So where do we start and how do we do it? We checked the State, CFA and Shire regulations and found out that we could “burn off” after the Fire Danger Period which ended on 22 April 2025, as long as we followed the conditions set by the Macedon Ranges Shire. There is a good summary of burn off conditions on the Shire’s website – Type “Burning Off” in the search field and it takes you right there. In our case we could burn off

under the following conditions set by the Shire.

*If your property is above 40,000 square metres: (i.e. 4 ha or 10 acres) you don't need a permit to light a fire in the open air on land, including in an incinerator, if:*

- *you do not burn more than 100 cubic metres (e.g. 5 metres wide x 5 metres long x 4 metres high) of vegetation at any one time*
- *the fire is not within 100 metres of any neighbouring dwelling*
- *the fire is not offensive and does not cause any nuisance to another person in the vicinity or beyond the property boundary.*

Conditions range down to properties of 1 acre or more where you don't need a permit to burn off. If the property is below one



acre you do need a permit and if it is below half an acre you can't burn off.

The other key condition in all cases is to register your burn-off, by phone or via their website. We did this by calling the burn-off registration phone line 1800 668 511 two hours before we started the burn. They wanted to know our address, when we were planning to start, when we anticipated finishing and whether we met the shire conditions. Registration is also useful in the case where a neighbour sees smoke and calls 000. The emergency services will then be able to inform them that a registered burn is occurring at a specific address close to them. (Of course, better still is to tell your neighbours that you will be conducting a burn!)

Now for the planning. Key points we considered were:

- What area to burn (consistent with the Shire conditions)
- How to manage the perimeter
- Where and how to start the burn
- When to do it.
- How to control it.
- How to extinguish it.

We are fortunate in that we have a couple of very useful tools to help us: a fire tanker trailer carrying 1,000 litres of water and a Davis weather station where we can monitor temperature, humidity, wind strength and wind direction (as well as a trusty retired CFA firefighter wife at the end of the fire hose). We also purchased a gas-powered weed burner so that it would be easy to get the burn going in case of significant moisture in the grass.

We waited for calm days with high humidity and relatively low temperature. (Temp 16 degrees, wind 2km per hour, humidity 73%, and after 25 mm rain a couple of days prior)

The attached photos show how we went. We were so happy with burning the wildflower meadows that we went on to burn the kangaroo enclosures a couple of days later.

It was notable how high the flames went when the grass was high. An ideal burn should have

flame heights less than knee high, but in our case we had let the enclosures grow too long without management. We now intend to burn every three years or so. Also we deliberately let the burn move out onto the grazed areas to see its behaviour. It continued to trickle on – a key learning to ensure that the fire is fully put out. We got a shock when our fire trailer pump stopped during the burn due to a bad setting. This highlighted the need to have an additional back up fire extinguisher equipment at hand.



The key learnings for us are:

- Check the shire website for conditions.
- Start small to build confidence, or even a test burn.
- Plan well: area, perimeter, equipment, weather conditions, wind, time of day, moisture content, fire break.
- At least two of you
- Don't rush and try to do it all at once, there is always another day
- Register your burn.
- Talk to the neighbours
- Manage the perimeter – wet it
- Burning back against the wind means a slower fire
- Have back up fire extinguisher equipment
- Ensure the fire is fully put out

Now to wait and see the outcome. Hopefully smoke, ash and rain will get the seeds germinating.

# March-May 2025 Rainfall

(and a bit extra)



Bruce Hedge

Yes, it was dry. Very dry. When I totalled up the May rain here at Newham and looked down into the abyss of our 22,500 litre tank to see only about a week's supply left forlornly at the bottom, I thought.... Wow. This is getting a bit serious.

We've never had to top up tanks from external sources in our 40 years here.

Peter Yates' official rainfall records for Woodend painted a similarly bleak picture, with May being the tenth consecutive month below average rainfall for Woodend on record. Peter, in an email to me, continues....

"According to BOM records since 1889, mean for May is 74.9mm and since we started here in 2003, we have averaged 62mm. If we get two more below average months, it may well be one of the driest consecutive 12 months on record. But (we) have already passed the driest calendar year which was 395.4mm in 1938. Then (there were) the 1939 fires and that year rebounded with 1127mm! A bit similar after Ash Wednesday - 1982 was just 478mm and then 1983 was 942mm.

"BOM says the lowest May ever was 2.9mm, the 5th percentile (being) 16.9mm and the 95th percentile 152.9mm."

Newham's 2025 totals continue the phenomenon of being about 25% drier than Woodend, and the following figures confirm that trend.

Newham	Woodend	
March	33mm	41mm.
April	19mm	26mm.
May	6mm	21mm.

And now into June.... On 3rd June, my Wunderground app was forecasting a rain event over the long weekend, of about 27mm total. Better than nothing. Hahaha. By the 5th June, the forecast was 37mm. Even better. By then BOM's forecast for total rain over the weekend was approximately 30mm.

In the end, Newham was blessed with 41mm, while Woodend copped the end of a southerly dump, and recorded 50mm by Monday morning, with a touch more up to 9 am on Tuesday the 10th. The effect of the Mt Macedon Range on systems from the South is quite remarkable. Here's to this being the late Autumn break, and a return to "normal" falls for the rest of the year.

# Backyard Blueys

## Blue tongued lizards

Tanya Loos

Thanks to Tanya Loos for this article which was originally published in her online blog in January 2025 at <https://tanyaloos.com/blog/>



Pictured here is the blotched blue-tongue

With the warmer weather comes the emergence of our loveable lizard friends – the Blue-Tongues! In the Hepburn region we have two species of Blue-tongues. The Eastern Blue-tongue is the most widespread species and occurs across the top half of Australia all the way down the east coast to Melbourne and Adelaide. Eastern Blue-tongues have a distinctive striped pattern on their back which is very variable – it may be thick stripes or thin, and in various colours. Blotched Blue-tongues are cool climate specialists – enjoying higher elevations and cooler temperatures, all the way up to NSW's Blue Mountains. In Tassie the only blue-tongues present are Blotched Blue-tongues. Blotched Blue-tongues are our regular bluey here in our Porcupine Ridge backyard, but I have seen Eastern Blue-tongues crossing dirt roads within a couple of kilometres of here.

Blue-tongues are very active at this time of year (January) – it's breeding season! These two were photographed by my husband Chris on our kitchen doorstep. It looks like they are fighting but this behaviour is actually courtship – the male

grips the female like this as they get ready for mating.

Both Eastern and Blotched Blue-tongues are live-bearing – that is, instead of laying eggs like other lizards, the young lizards develop in their mother with the help of a placenta. Eastern blue-tongues have the largest litters and smallest young of all the blue-tongues, according to Australian Museum website

<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/eastern-blue-tongue-lizard/>

Up to 19 (but usually about 10) young are born, each measuring 130-140 mm in total length and weighing 10-20g. When they are born, young Blue-tongues are immediately independent, and

it is time to learn to feed for themselves – and importantly – hide from predators. They are incredibly vulnerable to cats at this stage in their lives – another reason to keep your kitty inside 24/7.

Should they reach maturity, blue-tongues are very long-lived, with captive blueys living 20 years or more, and it could be longer. Your local bluey may have been at your house and backyard longer than you and your family!



Eastern Blue -tongue (LineyT Photography)

Having a blue-tongue in the backyard is great for many reasons – they are charming and loveable, they eat introduced garden snails and other foes of the gardener, and they are completely harmless to humans... but people also ask ‘do they keep snakes away’?

This is a myth! The omnivorous blue-tongues have very different diets to our local snakes – just broadly copperheads eat skinks, brown snakes eat mice and rats, and tiger snakes love frogs, so Blueys are not competing for food, and if there are plenty of resources they will cohabitate the same space. For example we have Lowland Copperhead and Blotched Blue-tongue both living happily here on our bush block.

There is more information in my book *Living with Wildlife: A Guide for Our Homes and Backyards*, which is a practical and wildlife-friendly guide for successfully living alongside our wild neighbours. The book is available at local bookshops or can be bought online from CSIRO Publishing

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8095/>

And just to finish off, look what Helen Scott found in her compost!



# Biolinks

## “The Movie”

Paul Carter

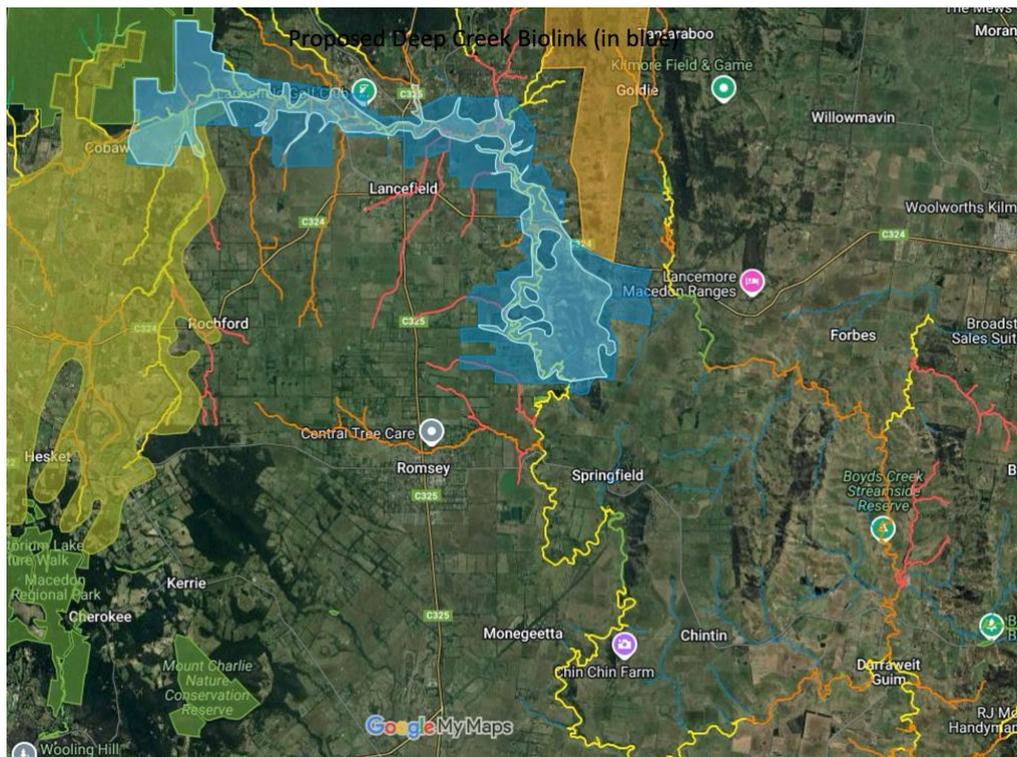
It is common knowledge that Australia’s animals are under considerable pressure from both humans and the climate. Two hundred odd years ago, when the landscape was managed sustainably, animals could roam freely wherever they chose. The country is now chopped up into towns and farms, there are fences and roads everywhere, and movement is now a great deal more difficult for wildlife. This difficulty has only been worsened by the climate effects of humans and their industries. The single most important thing which can today be done today to assist with the survival of endangered species is to urgently create continuous and connected Biolinks across the landscape.

Without these Biolinks, the future for animals looks grim. Many species, including, amongst many others, platypus, koalas, phascogale, Hooded Robins and Growling Grass Frogs, will be increasingly doomed to live in ever smaller and more isolated pockets of vegetation, where food will eventually become scarce, new mates will be hard to find and diseases will flourish.

Creating such Biolinks is a complex and costly business. It requires the involvement of Traditional Owners, current landowners, Landcare groups, Biolinks Alliances, local authorities, local parliamentary members, and members of local communities. Also, and perhaps most importantly of all, the project will also have to involve

children. Biolinks projects take many years to come to fruition, and so it is to the younger members of our society to which we must turn to see such projects through to their conclusion.

Whilst Biolinks are a concept which is widely talked about and understood in Landcare circles and environmental officers in shire offices and statutory authorities, that would not be the case in the general community. In the wider community there would be little



Proposed Upper Deep Creek Biolink (in blue)

understanding of what Biolinks are or why they were needed.

Biolinks are either mosaic patches or continuous stretches of native vegetation which join together otherwise isolated areas of trees. Joining the vegetation together in this way allows, once again, for the movement of animals and the spread of native plants.

Further, although we live in a world of rapid human assault upon nature, and despite all the evidence for climate change and global warming, there still seems to be much disagreement at government level about how to handle

environmental issues or even whether anything needs to be done at all.

A project as big and as expensive as creating a Biolink requires the support and dedication of entire communities. For this to happen, it requires them to understand what a Biolink is. Making the concept common throughout a community can only happen when the information is widely broadcasted.

Much wonderful work has already been done along these lines in relation to the creation of Biolinks in central Victoria and the headwaters of the Maribyrnong River, under the auspices of Newham and District Landcare Group, Macedon and Mount Macedon Landcare Group, Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network, Jackson's Creek EcoNetwork and Biolinks Alliance.

Despite all of this, Biolinks are still largely a well-kept Landcare secret. Two things are required to successfully inform the general public.

The first is to create a Biolink that is not just in the domain of those who live in the country but one which can also become part of the life of the huge number of people who live in urban areas. A Biolink which extends from Mount Macedon and Hanging Rock along the headwaters of the Maribyrnong River and on to Melbourne would exactly satisfy this criterion.

Creating such a Biolink would obviously be a large, costly and complicated undertaking. Amongst other things it would involve caring for the creek itself, repairing its banks, reforestation areas which have become denuded, installing fencing to keep out stock, and deciding on the width of the riparian corridor. Another issue might be the need to improve water flow which, in itself is a very complex issue, requiring scrutiny of concerns relating to dams and weirs, the use of both surface and underground water, and issues relating to recycled and storm water. The work required for such a project, would require a transformational change in our relationship to the landscape.

The second issue is to make 'Biolink' a household word, to widely broadcast the concept, especially to those who are not normally reached. Landcare

meetings can be very informative, but the speakers are often preaching to the converted. To gain wide community acceptance and involvement of the need for Biolinks, the concept has first to be broadcast to the unconverted. Due to the cost, effort and timeline involved in such an undertaking, it would be unwise to embark upon any work without widespread community knowledge and support.

Because of this need to inform the general community about Biolinks. it has been decided to make a thirty-minute documentary for television which, when broadcast, will reach as wide a group of people as possible. The chosen length of the documentary is one where there would be adequate time for the viewer to become both interested and informed.

When completed, the programme will explore what would be involved in the making of a Biolink, what problems might be encountered during its establishment, and why Biolinks such as this are so essential for the well-being of the landscape. There would also be interviews concerning issues of importance involving first nations people, landholders, community members and children. The programme would further touch upon the fact that, while establishing a Biolink is an extremely complex undertaking, it is something which could be initiated and developed in parallel with, and not waiting upon the seemingly endless round of political discussion, disagreement and procrastination. It is all this that will be recorded in the documentary.

It has been decided to use the course of Deep Creek as the basis of the programme as that can involve both country and town. Newham and District Landcare Group and the Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network are aware of, and supportive of, this proposal. The filming, sound work, production and editing will all be performed by professionals with experience in creating documentaries of television standard. It is estimated that once production is started, the film will take approximately 6-8 months to complete.

A three-minute video has been made as an introduction to the need for Biolinks  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AuVujt3EydENJ2m4CBM0ozpUn4UGaHa?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AuVujt3EydENJ2m4CBM0ozpUn4UGaHa?usp=share_link)



The production crew

Applications for funding have already been initiated with both Macedon Ranges Shire Council and the Bendigo Bank. It is intended to also approach other funding bodies, as well as businesses and philanthropic organisations. An organisation will be selected to manage the funds- preferably a registered charity with Deductible Gift Status.

Newham and District Landcare Group is delighted that JCEN, UDCLN, Biolinks Alliance, and other Landcare groups have agreed to support the project, and will assist in areas such as gaining access to creek areas, sharing Biolinks expertise, advising on any issues already encountered in work underway or completed, advice on obtaining funding, and perhaps most importantly adding the weight of the reputations of their organisations to the project.

## Australian Garden and Bandicoots



Brigitte Kny Porada

A couple of weeks ago Karl and I got invited by Melbourne Water to the Australian Garden within



the Royal Botanical Gardens in Cranbourne. This was to thank volunteers for their efforts to protect and monitor Victoria's waterways as part of 'National Volunteer Week'. Here are a few facts about the 'Australian Garden':

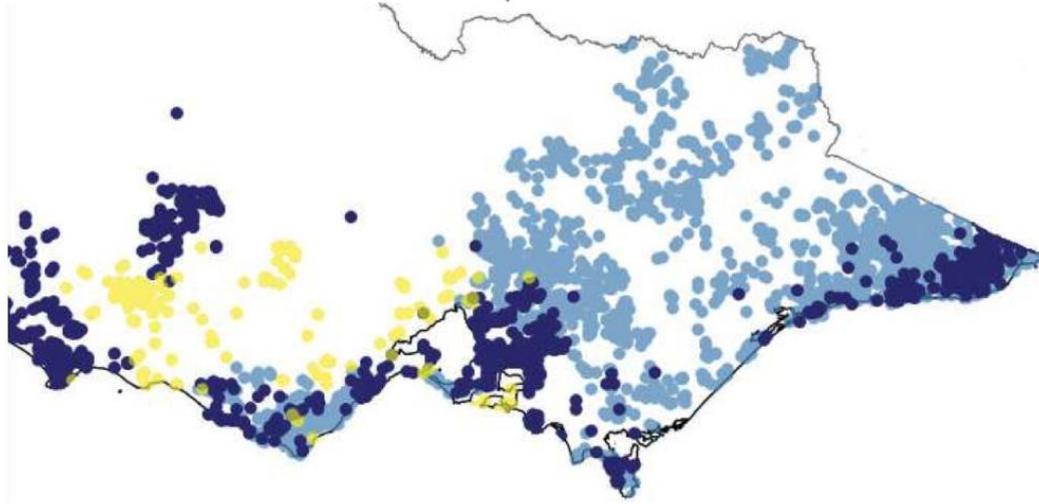
- Australian Garden is about 25 ha and is part of the Royal Botanical Garden of Cranbourne (approx. 363 ha)
- The Garden has recently been voted by the New York Times as one of the top ten gardens in the world
- According to the Royal Botanical Garden Cranbourne survey they have about 300 – 400 of

endangered Southern Brown Bandicoots in the Garden.

We had previously visited the Australian Garden and it was great. But this time we were given

indicators species to climate change .... Honestly ?? Those two plants are in my opinion very close to being noxious weeds by vigorously popping up in between pavers and everywhere in my garden. Of course I got into serious trouble by voicing my

### Bandicoot locations across Victoria (historic and re-introduction areas)



● Southern Brown Bandicoot      ● Long-nosed Bandicoot      ● Eastern Barred Bandicoot

tours by dedicated volunteers. The first tour was on their participation in ClimateWatch which is a citizen science project to monitor the changes of key species to climate change.

We all enthusiastically downloaded the ClimateWatch app and headed off to our first plants. To my surprise the first plants included Sweet Bursaria and Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) which are regarded as key

thoughts not only with my beloved but with the volunteers there. At least they also included Silver Banksia on the 'let's monitor' list on the app. On the next guided walk through the gardens we learned about their population of bandicoots. Bandicoots - small adorable little marsupials with a plump backside, short tail and a long snout.

No – unfortunately, we did not see any bandicoots during our walk. We just were shown

#### Types of Bandicoots in Victoria



*Isoodon obesulus* 115136663  
© Oliver C. Stringham/iNaturalist  
(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

#### Southern Brown Bandicoots

Small rounded ears, consistent marled brown fur on the body and a creamy-white underbelly



Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles nasuta*)  
© David Cook Wildlife Photography/Flickr  
(CC BY-NC 2.0)

#### Long-nosed Bandicoots

Sandy/grey-brown fur with light banding on the rump, long nose



*Perameles gunnii*, Eastern Barred Bandicoot  
© Museums Victoria's Catching The Eye/Flickr  
(CC BY-NC 2.0)

#### Eastern Barred Bandicoots

Distinctive lighter banding on the rump. Extinct in the wild until recent releases from a captive breeding program

pictures and learned about their preferred habitat of *Lomandra longifolia* (Spiny-headed mat-rush again) and “untidy messy” gardens with (yes, you guessed it) Sweet Bursaria.



There are 3 types of bandicoots in Victoria (see map). None are really recorded to be in our Newham area (bummer). Maybe this simply means that nobody has really looked. Or there might not be enough *Lomandra longifolia* (Spiny-headed Mat-rush) or Sweet Bursaria planted (both now on my “might-be-ok-to-have” list).

I didn't know too much about Southern Brown bandicoots and was amazed about their importance. According to our guide one of those small critters can turn over 3.9 tonnes of soil in a year !! They snuffle with their long nose in the soil and leave little ice cream cone shaped holes that increase water penetration and aeration. And their scats (poo) contain important beneficial fungi that our native plants need to survive. Woww – I really want to have those mighty small champions in our area.

Before settlement and hence foxes, cats, cars and urbanisation, the Southern Brown Bandicoots used to be the most common and widespread native mammal in Southern Victoria. But apparently, they are nowadays only found in isolated areas of Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs. An urban growth area that basically leaves the Royal Botanical Garden in Cranbourne with its 300-400 Southern-Brown cuties in a fenced-in area with no safe corridors or suitable biolinks to other habitats.

And we were told that to maintain a healthy DNA occasionally other bandicoots from nearby pockets are introduced into the gardens. It was quite a sad eye opener for all of us to hear that the non-flying inhabitants of such a famous garden, and one which was created to show-case the diversity and beauty of our native plants, have literally no safe way to move across the landscape.

But with Newham being in the middle of the Cobaw Biolink – you never know – something might have found a path to us. I am going to charge up my wildlife camera and pull out my ClimateWatch app.

# St Mary's Primary School, Lancefield Biolinks Presentation



On Monday 26th May, Paul Carter, gave a talk to Grades 3 and 4 at St Mary's Primary School (his fifth school presentation and easily the biggest audience of between 40 – 50 students). He was accompanied by Richard Matthews as the photographer.

The purpose of these talks is to introduce the children to the concept of Biolinks, what they are and why they need to be built. Since Biolinks take many years to come to maturity, it was considered essential that today's primary school children are the one's who are taught of their importance.

Paul told the children that Biolinks are corridors or mosaics of native vegetation which join isolated patches of forest that are just too far apart for animals to easily move from one to the other.

'Why don't they just walk?' one girl asked, and Paul answered that he guessed that some of them did, but that for most of them it was just too far.

Using platypus as an example, Paul explained how native animals will suffer if Biolinks are not created. The children love hearing all about platypus but were visibly startled when they were told how the mother platypus, after feeding her baby for twelve months in the comfort of her burrow, then just chucks the offspring out to make their own way in the world.

Whilst building Biolinks might seem an adult thing to do, the children were taught that there are three ways in which they could help: clearing up rubbish, planting trees and encouraging parents to erect wildlife friendly fencing to keep out stock.

# The Weedies

## Newham Landcare's roadside rangers

The Weedies goal is to encourage locals and agencies to be custodians of the small wildernesses and important biodiversity connections that remain on some of our rural roadsides.

Newham and District Landcare Group (NDLG) has always been active in protecting rural roadsides as a great natural asset, but 2005 saw an active campaign begin in response to neglect, damage and the destruction of roadside vegetation and habitat in the Macedon Ranges. The activities of the Weedies have been recorded before, but it is time for their sterling and voluntary efforts to be acknowledged once again.

Following a meeting of the NDLG on 16th March 2005, a sub-group was established to deal with the problem of roadside weeds. It was initiated by Alice Aird and several members registered their interest in being a part of this project. A group of nine interested members met for the first time on 11th May 2005 and have met bi-monthly ever since.

Back in 2005, following a discussion that took place with the then Macedon Ranges Shire

Council (MRSC) Environment Resources Officer, Lachlan Milne, about the manner in which the project would best be commenced, he suggested that the group nominate roads that were considered a priority for weed destruction. Three roads were initially chosen, Don's Road, Egan's Lane and Jim Road, and the council undertook spraying of weeds along those roadsides in 2006. The new group also undertook to map the level of weed infestation of roads within the Newham district for the Council. The mapping commenced on 10th January 2006, and the information was entered in the Council data base. On completion of this task, the group, in consultation with the Council, then decided to concentrate on identification and removal of weed infestation along specific Newham district nominated roads



Conquering a Spirea thicket

and, with working bees, this arrangement has continued over the years.

Twenty years later, the Weedies are still organising working bees to cut, paint and pull roadside weeds – always capped off with morning tea. At the bi-monthly meetings, a convenor records the hours that have been worked on roadside weed control, which confirms that the work would have cost thousands of dollars if calculated at paid rates. A report on the Weedies activities is then made to the NDLG committee on a monthly basis.

Works have now been carried out on twenty roads within the district, with particular and continuous attention being given to Shelton's Road, Jim Road, Hennerberg's Lane, and Colwells Road. As from the beginning, the Weedies activities include the physical removal of weeds, introduced trees and shrubs, the cutting and painting of woody weeds such as Holly and Common Elder, and the chemical spraying of areas of heavy infestation. To assist with all this, the group has applied for, and received, several

grants from the Council to purchase equipment and chemicals.

plan. Mapping was completed in 2018, and the draft plan was released early in 2019.



Morning Tea, Shelton's Road, 2016

In addition to their hands-on activities, the group has also engaged with the community through the distribution of publications relating to the weeds of central Victoria, through discussions with Landowners and the MRSC on the management of unwanted roadside vegetation, through organising talks on identifying weeds and through encouraging others to become involved. Further, in 2015, a budget submission was made to MRSC for an updated roadsides management

Since then, the NDLG Weedies group has continued to make robust submissions to various MRSC environmental strategies, and has also organised many meetings, displays and events including a tour of local roadsides with both State and Federal Members of Parliament.

Many people have taken part in the Weedies activities since its inception including Sue Massie, Fran Spain, Julianne Tellbach, Howard and Janine



The usual suspects, Whitebridge Road, September 2017

Sterling, Alice Aird, Bruce Hedge, Jane Trikojus, Jim Sansom, Wanda Moore Hilary Roberts and Helen Scott amongst others. Everyone has put in an enormous effort, but perhaps of particular note are Sue Massie, who is the current convenor, and Fran Spain, who was secretary of the group for three years, and who has proved to be a great organiser of events such as wildflower walks, propagation workshops and the biennial Newham Garden Club plant sale. Also for special mention are

Helen Scott, Penny Roberts and Alice Aird, who have been the major drivers in organising workshops on indigenous plant propagation as well as holding local expos (often with guest speakers), giving presentations, writing articles and spending a great deal of time involving the media and politicians.

From 10th January 2006 to 19th January 2025, the Weedies Group, has undertaken 162 days of activities resulting in 924 hours worked. This tremendous work-load undertaken to redress the degradation of roadside flora and fauna due to the introduction weed of species, has added a great deal to the beauty and unspoilt feeling of the area in which we live.

So good have been the activities of the Weedies that they even have a song dedicated to them: The Weedies lament.

Alice Aird has summed up the philosophy of the Weedies well when she said she believes that 'it is often feelings that ignite action'.

'It was the pain of losing a more natural bit of roadside that I had been enjoying, but not actively being a custodian of, that made me become more active to conserve these irreplaceable overlooked places,' she said. 'I've discovered that I care deeply about these small patches of unmanaged ecology, grateful that my love for these places has been revealed to me. I don't have to go far away to be in nature that is unregulated, wild, still what it is, and has been for a long, long time.'

The only issue which might interfere with the Weedies activities into the future is the sustainability of the work-force. From the photos included in this article, it is clear that the Weedies crew is much the same today as it was almost twenty years ago. New blood is required for a succession plan. If you are interested in joining the Weedies and helping preserve the integrity of roadsides, please contact:

[smassie@ozemail.com.au](mailto:smassie@ozemail.com.au)



Sue Massie  
Convenor and  
recorder of activities  
of the NDLCG's  
Roadside Group

New members will be enthusiastically gobbled up. For further reading on the Weedies :

Victorian Landcare Magazine - Spring 2020, Issue 79

The Weedies – Newham Landcare's roadside rangers

# Living with Birds

Alice Brown



My name is Alice and I am 13 years old. We moved to Newham in the Macedon Ranges when I was five years old from Melbourne. One of my favourite things about living here are the birds. We are so lucky.

When friends visit from Melbourne, they tell us that they see lots of Myna birds and crows, but not a lot else. We are often visited by king parrots who climb along the gutters of our house and say hello and once they flew down and sat on our arms. We also have eastern spinebills that come in to eat the nectar out of the salvias in our front garden. They're always darting around. They are fun to watch and really love the red-hot lips! I've been hearing about trees getting cut down by local people in places like the Wombat state forest. It really upsets me. Trees are homes for birds – if we take them away, where will the birds live and sleep?

We have to look after Australia, and the beautiful bush and trees that we are so lucky to have, especially the ones birds live in. Please think

about the birds before removing trees – once they're gone, we can't get them back and that worries me. Other problems birds have are cats, so if you have a cat, keep it inside. They are eating so many birds. It's up to owners to do the right thing and keep cats locked up, not just at night., always.

Thank you so much.

Alice



# The NDLG Newsletter

## A brief history

Our quarterly ( sometimes four monthly) communication is emailed to every member plus a list of external Landcare and environmental organisations, MRSC councillors and local MPs. Twenty to thirty copies are printed courtesy of the ALP office in Gisborne. A few members, for whom it is appropriate, receive the newsletter as a printed mailout, and the rest are kept as library and archive copies, or for further distribution as required.

In response to both a newsletter survey last year and a member survey performed in June 2024, it is clear that the newsletter is well received with many positive comments received by email, Newsletters from Number 1 (May 2004) up to the present time, which provide a comprehensive history of NDLG's activities and interests, are on the website as.pdf files, each listed with a brief summary of contents.

<https://newhamlandcare.info/newsletters/>

Over the years, the newsletter has been edited by Paul Marmara, Nick Massie, Fran Spain, Helen Scott (from 2017 – 2024) and more recently Paul Carter.

Articles are mostly provided by NDLG members (especially committee members) and are often related to guest presentations at evening meetings. Photos are included wherever possible. There have also been articles from environmental / ecological friends as well as editorial contributions. More regular items are Brigitte Kny's blog and Bruce Hedge's rainfall report. There is now also a desire to present the thoughts of the more junior members of the community. The usual format for the newsletter is with a front cover acting as a masthead featuring photos relevant to the issue Page 2 always includes a list of NDLG contacts and often also a brief summary of news, activities and forthcoming events.

Pages 3 onwards consists of current articles. The arrangement and compositing of articles has

mostly been performed by honorary NDLG member David Bonsall. In his absence Fran Spain, Kathy Mexted, and now Richard Matthews have stepped in.

As the current editor I wish to also thank all those who help to gather the material for the newsletter together, but would particularly like to single out Bruce Hedge, Karl Kny, Brigitte Kny, Helen Scott, Penny Roberts, Jane Trikojus and Jess Szigethy-Gyula.

Each edition is electronically deposited as a legal requirement at the State Library's National Deposit: <https://ned.gov.au/ned/> With lots happening at NDLG and also bearing in mind that we have several months ahead of us sitting by the fire of an evening looking for something to read, the current newsletter is a little longer than usual.

So now let's clean up and get back to that fireside.

