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SPRING 2025

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



*Thank you
Penny*

Upcoming Events



Angela Foley

17 October 2025.
Newham Mechanics Hall.

*My Place, Your Place, Our Place?
On Country Interculturally.*

Thinking about places as cultural as well as physical landscapes.

Merri Creek Management Committee's non-Indigenous Coordinator of Biodiversity and Waterway Education (Caring for Country) will lead a conversation to build confidence and knowledge about working on Country locally. The meeting aims to strengthen ethical understandings for conservationists, touch on aspects of Wurundjeri cultural revival, being a non-Indigenous ally, and what it can mean to disturb areas by weeding and planting, when to consider inviting traditional owners in relation to Welcomes, planting, advice re burning and possibly related to encounters with artifacts. Also looking at what happens when landscapes are continuously altered over time (pre- and post-contact).

Registration essential. Places are limited.
<https://events.humanitix.com/on-country-interculturally>

Prof. Barry Golding

7 November 2025.
Newham Mechanics Hall.

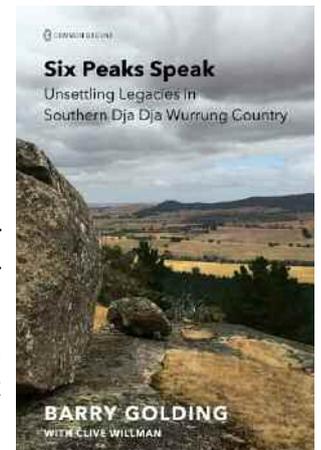
Professor Golding will give a presentation based on his 2024 book: *Six Peaks Speak; Unsettling Legacies in Southern Dja Dja Wurrung Country*, which he co-wrote with geologist Clive Willman.

The book looks at the history of six iconic peaks in central Victoria in Dja Dja Wurrung Country from a multidisciplinary perspective including issues relating to First Nations, geology, ecology, community and reserve management.

Many questions are discussed about how mountain peaks and their surrounding reserves have been and are currently managed. For an excellent review by Bill Gammage of *Six Peaks Speak* see



<https://ajal.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/AJAL-Apr-2025-BookReview.pdf>



**Save Saturday 13 December for the
N&DLG Christmas Party**

**Bruce Hedge promises an Annual Rainfall
Report for the next issue**

Group contacts

Committee for 2025– 26

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).

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

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

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://newhamlancare.info>

The committee meets on the first Tuesday of each month (February to November) between 7.30–9pm at the Newham Hall. All members are welcome to attend, be 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.



President's Report 2024–2025

Presented to our AGM on 12 September

Our Mission is to enjoy and enhance our natural ecosystems, to protect them for future generations and to champion community involvement along the way.

It has been another busy and active year for our group. Thank you to all the organisers, participants, facilitators and supporters in our varied activities. There are too many of you to name individually but all your efforts define our success.

Our group is growing in numbers as we continue the Landcare tradition as a grass-roots organization, with a clear focus on the importance of developing Biolinks in partnership with other Landcare networks. The Cobaw Biolink continues to be our defining project and this year we have been working with Biolinks Alliance and the Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network on the Deep Creek Biolink which begins in our area.

Our latest estimate for the Group Health Survey for Landcare Victoria for 2024 – 2025 is as follows:

- Members – 128 family groups
- New members – 12 families
- Total hours of environmental volunteering – more than 2,000 hours
- Estimate of time spent on the following areas
 - o Natural Resource Management projects – 30%
 - o Learning and training, presentations, field days – 15%
 - o Administration, reporting, meetings – 25%
 - o Communication, newsletters, website, socials – 30%

Some of our Newham and District Landcare Group activities over the year have been:

- Continued planting and weed control days on the Triangle – corner Andersons Road and Boundary Road, followed by lunch. It is setting a fantastic example of what can be achieved on rehabilitating degraded land.
- It has been very exciting to engage with the Traditional Owners – the Taungurung on selecting an indigenous name for the Triangle. After much discussion the Taungurung Language Reference Group have offered the Taungurung word

DUGAN (which means ‘showing signs of life’) for the site and we have invited the Taungurung People to hold a Healing Country ceremony there.

- We are supporting Paul Carter in his project to produce a documentary on the importance and challenges of creating a Biolink from Mount Macedon and Hanging Rock along the Maribyrnong headwaters all the way to Melbourne.
- It was a lot of fun working on planting days on member properties. Thank you to our hosts for the lunches and many thanks to the organisers.
- At our last AGM historian Professor Tom Griffiths talked about “This Continent of Smoke: fire in our lives and landscapes” covering the major fire events in Victoria’s colonial history.
- Our Christmas BBQ at Wesley Park was a lot of fun and well attended again.
- We held a Bushfire Risk and Biodiversity Information Night with the CFA Vegetation Management Team followed by a Field Day on a member property with the CFA team as well as Fire Ecologist David Cheal and local Fauna Ecologist Tanya Loos.
- Another evening was spent with Tanya Loos where she talked about Living with Wildlife and brought some copies of her book along. Tanya is also the Avian Influenza Response Coordinator and spoke about the issues around H5 Bird flu and how to detect and manage it.
- Dr Ross Colliver gave us a presentation on the Water Think Tank – a group focused on understanding the issues around managing water in the Maribyrnong catchment.
- From water to fire – Martin Roberts, Project Manager – Djandak Wi with the Dja Dja Wurrung traditional owners gave a presentation on Cultural Burning and then spoke about Ecological Burning and burn processes.
- We are now incorporated and planning to register as a charity.

- Our presence on Instagram and Facebook is growing. Thank you to our social network gurus. The website is continually updated and is a great resource: <https://newhamlandcare.info>.
- We continue to engage with primary schools discussing the importance of Biolinks. Presentations have been given to the entire student population of Newham Primary and further field days for interested schools with Junior Landcare Groups are planned. We are engaging with Braemar Woodend Campus on developing the Biolink between Hanging Rock and Woodend along Five Mile Creek which traverses the campus. Woodend Landcare is looking to assist.
- Four newsletters were distributed this past year, with write ups of our events and activities and guest contributions. They are always much appreciated.
- We participated on Clean Up Australia Day again.
- More than 3,000 native plants were distributed to members in the Cobaw Biolink area at no charge.
- Our Roadside Management Group (affectionately known as “the weedies”) had multiple working bees on our high value roadsides. They are

always good fun given that they are usually followed by a social catch up.

- We continue to review our member survey for ideas for events and activities. Thank you to members for your continued support of the group and its activities, and for your welcome feedback and suggestions. If you would like to establish a Landcare project we will very happily support you.
- A special thanks to the committee of Paul Carter, Bruce Hedge, Penny Roberts, Helen Scott, Howard Stirling, Jess Szigethy-Gyula, Trish Thorpe and Jane Trikojus with support from Richard Matthews on social media and Ian Scott for taking the minutes.

Thanks again to all our organisers, participants, supporters and facilitators.

We believe in building a healthy and resilient landscape through community involvement, education and fun.

Together we can sustainably improve the health of ourselves, our community, and our environment, while recognising the Traditional Owners of the land on which it is our privilege to live.

Karl Kny. July 2025.

Resource material gathered by Helen Scott

Backyard Biodiversity

Do you want to discover how your backyard can make a big difference for biodiversity? Macedon Ranges Shire Council have a range of resources available online to help you make your backyard more wildlife friendly. Visit their website for the Backyard Biodiversity booklet and factsheets aimed to help attract a range of insects, birds, mammals, reptiles, and frogs.

Access it at <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Environment/Backyard-Biodiversity>

Life on the Land – A toolkit for rural landholders

North Central Catchment Management Authority have developed this toolkit to assist new and existing land managers, particularly those in rural areas in North Central Victoria, to protect and restore the health of their land and the broader environment. The toolkit (115pages) provides a starting point for information on lots of topics and is well-illustrated with photos, diagrams and charts. It starts with a description of the area and its biodiversity; the second section has practical

information on property planning, water, healthy soils and habitats/revegetation, pest plants and animals, livestock and pets, sustainability and climate action and extreme events.

https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/assets/general-downloads/Life_on_the_Land_A_toolkit_for_rural_landholders.pdf

Enhancing farm dams to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Farm dams are essential infrastructure for farming operations and may be used for livestock water or irrigation. Did you know that among other freshwater ecosystems, farm dams produce the highest greenhouse gas emissions per m²? The Teal Carbon Project has established a large-scale experiment in south-eastern Australia to compare unfenced and fenced farm dams for GHG emissions.

Read more at

<https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Environment/Land-Management/Healthy-Landscapes/Top-Paddock-articles/Enhancing-farm-dams-to-reduce-greenhouse-gas-emissions?>

Cool Burns – A Retrospective

By Paul Carter

Following on from the articles relating to cool burns in the N&DLG Winter edition of the newsletter, it seems appropriate to look at what can go wrong with such burns. Because it was so well documented, the June 2025 planned burn at the Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve is taken as a case study.

Background

On Gunai Kurnai Country, on the Gippsland Plains between Bairnsdale and Stratford, is the Providence Ponds Fauna and Flora Reserve. It is approximately 2000ha in area. The Reserve supports the lower reaches of a long chain of ponds, that begins in the foothills and becomes the Perry River at Perry Bridge, flowing into the Gippsland Lakes.

In 1952, it was declared by botanists that there were rare flora specimens at Providence Ponds which were found nowhere else in the world. In 1954, 45 acres was reserved to protect this rare flora. This area was later expanded following the 1983 Land Conservation Council Final recommendations for the Gippsland Lakes Hinterland.

Intersected by the Princes Highway and surrounded by cleared farmland with tree plantations to the north, this bushland reserve is an isolated and precious remnant of old growth coastal banksia and peppermint woodlands associated with swamps and sedge wetlands set in dry and seasonally inundated, sandy soil.

The area is special in that the Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve is one of very few Victorian locations of a number of fauna species, including the nationally threatened New Holland Mouse, (*Pseudomys novaehollandiae*) and the White-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis leucopus*).



Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve



New Holland Mouse



White-footed Dunnart

The Burn

Forest Fire Management Victoria.
Burn:
Fernbank–Fernbank
Tk | GP-MAC-BRI-
0074. FIRE DISTRICT:
Macalister, Gippsland.
Total area: 80ha
| Area treated 46ha

A planned burn was ignited on 12 May 2025 in an 80Ha designated area of Providence Ponds stretching from the Princes Highway on one side, to cleared farmland on the other by Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV).

The burn was in an area of healthy woodland where there were records of many species including the New Holland Mouse, the White-footed mouse, Variable Bossiaea, Gippsland Lakes Peppermints, and large banksias as well as Sedge Wetlands.

The burn appears to have been ignited close to the very edge of two recorded New Holland Mouse sites with less than a hectare of clearance from them, despite the fact that a minimum exclusion area of 3ha is recommended.

With all cool burns there is a risk of things getting out of hand. At some stage this planned burn became an uncontrolled bush fire.

The New Holland Mouse sites within the reserve were completely incinerated. Two other recorded White-footed Dunnarts locations close by were also totally destroyed.



White-footed Dunnart locations completely incinerated

In addition to the loss of these animals, numerous Variable Bossiaea plants, which have a very restricted range in Victoria, were also killed together with large areas of canopy, woodland and sedge wetlands. Also destroyed were old slow growing hollow-bearing Gippsland peppermints and large banksias which, together, are a major source of food for Grey-headed flying-foxes, honeyeaters, spinebills, wattlebirds, lorikeets and eastern pygmy-possums, as well as a large number of nectivorous invertebrates upon which insectivorous vertebrates will feed. Fauna supported by these peppermints and banksia woodlands also comprises large browsers such as wallabies, wombats, bandicoots, echidnas, antechinus, native rats and mice, possums, pygmy-possums, gliders, and micro bats.

In addition to all this destruction, approximately 50 eucalypt trees were

felled or bulldozed by FFMV on the perimeter of the burn in pre or postburn operations, with many old hollow trees also collapsing.

Apart from the immediate ravages of the fire there are also longer-term consequences of such a fire



Across the burn area, the fire destroyed old hollow trees and many habitat trees were cut or bulldozed.



Destroyed woodland and canopy



getting out of hand. Here are some examples:

The White-footed Dunnarts require forest and woodland cover of more than 50% of any square metre of understory to re-establish colonies. Intense fire can lead to direct mortality, habitat degradation, the loss of ground refuge and nesting habitat, and an increase in predation risk, particularly by feral cats and foxes until the vegetation recovers.

The fire destroyed Swamp Rat (*Rattus lutreolus*) burrows leaving those animals that hadn't been killed in the fire, more vulnerable to predation. As the species tends to choose habitat based on

density of vegetation, burnt areas tend not to be recolonised.

The loss of large banksias, a keystone species, has a flow-on effect to other many other inhabitants of the ecosystem. They flower mostly in summer and autumn, rather than spring, significantly expanding the period of availability of nectar. If unburnt, they produce large woody seed cones which provide year-round food for a whole range of species.

Fire management operations such as the creation of fuel breaks by cutting and bulldozing trees and other vegetation, may cause yet more mortality, remove habitat and reduce regeneration.

There is much to be learned from the Providence Ponds burn, but it is first important to recognise that:

1. Fire management planning is happening without independent oversight, with the Department self-assessing and evaluating their own operations.
2. FFMV do not monitor the efficacy of their planned burns in preventing bushfires.
3. In Victoria there is no mandatory Code for protection of biodiversity values in planned burn operations that takes into account obligations under the EPBC Act
4. There is no publicly available information on how operations are planned and how the impact on threatened species is minimised and avoided
5. FFMV do insufficient on-ground pre- or post-burn survey for fauna, flora or habitat
6. FFMV rely on desktop data from the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas in planning which is outdated and does not show most recent records. This was highlighted by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's report *Protecting Victoria's Biodiversity* (2021)
7. According to the Victorian Auditor General's report *Reducing Bushfire Risks. Victorian Auditor General* (2020). "With the exception of some isolated case studies, DELWP does not know the effect of its burns on native flora and fauna"
8. Parks and Reserves make up around 50% of the state's planned burn targets. Even within these areas, there is no protection for biodiversity, habitat or threatened species in planned burns,
9. It has long been understood that logging can make bushfires worse, but it's only in the last few years that evidence is showing that prescribed

burning could be doing the same thing according to lead researcher Professor David Lindenmayer, ANU

<https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/prescribed-burning-could-be-making-aussie-forests-more-flammable>

So the first action to prevent disasters similar to Providence Ponds must be to ask for independent oversight on the need for, and the design of planned burns. This can only be done by contacting those responsible and asking them to put independent oversight in place and regulate the impacts of such burns using up-to-date science. See <https://vnpa.org.au/action-minister-give-nativeforests-proper-oversight/>

Steve Dimopoulos MP – State Min. for Environment
Email: reception.dimopoulos@ecodev.vic.gov.au
Phone: 03 862 43101

Jacinta Allan – Premier of Victoria
Email: jacinta.allan@parliament.vic.gov.au
Phone: 03 9651 5000

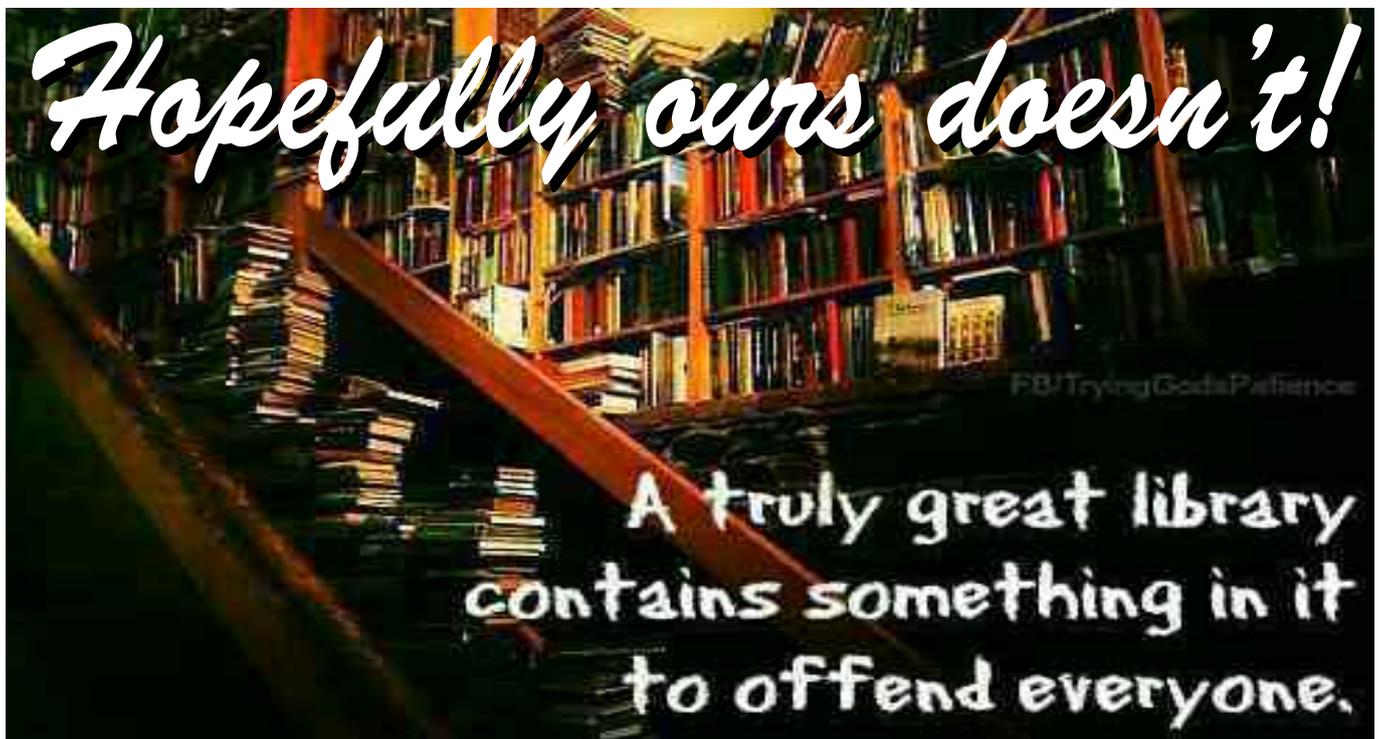
Vicki Ward Minister for Emergency Services
Email: vicki.ward@parliament.vic.gov.au
Phone: 1300 358 704

Murray Watt – Federal Min. for Environment
Email: Minister.Watt@dcceew.gov.au
Phone: 02 6277 7920

Office of Conservation Regulator, Kate Gavens
Email: conservationregulator@deeca.vic.gov.au

An article by Gayle Osborne – Reassessing planned burns in Wombat Forest Newsletter p8-9 no72, June 2025, p8-9, is at https://www.wombatforestcare.org.au/newsletters/WombatForestcareNewsletter72_jun_25.pdf

The Victorian Forest Alliance has many resources on fire management eg ecologist Karl Just who often works with N&DLG this year did a webinar called Challenging the Myth of Fuel Load Reduction talking of forest areas relevant to us. It is recorded at https://www.victorianforestalliance.org.au/recording_karl_just_webinar



The N&DLG library is a resource for members, its contents are on our website at newhamlandcare.info/library/ A pdf file of 17 pages is also available there to download – the latest version being July 2025.

This extensive collection of books, journals, pamphlets, articles and videos on all things environmental is currently stored at “Kolora” (the Kny property) 279 Sheltons Rd (off Bolgers Lane, Newham), 0409 543 661.

History

The library was initially collected by Penny Roberts and was kept at her property on Dons Rd until September 2020.

A list of the actual contents of the library was first compiled in 2012 by Sally Stabback (dec.). In 2016 Helen Scott reorganised the collection into subject boxes and created a new list, which she regularly updates as new items are added – the latest version being created in July of this year. Helen has also boxed and listed N&DLG’s collection of archival material such as posters, maps, awards and display materials, which are now also stored at “Kolora”.

Items are listed under topics: Agroforestry, revegetation and farming; Soils; Biodiversity and biolinks; DVDs; Fire; General interest, pamphlets and articles; Hanging Rock; Heritage; Indigenous Aboriginal issues; Landcare and Newham & District Landcare group; Native plants; Pests; Rural Roadsides; Waterways/Riparian issues; Weeds; Wildlife.

More up-to-date resources that are available online are also shown, live website links are blue.

So, especial thanks go to Helen Scott.

Helen Scott

In her past life as a librarian, Helen worked across various disciplines and invented the following mnemonic to encourage trainee librarians:

- L** Librarian – useful training for lots more!
- i** information management, indexing
- b** book industry (or bullshit detection)
- r** research
- a** archives
- r** records management
- i** information technology
- a** AI
- n** news (or perhaps nerd)





Cold weather is not over!

There are still a few remaining of these N&DLG sweaters – \$45, sizes X and XL only. Helen at 5’8” is wearing a Medium, says it is the warmest, most wind-proof garment she has ever worn. Contact Karl Kny (details on page 1).

Braemar Biolink visit

With Paul Carter and Richard Matthews



On 27 June Paul Carter and Richard Matthews visited Braemar College where Paul introduced the concept and necessity of Biolinks to a group of approximately sixteen Year 8 students as part of their elective environmental studies under the guidance of their teacher Laura Taylor.

The students were also shown the Biolinks trailer: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AuVujt3EydENJ2m4CBM0ozpUn4U_GaHa?usp=share_link

After the indoor presentation, the entire group walked over to the biolink on the eastern side of the school grounds and the principles outlined in the classroom, together with current issues which the students identified as relating to the site, were discussed in the real live setting.



The students were introduced to the idea of building bigger Biolinks starting at their school. They were informed that Braemar College in is a perfect position for such a project as it sits almost exactly on the watershed of the Great Divide, with Deep Creek, Rosslynne reservoir and Jackson's Creek running south to the Maribyrnong and with

the Campaspe and Coliban rivers running north to the Murray.

The students were given a copy of the following notes on their school grounds:

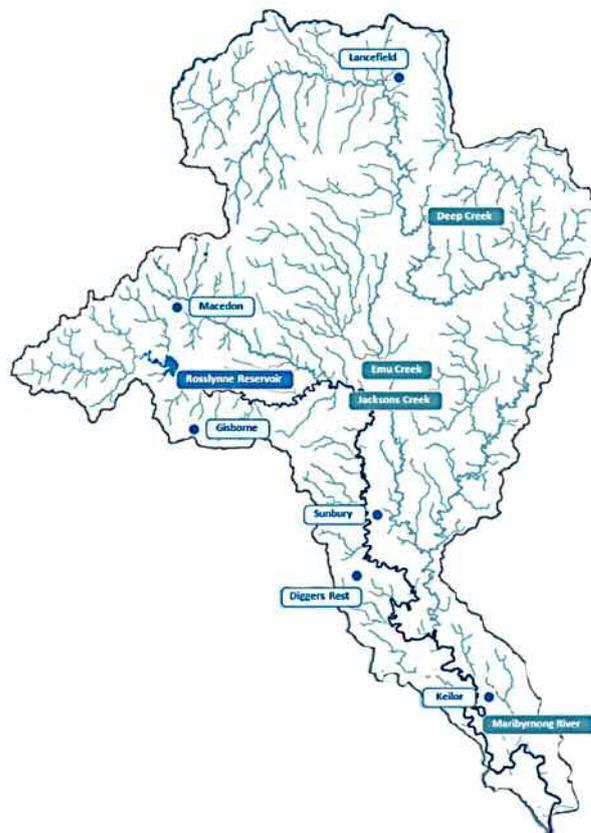
1. Woodland area to west of school buildings

Known to be a possible foraging area for Phascogales (dead male found there pre-covid but nothing more recently).

Motion-sensor cameras were placed for several weeks in the area around 2017 (by an ecologist as part of a N&DLG grant) hoping to record Phascogales – no Phascogales were recorded (but Sugar Gliders, kangaroos, wallabies, and bird species were)

2. Eastern boundary

Strip of 30m works done by previous owner of Braemar site and the adjacent owner of the time.



This consisted of:

Mechanical removal of Hawthorn hedging.

Ripping of rabbit warrens (of which there were many!).

Fencing renewal (15m inside the boundary line to

East and West, Combined direct seeding and tube-stock planting.

Damien Cook (an ecologist with aquatic/semi-aquatic expertise) visited the site approximately 10 years ago. He felt at the time that all that was needed to restore much of the creek zone was weed management and ensure protection from stock.

Braemar students/families/ N&DLG have since contributed to additional plantings west of the strip.

The Current Identified Issues:

1. Weeds

Flora surveys were undertaken in November 2024 in both the west woodland patch and along the creek for approximately 30% of its length, on both sides but with limited access due to weed infestation, notably *Eucalyptus aggregata*. It was found that the riparian zone contained a significant number of indigenous species,

however, despite the infestation, and it was determined that indigenous species could be expected to colonize further if the weeds were dealt with.

2. Fencing

The fence is very close to the creek along its entire length, and is barely 5m across in some places – as opposed to the 30 – 50m width which is recommended as the minimum to establish an effective corridor.

3. Planting

Planting in the triangle in the NE corner adjacent to the narrowly fenced creek area has not done as well as expected. Replacement of dead plants and supplementary planting in this area would be great to add a ‘node’ of habitat along this predominately narrowly fenced section of creek.

Back in the classroom there was a Q&A session, and then the students were invited to contribute an article of their own choosing to N&DLG Newsletter either as a group or individually.

Some good news for national parks

Long awaited legislation, promised in 2021, was introduced in the Victorian Lower House on 11 September. It fulfills several long-standing government commitments which many of us have agitated for:

- Three new national parks: Wombat-Lerderderg, Mount Buangor and Pyrenees national parks
- Two new conservation parks: Cobaw Conservation Park and Hepburn Conservation Park

On 7 September the NSW Minns government confirmed its long-awaited Great Koala National Park, announcing it will add 176,000 hectares of forest to existing reserves in mid-north New South Wales to create one of the largest national parks in the state and protect more than 12,000 koalas and other endangered species.

Congratulations to both Victorian and NSW Labor governments.



Free plants available in Spring 2025

Newham Landcare has distributed indigenous native tubestock for almost 20 years now, heavily subsidizing the cost to members.

The aim has always been to enhance the Cobaw Biolink by increasing the amount, diversity and continuity of native vegetation. This improves food and shelter resources for animals living within, or moving through, the Cobaw biolink and provides a safer environment for them.

Plants in 2025 will be free, courtesy of a grant from Macedon Ranges Shire Council aimed at improving biodiversity within the Cobaw Biolink

Some of the plants available have been grown locally, others have come from a commercial nursery that uses seed sourced in the Macedon Ranges.



Vanilla Lily *Arthropodium Milleflorum*.



Banksia Marginata.

Whilst the first Spring opportunity to obtain plants was on the weekend of 6–7 September plants not yet ready for planting will grow rapidly once warmer weather occurs.

Pre-loved but serviceable hardware (stakes and guards) will likely still be available.

Contact point remains Penny Roberts at penroberts@bigpond.com to let her know what you would like and find

out when/if it will be available this Spring.

Also consider what you would like for 2026 – and make it known before 21 September to have it included in our TreeProject order for next Autumn.



New members Peter and Elaine trip the light fantastic while Bruce and Helen retired from Strip the Willow – too uncoordinated, and Alice and Ian looked on!

Winter Bush Dance

Upper Deep Creek and South West Goulburn Landcare Networks joined forces to bring a Bush Dance to Lancefield Mechanics Institute on 5 July, with the help of \$2255 awarded through Macedon Ranges Shire Council's small project grants. It was free for current Landcare members.

Our two very newest N&DLG members showed up and danced along to lively entertainment from *Eat Ya Greens* band. Others of us brought our own food and drinks for the night, socialised and had plenty of fun at this sell-out event.





Penny Roberts

Landcare Champion

Penny is stepping down from Newham Landcare’s Committee after 21 years of extraordinary commitment, leadership and achievements. Awarded lifelong membership in 2020 along with husband Hilary (a star Treasurer) she will thankfully continue her involvement by sharing skills, knowledge and advice with members and community, and continue to organise provision of plants.

Many of Penny’s achievements have been spelt out in the following awards and recognition.

- Commendation in the 2017 Victorian Landcare Awards Australian Government Individual Landcarer category.
- In the *Victorian Landcare* magazine she was front cover feature of a *Women in Landcare* issue (no.74. Summer 2019, p6-7). For the full report see <https://www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/summer-2019/some-outstanding-women-of-the-newham-and-district-landcare-group/>



Jim Sansom, Helen Scott, Penny and Hilary at Government House for award ceremony in 2017.



- High commendation in the Joan Kirner category of the Victorian Landcare Awards on 18 July 2024 – the summary has been adapted by Helen Scott: Penny Roberts has been involved in Newham and District Landcare Group (N&DLG) since its inception in 2004. Penny is known fondly by



Penny together with husband Hilary.

members of the group as ‘a force of nature’ due to her commitment, energy, and ability to get Landcare projects done. Penny served as N&DLG president for more than seven years and has undertaken many other leadership roles. She is the group’s contact for new members and general queries and has seen membership grow from 40 to over 100 families – more than 35 per cent of the district’s population. She has hosted or organised dinners for new members most years, also many other social and educational events and field days, which all lead to networking, friendships and increased participation in N&DLG’s many projects and member planting days. Penny has been a stalwart of the group’s ambitious Cobaw Biolink and roadside biodiversity projects. She has been the writer and manager of grants for the group and secured over 21 different grants totalling \$521,760 for Cobaw Biolink works since 2006. Various other projects bring the total up to around \$700,000.

In addition to her work with the Newham and District Landcare Group, Penny has also been involved in environmental education at Newham Primary and other local schools where she has organised funding for excursions, science classes and fun events.



Sunset picnic on the Jim February 2009



A Little Bush Magic 2013



Propagating group



Biolink planting with the late Jenny Waugh.



Grandson helps at Triangle planting with Karen.

She also organised Newham Primary School’s propagating group with parents and grandparents providing labour. The group grew plants to order for Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Management

Program participants, school landscaping projects, and supplied low-cost indigenous plants to Landcare members, raising more than \$67,000 for the school since 2010.

Penny has always been willing to share her skills and knowledge – especially in relation to indigenous native plants, seed collection, propagation, revegetation techniques, landscape-level planning, pests, project management, and training members in on-ground works. She has been a Landcare champion in facing challenges to preserve remnant roadside vegetation and habitat, and the conservation management of iconic Hanging Rock.

Penny’s mantra has always been that Landcare is integral to benefiting and involving the community. How better to conclude than with her words in our video acceptance of N&DLG’s 2022 Victorian Landcare Community Group Award: “Member families are at the heart of our group and community and demonstrate just how much can be achieved when we work together towards a worthy goal. It’s been quite a journey”.

Helen Scott

Integrating Permaculture and Landcare Principles on smaller rural properties

a talk by David Holmgren

With excitement, hubby and I booked our FREE tickets to hear The Legend, David Holmgren talk at The Mechanics Hall hosted by Newham Landcare (N&DLG), following the AGM.

If you were indisposed on September 12th 2025, here I shall attempt to give you the flavour of the evening, which was a real treat... to get 'the bones' of the talk you could apply to Alice for her audio-recording, but sorry to say you missed the flesh!

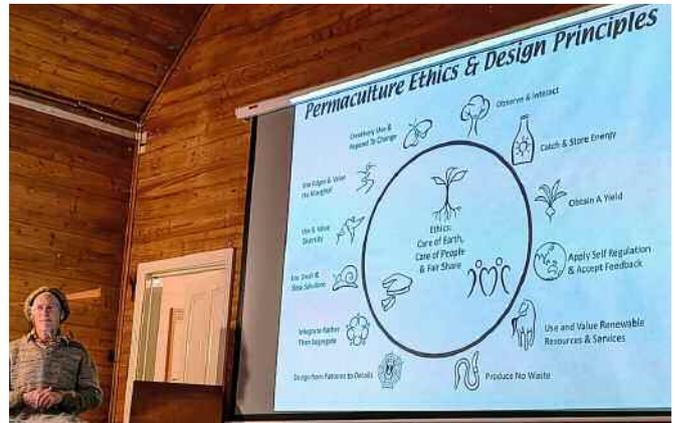
In fact we all probably concluded the evening with considerably more flesh than we started! Landcare really spoiled us with free sandwiches beforehand and thanks to generous members, there were many beautiful cakes after David's talk to send us all home fully satiated in the stomach department...

As for the intellectual department... David is truly comfortable, in trademark woolly hat, presenting the substance of his lifework and addressing his audience with candid intellect, warm humour and a very integrated physical and mental presence. What I mean by that, is he seems to talk fluidly with his whole body – retaining such a youthful presence at a mere 7 decades that must come from living and breathing his permaculture passion.

He co-authored *Permaculture One* in 1978 with Bill Mollison, originating the 12 Permaculture Design Principles, and was already putting them into practice in 1979 on his mother's newly acquired 188 acre NSW property. We were amused to hear that whilst he thought she had been remarkably irresponsible in purchasing the property; she thought he was profligate, using HER money to experiment on HER land, to trial HIS Permaculture Principles! David and Sue Dennett and family members live in separate dwellings on their property at Melliodora, a 2¼ acre permaculture demonstration property on the edge of Hepburn Springs.

But what of the connections between Landcare and Permaculture?

Well it was interesting to hear how they were practically synonymous with each other upon their



inception in the 80s. Salt Watch and Frog Watch programmes were early community eco-watch or citizen science programmes in Permaculture and Landcare. Landcare was formed in 1986 by Joan Kirner (then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands) and Heather Mitchell (then President of the Victorian Farmers Federation) as an alliance between conservation and agricultural interests.

Jason Alexander of The Landcare Accord founded Victoria's first ever Permaculture Nursery on Mount Macedon in 1978, joking that he was pleased to come out of the closet as a Permaculturalist.

But where Landcare is a truly grass-roots, local-action, community-led, environmental network, Permaculture concerns itself with systems from soil to society at large, and claims: 'The condition of the soil under our feet is the best measure of our Stewardship – of how we are managing our land'. It is indeed one of those many doom-laden apocalyptic visions that prophecies the destitution of soils in the Westernised World and ensuing famine. David has applied his intellect to the problem of how to sustain life, generate abundance in life and have enough to give-back to the wider world – the core principles of Care for the earth, Care for the people and Fair share.

He is pro-radical, wishing to reshape the thinking of modern society. Let me tell you: we really got to see David's ire flare on the subject of middle-class lawns!!! – and Monsanto!



David describes Permaculture as an ‘agent of influence’ in many organisations, including Landcare. Whilst both frameworks concern themselves with what to plant and where – as well as why, Permaculture allows itself a broader palette to paint with. Where Landcare purists will entertain only Native or Indigenous species, Permaculturalists dare to ask what practical function do you seek from planting? – Is there an Australian species to do it? – Or is there an Exotic?

On the Thorny issue of the Hawthorn tree, it turns out, in studies, that native fauna such as Ringtail Possum and Gang Gang Cockatoos, chose it as a food-source of preference over native flora – also providing them protective habitat. If Mother Nature is an equal-opportunities employer, then Hawthorn could be a D.E.I. hire. (DEI = Diversity Equity and Inclusion).

Another example of Permaculture’s laissez faire attitude to native planting would be alternating Oaks with Eucalypts or Acacia’s – the Oak being less flammable.

David Holmgren quotes David Watson’s 1979 book, urging us to experiment with our planting in a balanced way, without running amok like The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: ‘Ecosynthesis creates Novel Ecosystems’. *(Editor HS note courtesy of Co-Pilot: ‘Ecosynthesis refers to the intentional or unintentional introduction of species into ecosystems to alter their structure or function’ leading to Novel Ecosystems, i.e. ‘ecological communities that differ significantly from historical ecosystems due to human influence’. Examples are urban green spaces, abandoned farmland dominated by non-native species and altered fire regimes).*

Many of us were eager to hear more of this little tongue-twister, but there was a lot of cake to be eaten and coffee/tea/wine to be drunk and the metaphorical dinner bell rang before David had finished explaining and giving interesting examples of more than half of his Permaculture Principles – perhaps he could come back for Round two? We enjoyed the Powerpoint photos including some beautiful birds-eye shots of tractors creating Key-Line Contour planting channels. There were nuggets of wisdom to mull-over such as: ‘If you’re not looking after yourself, you’ll become someone else’s problem’ and ‘Live Simply so others may Simply Live’.

It was a wonderfully sociable night and a very jolly atmosphere, with mental stimulation at its best and superb refreshments! Thanks to Bruce Hedge for organising his friends David and Sue to come! I’ll be the first in line, or should I say online for another free ticket, if David can be persuaded back!!

Vanessa Jeffcoat, Newham Landcare member and Permaculturalist.



Hi, I'm Rachel Owen and I have been a part of the Newham community for almost 12 years. Something I love about living in the countryside is the environment that we have all around us, the nature and hills is always breathtaking, and you really don't appreciate it until you spend some time away and realise how beautiful it is here.

It is so important that we protect the nature and wildlife around Newham as it's what makes it so special. We have so many amazing waterways and different parts of nature here that it is crucial that we protect it. When I go on walks, I often see rubbish that has either flown out of cars or bins or people have just thrown out the window. It is important that we make that stop as that is having a negative effect on the wildlife that is crucial to protect. At the local school and park it's so great to see all the bins everywhere so kids can learn to put the rubbish in the bin and to not litter.



trees and leaves over grass which means that they can strip back natural vegetation. This can make it harder for natural plants to grow and for wildlife to find food. By keeping goats and other farm animals well fed and securely fenced you can ensure that they are doing no damage to the local environment that we all love. I would love to see the gum trees be more cared for so they can provide safer, better

habitats for koalas. I haven't seen a koala in a very long time, and they are one of my

In my opinion Landcare are doing an amazing job with protecting Newham and making sure the future of the land will thrive. I remember in primary school Landcare and all the kids went and planted trees and it's so great to see them grow and know that we played a part to helping with that.

Different farm animals in the area can have a good impact and also a poor impact on the land, I have goats and as much as I love them, if they aren't cared for properly, they can have negative impacts on the environment. Goats love shrubs like young

favourite animals to see in the Macedon Ranges. It's so amazing to be surrounded by such amazing animals and seeing them around in your community is so special. If we can all work together to cut down on litter, take good care of our animals, and keep supporting the amazing work that Landcare is doing, I truly believe Newham will remain a beautiful and thriving place for many years to come. It's not just about making sure it's clean and tidy it's about respecting the land we live on and the land the wildlife depends on. If we can all do our part, we can keep Newham to be healthy, green and the vibrant place we all love.

Some more handy resources

iNaturalist

iNaturalist is becoming the most popular tool for recording nature observations and contributing to citizen science. This guide by the Atlas of Living Australia provides a high-level overview of the platform iNaturalist.

https://ala.org.au/app/uploads/2024/04/A_Guide_to_iNaturalist_Apr2024-1.pdf

Fungimap

It appears from recent news events that not enough is known about fungi in Australia or where they

occur, so consider being a Fungimap citizen scientist. Fungimap has selected 100 target species to start the task of making distribution maps of fungi Australia-wide. The best time to see the fruit bodies of fungi is autumn and winter, especially after rain. Fungi are in all natural ecosystems, but the greatest diversity is likely to be found in places that are relatively undisturbed. You can get started by joining a fungi foray and familiarise yourself with what to look for by checking out the Fungimap website and newsletter.

<https://fungimap.org.au/map-2/>