

NERRENA / TARWIN VALLEY LANDCARE GROUP

PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR 2018/19

What a busy year we have had.

The Black Spur Creek Wetlands Project is central to most of our efforts for this year. This project links into the upgrade of the South Gippsland Highway at Koonwarra. Kate Walsh, our Project Manager, has liaised with many stakeholders to enhance our opportunity to gain the best outcomes for this area. Kate with the assistance of Coral Hughes, spent much time discussing the finer points of Flora and Fauna plans and weed control with the Major Roads Corporation. The roadworks are to commence in late 2019. As this area will be impacted by major earthworks, weed control and revegetation we have commenced a bird monitoring project to observe the changes over the next 10 years.

To commence this process, Wild Melbourne, ran our two day Citizens Science Workshops in October, which was funded by the Community Skills Development Grants Program. This gave us the knowledge to commence our bird monitoring project, which we record through the Birds Australia database. We have worked through several different monitoring sites and hopefully they will soon become public monitoring sites which can be accessed by anyone on the Great Southern Rail Trail at the Black Spur Creek area. Our bird monitoring project commenced in December - still a learning process as to data input and procedures.

Sharon and Rob Fisher of Blue Tree Honey Farm at Dumbalk hosted our November meeting and gave us an overview of their operation and a taste of the South Gippsland environment.

We have to thank Jill Vella, our IT guru for her time spent on building our website, updating our Facebook page and organising our bird monitoring data storage point. Without her expertise none of this would have happened. Jill is also our funding expert, and we have applied for several grants this year. We missed out on funding from the Wettenhall Environmental Trust for our bird monitoring sign to be placed on the Rail Trail near our monitoring sites. Hopefully our sign may eventuate this year. We have applied for funding for two members to enhance their properties, one a run down farm recently purchased by one of our older members and the second by new members wanting to return their land back to indigenous vegetation.

We returned to walk around Luke Biram & Melissa Ellis property which links to the Koonwarra Recreation ground and the Blackspur Creek Wetlands Project to see the changes that have happened in the past 12 months. Willows have been removed, weed control undertaken and fencing commenced.

Our group was also invited to visit the archaeologists who are working to find Indigenous and early European artefacts in the path of the new roadworks. It was interesting to understand the history of this area through their findings.

Following on from this we held a meeting at the Meeniyan Hotel and Lyn Skillern, a noted local historian, give us an overview of the vegetation and history of South Gippsland and especially the Black Spur area. At one stage around 200 people lived at Black Spur working on the new railway through the area.

In late May we hosted the Friends of the Cranbourne Botanical Gardens. Held at the Koonwarra Recreation Ground we had a variety of speakers from the local Indigenous Land Council, members of the Major Road s Corporation, WGCMA, Indigenous Designs and ourselves outlining our project. We then took them on a walk along that section of the rail trail, looking at the flora and

fauna.

Four members recently assisted the Great Southern Rail Trail Management Group plant 2000 trees at Koonwarra on land adjacent to the rail trail. It was an open area and hopefully this will bring birdlife back to this part of the rail trail.

Publicity this year included Kate producing bi-monthly Black Spur Wetlands Project updates, Jill sending out regular email updates, our four female office bearers also appeared in the Landcare Magazine, as well as an article on the rail trail planting. Our likes are increasing on Facebook and our website is being visited more often.

All of this activity has made us update our Action Plan, our Child Protection and Bullying Plan and our Safety Plan. Thanks again Jill.

To the wonderful Jill, Kate and Coral who have given so many hours of your time to make the Nerrena /Tarwin Valley Landcare Group vibrant and effective, thank you so much.

We have 20 active members (this includes families) - thank you so much for your support and assistance over the past 12 months.

Finally, thank you for allowing me to lead this wonderful project focus group of enthusiastic people, it is such a privilege.

Sue Miles President.