



Hastings Landcare Inc.

Supporting Voluntary Natural Resource Management in the Hastings, Camden Haven and Wilson River Catchments



**Celebrating 20 years of Landcare:**

- Start work on your entries in the POSTER and PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITIONS

- Entries close 19th August

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Number 42

Winter 2009

## Small Farms and Biodiversity: workshops and field day

Want to learn more about biodiversity and managing a small farm?

Then book in now for two workshops and a field day at the end of May.

The workshops are supported by the National Landcare Program and feature a diversity of local and imported presenters.

At Rollands Plains on Thursday May 28, we will focus on managing and appreciating biodiversity.

As well as threats to biodiversity – wild dogs, weeds and Indian Mynas, we will look at National Parks, riparian management, local significant fauna, bush regeneration and seed collection. The



Weeds, native vegetation, grazing management, soil: come along to the workshops and learn more.

presentation will be followed by a farm walk on Brian Irving's nearby property, featuring riparian regeneration and grazing management for biodiversity.

On May 30 and 31, at Wauchope we will host workshops in small farm

management. The range of topics to be covered over the two days includes: Vegetation management; basic agronomy; weeds; appreciating and regenerating bushland; bushfire management; environmental legislation relevant to private landholders; Livestock health; NLIS (National Livestock Identification Scheme); and an introduction to soils.

The workshops and field day are fully catered but you will need to book your place by the 26th May by calling Hastings Landcare on 65864465 or send us an email to [hastingslandcare@midcoast.com.au](mailto:hastingslandcare@midcoast.com.au).

See you there!

## Carbon Myth Busters - The Science on Soil

Want to find out about soil carbon and what it means for your farm?

David Waters, soil scientist from the Department of Primary Industries, will present a seminar at Comboyne on 23rd June.

Topics include carbon cycles, soil carbon fractions, effects of climate and soil type on soil carbon, influence of management practices on soil carbon, whole-farm carbon dynamics, organic carbon amendments and the

emissions trading scheme. In the afternoon we will look at how to sample for soil carbon.

The seminar is free with lunch provided. Contact Marg Duffy at Comboyne on 65504346.

## Indian Myna Project



Hastings Landcare Inc. is planning an expansion of the Indian Myna trapping program and we need to set up a more co-ordinated process to ensure that the best results are achieved.

Currently this project receives little funding support and the co-ordination is handled by a person 1 day a week.

Hastings Landcare has just received a small grant from the Holiday Coast Credit Union and this will be put to use having more traps built by the Hastings Mens Shed at Timbertown. These guys are doing a great job in increasing the number of traps available to the public.

To ensure we maximise the effort in reducing the Indian Myna population and get a return on the

time and money invested, we are seeking assistance from the public.

**It's the people in the community that can make this difference.**

The more people involved the better the result. As an example, an action group was set up in Canberra some two years ago (Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc or CIMAG). There are now over 500 members who have in a very short time reduced the Indian Myna population by over 20,000. According to the monitoring program of the Canberra Ornithologists Group this has reduced the Indian Myna from being the third most abundant bird in Canberra to now being the twelfth.

It would be great if we could move in the same direction here in the Hastings area.

If you would like to find out more of what is required or think you can help out in any of the following areas, please let us know:

**Undertake a co-ordination role;**

**Construct traps;**

**Transport traps;**

**Collect/transport indian myna birds for humane euthanasia;**

**Humane euthanasia of indian myna birds.**

Details of what is involved will also be added to our website

[www.hastingslandcare.org.au](http://www.hastingslandcare.org.au)

## Small Coastal Grants achievements

Hastings Landcare and the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority were able to offer a limited number of small grants to coastal groups last year.

Proving again that a very little funding can go a very long way, the groups: Lake Cathie Landcare, National Parks Association, Port Macquarie Landcare and Northside Progress Association together turned \$4,500 into:

An area of 6.1 hectares of coastal habitat enhanced and rehabilitated;

5.1 hectares of weed control; and

Approximately 0.65 hectares revegetated with native vegetation.

Congratulations and well done.

If your group is interested in applying for a small grant,



Environmental Levy funding will again be available in 2009-2010 thanks to Port Macquarie Hastings Council.



## Fox control program at Sea Acres

A control program is being undertaken in Sea Acres Nature Reserve at Port Macquarie, to protect this important reserve from threats posed by foxes. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Regional Manager Greg Croft said it may surprise people that foxes thrive in urban areas like Port Macquarie, where garbage, food scraps, pet food, even rats and mice, provide an easy and constant food supply. "The most

effective pest control programs involve all land owners. The NPWS is working with other agencies such as Port Macquarie Hastings Council, Landcare and the Livestock Health and Pest Authority on cooperative pest control programs throughout the area", Mr Croft said. "All native wildlife is threatened by foxes and this is why they have been declared a 'threatening process' to the environment", he said.

Trapping is the technique being used to target the foxes, with approved small soft jaw traps. However the traps can also catch dogs, so it is important people keep their dogs away from the reserve. Signs will be placed stating when and where fox control work is taking place.

"Park neighbours can ensure the safety of their pets by securing them, especially at night. If roaming domestic animals are caught, they will be taken to the Port Macquarie Pound", Mr Croft said.

# NSW Landcare Forum in Port Macquarie September 9, 10, 11

Celebrating 20 years of Landcare and Land Management, the Northern Rivers CMA is hosting the NSW Landcare Catchment Management Forum this year at Port Macquarie.

The themed “Landscapes, Communities and Resilience - Weathering Change”, the forum promises reflection on Landcare’s achievements as well as a look into the future.

**Start working on your poster and photographs now for entry into the competitions. Entries close on 19 August.**

The program will include presentations on indigenous involvement in natural resource management, resilient and productive ecosystems, impact of climate change on the agricultural sector and volunteering in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as a round-table discussion on the future of Landcare.

Field trips on September 9 will visit Port Macquarie Landcare Group projects, Port Macquarie Hastings Council water management and riparian protection project, Sea Acres bush tucker tour and Eggerts’ biological and organic dairy farm.

Speakers at the forum include our

favourites Philip Toyne, John Williams and Coral Love as well as a range of speakers on topics as diverse and relevant as Soil Carbon, Climate Change, Peak Oil and Aboriginal Landcare in an Urban Context.

Local presenters will feature on the Friday, demonstrating how we are working toward a more sustainable future. Entitled “Weathering Change”, the local examples include Kim Honan on The Locavore challenge; Linda Parker, Wauchope Community Garden; Lauchie Hollis, Small scale organic farming; Lyn Withers, Local sustainable food production and education; Andrew Hearne, Community Supported Agriculture; Brian Wehlburg, Holistic Management; Jem Hansen, Tackling climate change; Murray Thompson, Delivering a sustainable, quality water supply.

Don’t miss the NSW Landcare Awards Ceremony and Dinner on September 10. Former Landcare Ambassador Jack Thompson will open the festivities which celebrate the inspirational work of volunteers, the backbone of the Landcare movement.

Book in early for your early bird discount (before 3rd July) by contacting the Port Macquarie

Visitor Information Centre on 1300 303 155 or 65 818 000 or visit [www.portmacquarieinfo.com.au](http://www.portmacquarieinfo.com.au).

More information about the forum is available via the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority’s website [www.northern.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.northern.cma.nsw.gov.au)



September 9, 10 & 11

## Port Macquarie Hastings Council Community Grants

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council recognises a need to assist non-profit community groups and organisations that are interested in, and working towards, the enhancement and wellbeing of its residents. The Community Grants Program provides funding support to such community groups and organisations in their endeavours

to establish, strengthen and/or implement projects, which would benefit our residents. A total pool of \$170,000 is available with a maximum of \$10,000 available for individual grants.

Applicants are invited to discuss their ideas with the Grants

Manager by calling 6581 8545.

The Community Grants Program closes on the 12th June at 4.00pm. Forms can be accessed from <http://www.hastings.nsw.gov.au> or you can pick up a hard copy from Council offices.

# Productive sustainability of land and water resources at risk

The decision to abolish Land & Water Australia placed the long-term productive sustainability of Australia's land and water resources at risk at a time when the nation faces the converging challenges of climate change, water availability, global food security and declining productivity growth, the Chairman of Land & Water Australia, Ms Bobbie Brazil, said today.

"For 19 years Land & Water Australia has been equipping Australia's farmers with the best available science and technology to manage our soil, water and vegetation," Ms Brazil said. "Gaps in our knowledge which have become clear through debates on water allocation, drought relief and species loss in rural landscapes demonstrate that Land & Water Australia's role is more important than ever."

The decision by the Federal Government to abolish Land & Water Australia with effect from 30 June 2009 was disclosed in a range of media reports. Ms Brazil said it had been suggested that the new government program, Caring for Our Country, would fill the gap left by Land & Water Australia. "However, Caring for Our Country focuses on remediation or work on the ground; it operates on the assumption that the research has

been done, we know what to do, we just need incentives and grants to make it happen," she said.

Another rationale for the abolition was that Land & Water Australia's job was done, that it had influenced industry-based R&D Corporations to fund their own research into the management of natural resources. "While Land & Water Australia has been a major force in mainstreaming natural resource management, the work of the organisation is far from complete. Land & Water Australia today is the nation's primary and unique funder of research and adoption into long-term sustainable and productive management of our rural and regional landscapes," Ms Brazil said.

Ms Brazil pointed out that a recent Productivity Commission report identified Land & Water Australia's portfolio of significant public good research as an area where there are "strong grounds for large public subsidies [to] remain, because that research is unlikely to take place in their absence." "Now, the Government is to abolish the only rural R&D Corporation dedicated to public good sustainability research," Ms Brazil said.

"This decision recalls that of

Warwick Parer, Minister for Minerals and Energy in the Howard government, who shut down LWA's sister body the Energy Research and Development Corporation in 1996," Ms Brazil said. "At the time Australia was a world leader in solar energy technology. Today, despite our huge natural advantage, we languish amongst 'other countries', well down the list behind China, Germany, Japan, USA and Korea. Imagine where we would be in alternative energy development had that Research & Development Corporation survived. Can we afford to slip as far behind in the management of the natural resources that underpin our agricultural industries and water supplies?"

Abolition of Land & Water Australia will involve the cancellation of a large number of contracts with university-based and other researchers across Australia, closing down many partly completed research projects.

*Dr Michael Robinson and Bobbie Brazil, 7 May 2009*

*Since this article was released Land and Water Australia has been abolished in the 2009/10 Budget*

## The Future for the Hastings Landcare office

Hastings Landcare office is currently open Tuesday to Friday and we hope to maintain this in 2009-10.

Federal Government funding to the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority has been reduced from last year's budget and there will be a reduction in the

funding that could be available for the Community Support Officer from this source for the 2009-10 financial year.

Hastings Landcare has applied for funding from the Australian Government Caring for Our Country program and the NSW Environmental Trust and is

pursuing other avenues to keep up the Landcare momentum in the Hastings.

We will be devolving small grants in 2009-10 from Port Macquarie Hastings Environmental Levy and continue to seek funding to ensure that your environmental work is supported.

# Rural research a top priority

Andrew Campbell in *The Australian*, 11 May 2009

IN July 1989, prime minister Bob Hawke stood at the junction of the Murray and Darling rivers to announce the 1990s as the decade of Landcare. Beside him stood Rick Farley from the National Farmers Federation, Phillip Toyne from the Australian Conservation Foundation and members of the Opposition. With bipartisan support, he announced a 30-fold increase in commonwealth funding for Landcare and nature conservation to \$340 million over 10 years. At the time, the budget for the national soil conservation program was less than the cost of landscaping new Parliament House.

In parallel with its Landcare package, the Hawke government created the Rural Research and Development Corporations to introduce professional, independent research investment and management to the rural sector. These two initiatives, Landcare and the RRDC model, intersect in Land & Water Australia.

According to *The Australian* (May 6), Land & Water Australia is to be abolished in tomorrow's budget, with the loss of 51 jobs and a budget saving of up to \$13 million.

This Government came to power promising a positive approach to climate change and a reinvestment in innovation, infrastructure and productive capacity. Prior the Group of 20 leaders summit Kevin Rudd said that: "To these (traditional) values of security, liberty and prosperity must also be grafted the values of equity, of sustainability and community." This framework recognises people are central to environmental problems and solutions, not malign externalities.

During the past 20 years of environmental programs in Australia, there have been three key developments: community-

based Landcare, regional-scale delivery through catchment management organisations and the recent push for evidence-based investment and reporting. All three are essential, but none is sufficient to bring about more sustainable management of Australia's natural resource and more resilient rural and regional communities.

Ideally, these three approaches should be built on a sound knowledge base and proceed in parallel, reinforcing the others. But there has been a tendency to see these as sequential developments, that we have been there and done that with Landcare, and to a lesser extent the regional delivery model. The axing of Land & Water Australia to achieve a very modest (and probably illusory) budget cut raises similar questions about sustainability research.

There is much to be gained from taking the best elements of local and regional Landcare from the Hawke-Keating era and the best of the rural research experience, and rejuvenating them as part of a comprehensive rethink of agriculture and environmental management.

We need food and farming systems to be more efficient in their use of water, carbon and energy and be healthier, more productive and resilient. To do this, we need to reinvest in keeping people involved and informed at a grassroots level, to develop and implement better ways of producing food efficiently and humanely, while looking after the environment. This is technically challenging and needs to be underpinned by a comprehensive knowledge platform.

The RRDC model has served Australia well on commodity-specific agricultural research, but it has underinvested and

underdelivered on issues of water, energy, soils and climate. It would be nice to think this budget heralds a rethink of rural research that will substantially ramp up investment in the innovation needed to tackle these big issues, to underpin green jobs and ensure future food security.

A new approach to managing Australia's natural capital needs to be developed against a challenging backdrop: rapid environmental change, increasingly difficult climatic conditions, struggling food systems, a rural sector under pressure, frustrations within the environment movement and a seismic shift in the relationship between the state and the market in Western liberal democracies.

Right now, a time of flux, of rapid change and of rethinking accepted norms, is exactly the time to be implementing a new approach to managing natural capital and producing food, fibre and energy sustainably. A bipartisan commitment to rejuvenate the Landcare movement during the next decade, building on the local and regional community base for environmental action and developing a new research and extension model, would be an apt way to mark the 20th anniversary of the Hawke government's launch of the decade of Landcare.

This would also give tangible effect to the Prime Minister's commitment to evidence-based policy, to innovation, and to values of equity, community and sustainability.

*Andrew Campbell was Australia's first national Landcare facilitator, a senior executive in the commonwealth environment portfolio from 1995-99 and executive director of Land & Water Australia from 2000-2006.*

# “Natural Disasters” give weeds a boost

Drought, flood and fire may be the ruin of rural life, and cyclones the curse of coastal land and other low-lying communities, but if you're a weed you love 'em, says Dr Rachel McFadyen, CEO of the Weeds CRC.

Commenting on the recent floods in northern NSW and central Queensland, Dr McFadyen says that while our agricultural systems, and our native plants and animals, take a hammering from these extreme weather events, they give weeds and other biological invaders the perfect leg up.

Alarmingly, says Dr McFadyen, extreme weather events are likely to become more common as climate change progresses. But for many weeds, that's great news.

'In the tropics, cyclones often break open the canopy of a forest and let in new light to the normally dim forest floor – that's just perfect for weeds.'

'For thousands of years the local native plants have supplied the only seed available. This meant, given time, that the forest always returned to near-original condition.'

But now, says Dr McFadyen, thanks to people and vehicles, there are often seeds of new foreign species lying around in small numbers ready to out-compete the local plants in the grab for space and light. Birds and animals may also bring in these new seeds from towns and farmland. 'Suddenly', says Dr McFadyen, 'the invaders get the break they need'.

Furthermore, some weeds are quite capable of keeping the canopy open (e.g. African tulip tree, madeira vine, cat's claw creeper, privet) by smothering the regrowth of native trees. The new conditions with high light levels suit the weeds, and they consolidate their position. 'With each storm or cyclone event the

invaders ratchet up their position', says Dr McFadyen, 'and the forest is prevented from repairing itself'.

Fire risk is also predicted to increase greatly under climate change scenarios, and favours weeds by 'clearing the decks' of competitors, says Dr McFadyen. And while fires may burn up many tons of weed seed, and favour the germination of some fire-adapted native species, it also provides the perfect seed bed for weed seeds.

'If you're a weed with seed that is blown around by the wind, or have fruit that birds spread, for example, then a bushfire can be good news', says Dr McFadyen.

'Chances are that your seeds will be the first to arrive. Your seedlings will be first up when the rain comes, and will have set seed themselves long before any native plants recolonise the burnt ground.'

Some weed species, such as the 4m-tall African gamba grass now rapidly spreading in northern Australia, go even further by fuelling fires so hot that even normally fire-resistant eucalypts are killed. Native eucalypt woodlands, with their many animals and birds, are changed into a pure stand of gamba grass with much lower biodiversity. 'These new grasslands might be good for elephants', says Dr McFadyen, 'but are pretty useless for most Australian animals and birds.'

Drought also tips the scales in favour of weeds. If climate change does result in more frequent and more severe droughts, then weeds will again be the first to benefit. 'If the drought kills off all the competitors, whether these are crops or pasture grasses, then when the rains finally come the weeds will do what they do best – invade bare ground and grab all the moisture!', says Dr McFadyen.

'Those invaders able to cope with drier conditions, and able to

quickly move their seed around, (eg parthenium weed, or serrated tussock) will be the weeds we'll be battling tomorrow', she says.

Finally, floods can help weeds get a toehold in conditions they like. Climate scientists are predicting more floods – as we are already seeing in the north – as rainfall conditions become more variable. Once again, this will suit the weeds nicely.

According to Dr McFadyen, *Mimosa pigra* in the NT didn't really get out of hand until major floods in the 1970s spread the seed from a small initial patch out over the wide flood plain of the Adelaide River. The same happened with Athel pine in the river channels of central Australia, and even prickly acacia in north Queensland.

Any weed that is spread effectively by water is a candidate for trouble in areas where floods become more common, says Dr McFadyen. Examples include willows, giant reed, alligator weed, cabomba and lippia.

'Whether it's cyclones, fire, drought or flood, weeds are set to become the big winners from climate change', she says. 'Extreme vigilance and early action by landholders, agencies and individuals are the keys to keeping these species under control.' 'Changing climate is new territory for farmers and other land managers, and they will need all the information and understanding that science can provide if they are to stay ahead in the weed war', says Dr McFadyen.

It is critical that public and private stakeholders join forces and invest wisely in building a new knowledge base, she says. 'This is the only way we will equip ourselves to meet the new weed challenge now emerging from climate change.'

**By Weeds CRC**

# World Environment Day

There is more to conservation than just planting trees, and Landcare ambassador Layne Beachley is urging people to make simple lifestyle changes that can make a big difference to the environment.

Beachley, a seven times World Champion surfer, and former Miss Universe Australia Erin McNaught joined forces on Friday to promote Landcare Australia's latest initiative in the countdown to World Environment Day (WED) on June 5. They are urging people to help the environment in whatever way they can.

'People tend to believe that they don't have the ability to make change but everyone can make the choice to accept responsibility for their actions and make a difference to the sustainability of the planet,' Beachley said.

'None of us really like to make too many really drastic changes so I think once again it just comes down to awareness.'

She said people could help by: 'Spending more time being conscious of the products they're buying, not

being so consumer driven, buying things with less packaging ...'

'I even recycle the tiny bit of paper my tea bag's wrapped in,' Beachley said.

McNaught, who has studied wildlife biology, had a similar message.

'People don't realise that they have a lot of skills,' she said.

'Landcare realised that a lot of people didn't want to get down and dirty, but they can do other things,' she said.

'If you own a portaloo company you can provide a portaloo on site for volunteers.'

Both women said people could contribute by making simple

changes to their daily lives, such as taking shorter showers and switching appliances off at the wall.

The message comes as part of Landcare Australia's Your Planet Needs You campaign, which is urging people to register online and volunteer skills or services they may already have.

The initiative is supported by the United Nations, which launched World Environment Day in 1972.

Landcare Australia is urging people to volunteer their time, goods or services ahead of World Environment Day by registering online at

[www.yourplanetneedsyou.org](http://www.yourplanetneedsyou.org)



## Hastings Landcare ONLINE

The Hastings Landcare website is now up and running. Take a look at it — [www.hastingslandcare.org.au](http://www.hastingslandcare.org.au).

In future our newsletter will also be posted on the website so you can read it there. If you are receiving this newsletter either by mail or email and would like us to merely notify you when it is posted on the site, just send us an email and we will add you to the list. It saves us money and you download time if you read it from the website.

By the way, it is still a work in progress and needs **your** contributions for its success.

Our email address for contributions is:  
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Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, the National Landcare Program and the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority support the production and distribution of this newsletter.

*HatCH* presents a forum for the expression of a range of opinions. The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of Hastings Landcare Inc. or its employees. While every effort is made to publish accurate information, Hastings Landcare Inc. and its employees do not accept responsibility for statements made and opinions expressed in this newsletter. We invite and appreciate your contributions.

### LANDCARE COMMUNITY NURSERY

*A community nursery for community re-vegetation projects*

The role of the nursery is to provide indigenous plants grown from local provenance. This not-for-profit nursery enables your project's funding to go further.

Address: NPWS Area Depot, end of Blackbutt Rd, Port Macquarie  
 Times: Monday morning 9am—12 noon  
 Other times by arrangement  
 Contact: Estelle Gough  
 6583 6508 / 0432 141605

### SORRY!

The last issue of *HatCH* contained an article which may have implied that Council had not taken enough action to manage water quality in Lake Cathie. We know that Port Macquarie Hastings Council takes environmental management seriously and we apologise for any misunderstanding. In future we will endeavour to present more balanced and better researched articles. We also turn your attention to our disclaimer above!

### Ann's having a baby!

Due on October 12th.

*Congratulations  
 Ann and Chris!*



### New Stuff at the office

"Rural Landholder's Guide to Environmental Law in NSW" produced by the EDO

"Wetland Plants of the Hunter and NSW Coastal Regions"

DVDs from the 2008 Soil Carbon Conference and "The soil carbon handbook"

DVD "Getting Started in Bush Regeneration"

## Calendar of Events

Biodiversity Field Day	Rollands Plains	28 May
Management of Small Farms	Wauchope	30-31 May
World Environment Day		5 June
Port Macquarie Hastings Community Grants	CLOSING	12 June
Soil Carbon Myth Busters	Comboyne	23 June
Landcare Forum—Early Bird Registrations	CLOSING	3 July
Schools Tree Day		31 July
National Tree Day		2 August
Landcare Forum—Registrations	CLOSING	14 August
Landcare Photographic and Poster competitions	CLOSING	19 August
<b>NSW Landcare Forum</b>	<b>Port Macquarie</b>	<b>9-11 September</b>