

# Caring for Landscapes

Landcare and environmental volunteering in  
the Port Phillip and Western Port region  
2020-21 Landcare Report Card



## Acknowledgment of Country

The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA works on the lands, waters and seas of the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri peoples and acknowledges them as Traditional Owners.

It recognises and respects the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with Country. It values partnerships with their communities and organisations to improve the health of Indigenous people and Country.

The Board and staff of the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA pay their respects to Elders, past and present, and acknowledge and recognise the primacy of Traditional Owners' obligations, rights and responsibilities to use and care for their traditional lands, waters and seas.

### 2020-21 LANDCARE REPORT CARD

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The photos featured in this report were taken in line with coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions.

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## Introduction

At the end of 2020-21, Port Phillip and Western Port region was home to 85 Landcare groups and 14 Landcare networks, as well as over 500 Friends groups, committees of management and other environmental volunteer groups.

These groups worked across both private and public land, bringing people together to achieve beneficial outcomes in sustainable land management and environmental restoration and protection.

Landcare in Victoria is underpinned by the support of Victorian Government, which funds a Regional Landcare Coordinator role for each region, the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, the annual Victorian Landcare Grants program and numerous valuable events and opportunities for Landcare volunteers and professionals.

2020-21 brought unprecedented challenges for Landcare as coronavirus (COVID-19) continued to limit gatherings such as planting events, in-person training and knowledge sharing, and formal meetings. Groups grappled with changing restrictions and cancelled and rescheduled events and pivoted to engage with their community online, or hosting socially distanced planting days.

Despite this disconnection, the region's groups reported a positive outlook. The average score in the 2020-21 Landcare Group Health Survey was 3.7 out of 5 (3 = "moving forward", 4 = "rolling along"). This is the highest score since the survey

was conducted in 2015-16, and reflects the views of 107 community groups (only 49 groups participated in 2015-16).

There were no Victorian Landcare Grants for 2020-21, and the majority of projects funded as part of the Victorian Landcare Grants 2019-20 requested six month extensions. Applications for the Victorian Landcare Grants 2021-22 closed in June 2021 and were the most subscribed in PPWCMA history. In November 2021, 21 project grants and 88 support grants were provided totaling \$536,081.

While this report reflects the achievements 2020-21, it is important to acknowledge the changes brought on by the 2019 Victorian Landcare Facilitator Review. On 1 July 2021, the 2021-24 Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program commenced, and brought the region's Landcare and environmental volunteer networks up to 17, bringing with it a new passion and drive.

Similarly, Landcare support in region will have a new home with the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA's integration into Melbourne Water from 1 January 2022. Both organisations have a long and proud history of partnering with environmental volunteer groups and the integration will provide even greater opportunities for these groups.

Congratulations to the entire Landcare community, who have continued to achieve outstanding on-ground outcomes throughout another difficult year.

To get involved, find your local group at [landcare.vic.gov.au](http://landcare.vic.gov.au).

## Landcare groups

Landcare groups are grassroots organisations formed by neighbouring private landholders and other local people with a common desire to protect and protect their local environment and contribute to a sustainable environment.

Run by local volunteers, many Landcare groups share a sustainable farming motivation such as tackling pest plants and animals or increasing sustainable agricultural practices. Others groups are motivated by a desire for positive biodiversity outcomes in their local area and work together to tackle these issues on the ground.

Many groups also link common passions to the concept of Landcare, with specialist groups such as Intrepid Landcare (catering to 18-35 year olds), Equine Landcare and Mobile Landcare operating in the region.

At the end of 2020-21, there were 85 Landcare groups in the Port Phillip and Western Port region.

The year brought unprecedented challenges for Landcare as coronavirus (COVID-19) continued to limit gatherings such as planting events, in-person training and knowledge sharing, and formal meetings.

Despite the continued reduction in face to face activities, Landcare groups reported good participation by members and non-members in the Landcare Group Health Survey and were able to engage with and attract new people to the movement.

### Case study: Loch Nyora Landcare Group celebrates 25 years

Loch Nyora Landcare Group is one of four Landcare groups part of South Gippsland Landcare Network based in the Port Phillip and Western Port region. In June 2021, despite a year of storms and lockdowns, the group was able to celebrate 25 years of operation.

The group is underpinned by around 45 families made up of lifestyle/small acreage farmers, townspeople, larger farming properties and community groups, providing strong connections to the South Gippsland communities of Loch and Nyora.

Landcare is central to many community projects, especially around Loch

Memorial Reserve, which is the focus regular revegetation programs and plantings. Group members also support the weekly Loch Bush Kinder by preparing the area.

Every year as spring arrives, group-branded Landcare signs appear around the community, informing residents to be aware of the upsurge in blackberries, thistle and ragwort, urging them to help control their spread.

A passion of the group has been increasing habitat for the Sword Grass Brown Butterfly which is reliant on Red Fruit Saw Sedge for survival.

### Case study: Tackling deer in Manningham

Formed in 2007, Jumping Creek Catchment Landcare Group is situated on the peri-urban fringe of the municipality of Manningham, with lifestyle block residents in and around Warrandyte South amongst its membership.

The group's members share a concern for both pasture management and bush protection. Since the beginning, the volunteers have dedicated themselves to tackling weeds and undertaking revegetation projects, rotating through member properties and public estates.

In more recent times, they've witnessed much of their hard work around revegetation impacted by deer, which continue to encroach on the peri-urban landscape. The need to convince statutory authorities that deer were a growing threat motivated a new strategy to monitor and minimise their impact.

In 2017, the group, in collaboration with the Middle Yarra Landcare Network, secured five years of support from Manningham Council to engage contractors to control deer, as well as established an extensive monitoring program, which incorporates cameras and vegetation audits. Property owners, in partnership with council, also make financial contributions. After four years they have made great inroads, with clearly visible environmental improvements.



## 2020-21 Landcare snapshot



**3,817+**  
Landcare  
group  
members  
(45 per group)



**122,000+**  
hours of  
volunteer  
work  
(on-ground,  
training,  
administration  
and promotion)



**41%**  
of groups  
described  
themselves as  
'trailblazing'  
or 'rolling  
along'



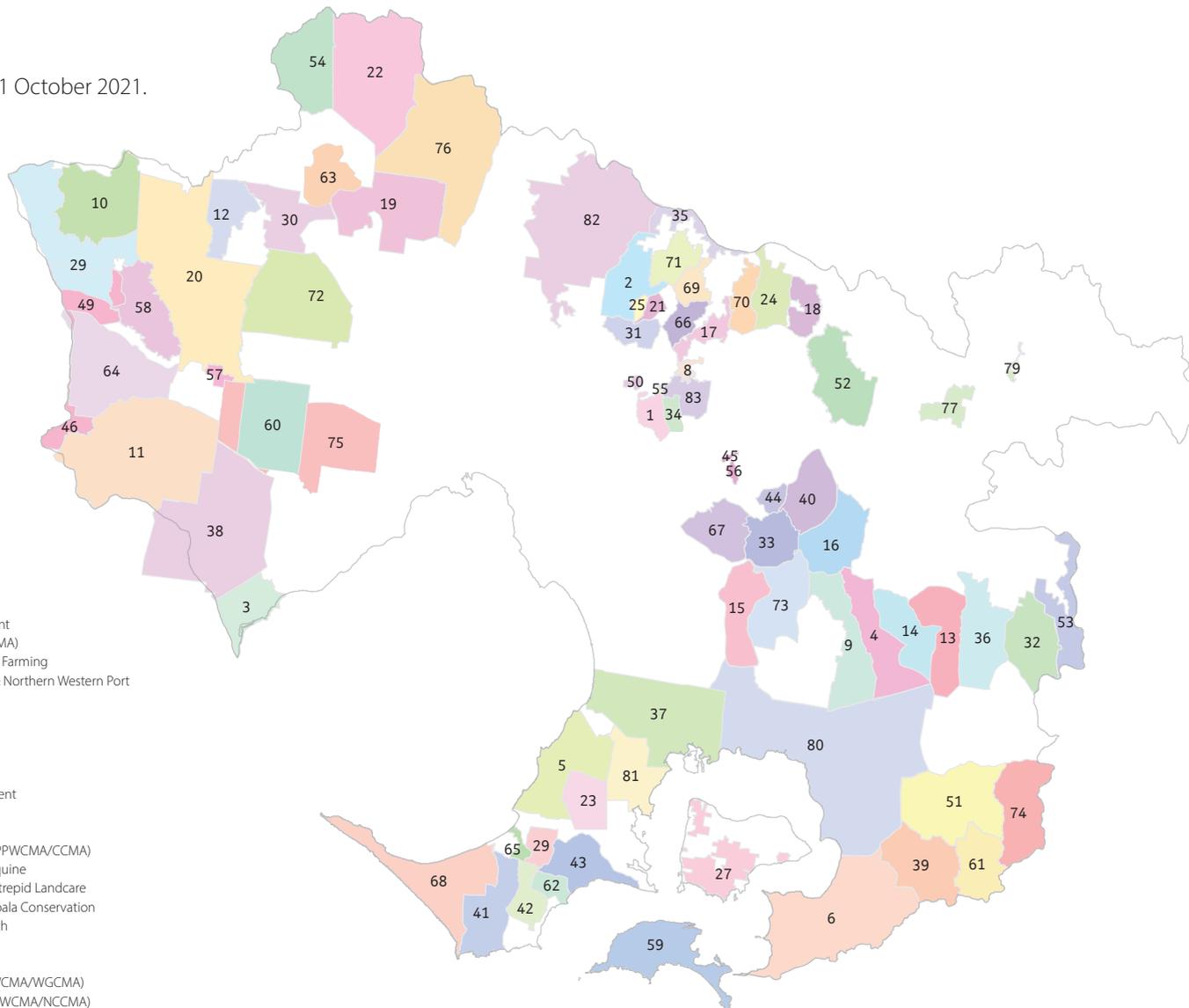
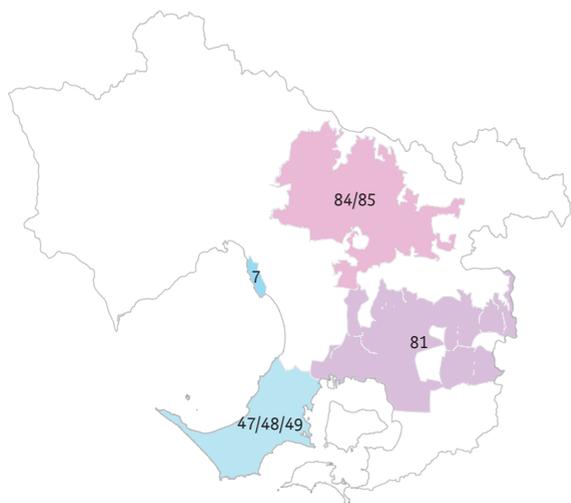
**1,882**  
hectares  
of  
revegetation  
and weed  
control



**\$5+**  
million  
economic  
contribution  
through  
volunteer  
work

# Landcare groups

Landcare groups in the Port Phillip and Western Port region as at 1 October 2021.  
Geographical data provided by Landcare groups and networks.



1. Andersons Creek Catchment
2. Arthurs Creek District
3. Avalon (PPWCMA/CCMA)
4. Back Creek
5. Balcombe and Moorooduc
6. Bass Valley
7. Bayside Intrepid
8. Bend of Islands
9. Bessie/Ararat Creek
10. Blackwood/Barrys Reef
11. Brisbane Ranges (PPWCMA/CCMA)
12. Bullengarook
13. Bunyip
14. Cannibal Creek
15. Cardinia Catchment
16. Cardinia Hills Ragwort and Landcare
17. Christmas Hills
18. Chum Creek
19. Clarkefield and District Farm
20. Coimadai
21. Cottles Bridge
22. Deep Creek (Romsey Lancefield)
23. Devil Bend
24. Dixons Creek
25. Dunmoochin
26. Dunns Creek
27. French Island
28. Global Landcare (region wide)
29. Greendale Wombat
30. Gisborne
31. Hurstbridge District Landcare
32. Jindivick
33. Johns Hill

34. Jumping Creek Catchment
35. Kinglake (PPWCMA/GBCMA)
36. Labertouche Sustainable Farming
37. Langwarrin Woodlands & Northern Western Port
38. Little River
39. Loch-Nyora
40. Macclesfield
41. Main Creek Catchment
42. Manton and Stony Creek
43. Merricks Coolart Catchment
44. Monbulk
45. Montrose Upper
46. Moorabool Catchment (PPWCMA/CCMA)
47. Mornington Peninsula Equine
48. Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare
49. Mornington Peninsula Koala Conservation
50. Mount Pleasant - Research
51. Mt Lyall
52. Mt Toolebewong
53. Neerim and District (PPWCMA/WGCMA)
54. Newham and District (PPWCMA/NCCMA)
55. North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula
56. Olinda Creek
57. Parwan
58. Pentland Hills
59. Phillip Island
60. Pinkerton
61. Poowong
62. Red Hill South
63. Riddells Creek
64. Rowsley
65. Sheepwash Creek
66. Smiths Gully

67. Southern Dandenong Ranges
68. Southwest Mornington Peninsula
69. St Andrews
70. Steels Creek
71. Strathewen
72. Toolern Vale
73. Toomuc Valley
74. Triholm
75. Truganina
76. Upper Maribyrnong
77. Upper Yarra

78. Victorian Mobile (region wide)
79. Watsons Creek
80. Westernport Swamp
81. Western Port Intrepid
82. Whittlesea
83. Wonga Park
84. Yarra Valley Equine
85. Yarra Ranges Intrepid

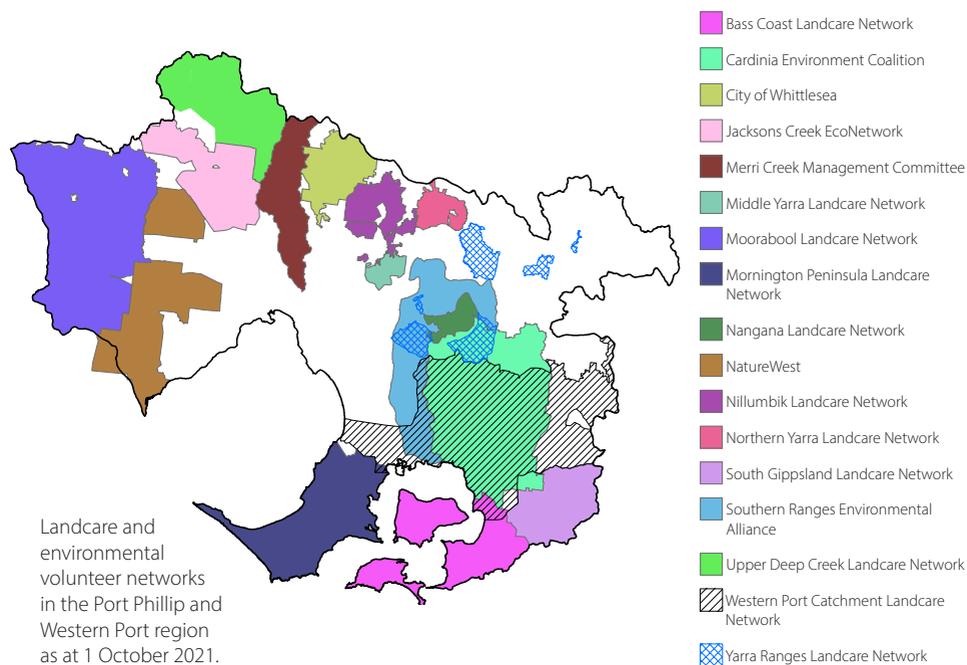
## Landcare networks

Many of the Landcare groups in the region have come together and formed Landcare and environmental volunteer networks to share and learn from each other. These networks enable groups to collaborate more effectively to address local land management issues and develop landscape-scale projects to enhance their local environment.

Networks help steer the strategic direction of Landcare at a regional level and work closely with councils, government agencies and community networks to develop ambitious environmental projects, such as multi-year strategic plans and large on-ground projects.

At the end of 2020-21, the Port Phillip and Western Port region had 14 Landcare and environmental volunteer networks, which were supported by 11 part-time Landcare facilitators funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. However, following the commencement of the 2021-24 Landcare Facilitator Program on 1 July 2021, the region's networks grew to 17.

These networks interact continuously with the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA via the Regional Landcare Coordinator, with network chairs and Landcare facilitators participating in bi-annual meetings and regular leadership and development events.



Landcare and environmental volunteer networks in the Port Phillip and Western Port region as at 1 October 2021.

## Case study: Moorabool Landcare Network

In order to further sustain themselves, Moorabool Landcare Network (MLN) has blended traditional Landcare functions and newer adaptations, such as a regional indigenous nursery at Rowsley.

This vast network, straddling the Brisbane Ranges, Lerderderg State Park and Wombat Forest, has a footprint in both Port Phillip and Corangamite catchments. MLN supports 14 Landcare and environmental volunteer groups with varying levels and types of activities.

MLN has recently engaged staff for the Rowsley Nursery, which started operating commercially in 2019 and is driven by volunteers drawn from every corner of the region. The establishment of the nursery business was in part supported by a Victorian Landcare Grant. While the nursery is set to supply groups seedlings to support revegetation efforts, it has also served as a welcome focus for volunteers during the disruptions caused

by coronavirus (COVID-19).

MLN is a conduit for a range of land interests from broad acre farmers to new environmental volunteers. Many of its long-term projects like fauna monitoring, aerial spraying for weed control, long term rabbit monitoring and control programs, gorse and blackberry control have been undertaken over many years and based on citizen science engaging groups, agencies and research institutions.

Moorabool Landcare Network actively interacts with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation, Moorabool Shire, Gardens for Wildlife Moorabool, Moorabool Environment Group, and is a long-term partner of the collaborative restoration program, Grow West.



## Other groups caring for landscapes

In addition to Landcare groups and networks, environmental volunteering encompasses a diverse range of environmental and sustainability activities. Friends groups, committees of management, and other nature advocacy and research groups care for and enhance public lands and reserves across the region.

These groups often work closely with partner organisations such as Parks Victoria and local councils, and are eligible for many Landcare programs, such as Victorian Landcare Grants and participate in training and events run by the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA. Many groups have become long-time partners

with the region's Landcare groups and are part of Landcare networks.

Accurately measuring the number and impact of these diverse groups has been difficult, but recent work by the Victorian Government through the Victorians Volunteering for Nature survey has helped to map the breadth of environmental volunteering groups in Victoria.

An estimated 919 environmental volunteer groups operate in the Port Phillip and Western Port region. Of these groups, an estimated 490 undertake activities that wholly or in part focus on on-ground work on coasts, parks and other lands (in addition to Landcare groups and networks).

## Case study: Wildthings Australia-nature explorers, facilitators and educators

Wildthings is a collaboration of environmental facilitators who are shining the light on the vital role wild pollinators play in improving biodiversity and restoring degraded landscapes.

Calling on a broad range of environmental professionals who run and support in-person and online workshops, Wildthings Australia has a focus on deepening the skill base of both new environmental volunteers and established agricultural businesses.

Their activities include engaging workshops, presentations and on-ground works to maintain and enhance native biodiversity in local landscapes.

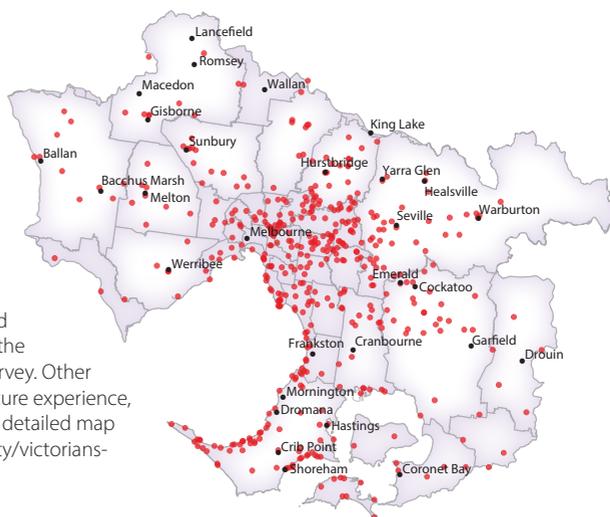
Demonstration sites established by the group allow for hands-on education to take place. Participants will learn how to pick the right pollinator species to support vegetation, as well as more niche skills such as mechanical removal of topsoil to remove weed seed banks, and pollinator attracting vegetation.

Wildthings was established in 2013 and has worked across sites on the Mornington Peninsula, Bass Coast and West Gippsland. They are one of several environmental not-for-profit groups working to bring tangible natural resource management skills to environmental volunteers. Learn more at [wildthingsaustralia.org.au](http://wildthingsaustralia.org.au)



**8,193 members from 438 environmental groups working on coasts, parks and other lands undertook a reported 136,403 hours of volunteer work.**

2020 Victorians Volunteering Naturally Survey



Red dot points represent groups (other than Landcare) undertaking on-ground work on coasts, parks and other lands in the Port Phillip and Western Port region (by LGA), as per the Victorians Volunteering for Nature survey. Other environmental volunteer groups (nature experience, advocacy, etc) not represented. View detailed map at [environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorians-volunteering-for-nature](http://environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorians-volunteering-for-nature)



# Indigenous engagement

There are three Registered Aboriginal Parties in the Port Phillip and Western Port region - Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

Landcare and environmental volunteer groups are becoming increasingly aware, not only of the need to, but the benefits of, engaging Traditional Owner groups when planning or undertaking environmental works. Places of cultural

significance are progressively being identified and protected. In addition, Indigenous cultural heritage is becoming more recognised and volunteers are keen to enhance their knowledge and understanding.

Some groups and networks are also employing Aboriginal businesses in natural resource management work such as cultural burning practices, archaeological inspections and weed removal.

## Case Study: Linking Traditional Owner knowledge with community groups

The Victorian Government's Waterways of the West Action Plan maps out a plan to protect the network of creeks and rivers from Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee) Creek to Little River (Worriyaloke), including the Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) and Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) rivers and their tributaries.

The community and stakeholder engagement process for the plan showed unanimous support for better embedding of Traditional Owners values and culture in waterway planning and management. It also identified the critical role that community groups play in championing the protection of waterways, as well as a desire to build community knowledge and capacity.

The Waterways of the West – Traditional Owner Engagement Project aims to link community environmental groups based in the Maribyrnong and Werribee catchments with the cultural

knowledge and land management expertise of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

A series of cultural and educational services and knowledge sharing events with the aim of increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal heritage amongst volunteers and enhance relationships between groups and Registered Aboriginal Parties.

To date, the project has focused on supporting groups to engage with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. Eight online cultural heritage workshops were delivered throughout 2020-21 and an educational video about Wadawurrung people's role in caring for Country is due for release in early 2022. Other activities are also planned for 2022.



**29% of Landcare and environmental volunteer groups in the Port Phillip and Western Port region groups regularly engage with their local Traditional Owners.**

2020-21 Landcare Group Health Survey



## Government support for Landcare

Victoria is fortunate to have an enthusiastic volunteer community, and a key priority for government organisations and councils is to support these volunteers and landholders to undertake actions that improve the condition of the environment and the sustainability of farming while empowering others.

With funding from the Victorian Government, the PPWCMA provided a range of leadership and support activities in 2020-21 to help Landcare and environmental volunteer groups continue to take an active and central role in the region's land management. This included:

- Convening two Landcare Facilitator and two Landcare Network Leader forums (online)
- Delivering three online training events focusing on Mental Health First Aid, ecoanxiety and amateur film making
- Establishing partnership agreements with the Moorabool and NatureWest Landcare networks. Three other agreements were agreed in principal ahead of signing events when restrictions allow, taking the total agreements in place to 10.

- Coordinating the Waterways of the West Traditional Owner Engagement Project and supporting the planning and delivery of eight events with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Indigenous Corporation and community groups.

The Victorian Government also supports this work by investing in regional and state-wide coordination services, including the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program and Victorian Landcare Grants. Many other environmental volunteer groups, such as Friends groups, receive support from local councils, Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria.

There were no Victorian Landcare Grants for 2020-21, and the majority of projects funded in 2019-20 requested six month extensions. Many groups and networks substituted community planting days for contractors and called on the PPWCMA Work Crews project (see next page) for support.

### Case study: PPWCMA Agricultural and Environmental Work Crews

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has presented unprecedented challenges. In the face of this, the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria Initiative as part of the \$1.7 billion Economic Survival Package was designed to connect workers with new opportunities that help the community and contribute to Victoria's ability to respond to the pandemic.

The PPWCMA secured \$2.6 million to deliver the Agricultural and Environmental Work Crews projects, which supported the community and the environment while providing employment to Victorians impacted by COVID-19.

Three Agricultural Work Crews assisted 51 farmers and agricultural businesses in the region to deliver on-ground works that were delayed due to COVID-19. The crews provided a range of on-farm services including weed and pest control,

bushfire recovery work, Queensland Fruit Fly monitoring and more.

Three Environment Work Crews project assisted 28 local organisations and groups, including Landcare, to deliver on-ground works that had been delayed/ceased due to COVID-19. The crews improved 69 individual environmental sites, many of which were areas of environmental significance that provide habitat for priority threatened species.

However, the impact of these projects went far beyond providing meaningful employment and Traditional Owners, farmers, councils, Landcare groups and community organisations all directly benefited.

The final result was a series of projects that supported hundreds of Victorians while ensuring vital work to protect Victoria's land, water and biodiversity could continue.



62 schools in the Port Phillip and Western Port region shared \$237,344 of Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants funding in 2020-21, a program supported by the Victorian Government and Landcare Australia.



# Return on Landcare Investment

In 2020-21, the Victorian Government  
invested \$822,198 in  
Landcare in the  
Port Phillip and  
Western Port  
region:

**\$155,698**  
for Victorian  
Landcare Program  
support (including  
Landcare Magazine)

**\$500,874**  
for local  
Landcare  
facilitators (funded  
by the Victorian  
Government and  
employed by Landcare  
networks)

**\$165,626**  
for Regional  
Landcare  
Coordinator  
through the  
PPWCMA

This investment helped leverage **\$1.55 million**  
in additional funding for Landcare, including:

**\$265,713** through  
Landcare Australia

**\$237,344** through the  
Junior Landcare Grants

**\$20,000** through the  
Victorian Government's  
Our Catchment,  
Our Communities  
Leadership Grants

**\$1.03 million** in  
additional funding  
received by Landcare  
groups and networks  
reported/estimated  
through 2020-21 group  
health survey)

Combined with **\$4.22 million** worth of *volunteer work*

(64,835 reported hours by 64 groups/networks + 36,468 estimated hours of 35 groups/networks x \$41.72 p/h)

This means that for every **\$1** invested in Landcare in the Port Phillip and  
Western Port region in 2020-21, the return on investment was **\$7.03**