



Southern Dandenongs Landcare Group

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Robert Pergl, Presidents Report, 2022

We've had a successful year for the Southern Dandenong's Landcare Group in 2022. This year marks the return of public events including Minibeasts Festival and Platypus Day after a three-year absence due to the covid pandemic. The Landcare group has played a key role in organising and establishing both these events since its inception.

The State of the Environment Report was released and confirmed what we already know, nature is facing immense amount of pressure from a range of threats including climate change and invasive species. This report demonstrates the importance of environment values and the need to promote a resilient community. We find community groups like ourselves, and our member groups raise the profile and promote awareness of an area by having a local presence. We are one of many active conservation groups in the Yarra Ranges Council. Many councils elsewhere in Greater Melbourne region including growth corridors like Whittlesea and Wyndham, encourage but struggle to encourage volunteer environment group to establish. We are so fortunate to have these groups here. They are indicative of a strong sense of ownership, identity, and care for our unique environment.

We thank our umbrella group Yarra Ranges Landcare Network

Outside of the groups we support we were in correspondence this year with

- Three of the Yarra Ranges local councillors Cr Johanna Skelton (Lyster Ward) Cr Andrew Fullagar (Streeton Ward) & Cr David Eastham (Chandler Ward)
- Community groups Save the Dandenong's League, Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group, Friends of Sherbrooke Forest, Friends of Singleton Reserve, John's Hill Landcare Group
- Local contractors Diverse Bush, Forest to Foreshore and Weedsmart
- Government representatives DEWLP, FFM, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Council
- Australian Conservation Foundation, Victorian National Parks Association

Landcare Strategic Plan

We held three workshops facilitated by Aaron Lamb to establish an updated strategic plan relevant for the Landcare Group. This replaced the previous 2019 strategic plan. The new plan will guide us next year and into the future. Over much discussion we refined our vision to 'A protected and biodiverse natural environment for the Dandenong Ranges.' We established our mission statement 'To identify threats and opportunities across the ecosystems of the Dandenong Ranges and facilitate solutions.' We now have a clear framework involving three key pillars of

1. Community Engagement
2. 4R's Retain, Restore, Rehabilitate and Revegetate
3. DOM's-Document, Observe, Monitor and Study.

Community Planting Belgrave Lake Park

Despite being cancelled and re-scheduled due to wet weather, we coordinated a community planting day at Belgrave Lake Park as part of the \$19K Melbourne Water grant applied for and received by Vicki Boyle in 2019. Our planting was well attended with over 30 volunteers including

local families, residents, workers in the NRM industry and environmental science students from Deakin and Melbourne University. Despite the overcast conditions and the muddy ground everyone enjoyed themselves. This planting strategically enriched species diversity of plants that have declined in the Monbulk Creek catchment including key species Shade Nettle, Austral Mulberry and range of other indigenous plants.

Grants

The implementation of the grants was delayed due to covid and reporting on incomplete grants. In the process of establishing improved arrangements between friends of groups and contractors, we are slowly closing in on completing all grants previously obtained prior to 2019 by the tireless energy and legacy of Vicki Boyle and Darcy Duggan. In the last two years we've approximately spent \$43,000 on 10 separate grants in the Southern Dandenong's region. Belgrave Lake Park Grant and Minak reserve remain as the last two main outstanding grants. We have applied and successfully obtained \$16K of funding in 2022/3 financial year to continue restoration work along the Monbulk creek at Colby Dr Reserve and Zig Zag Reserve. Both are long term restoration sites with works commencing in Colby Dr 2005 and Zig Zag 2016. We now have much more coherent understanding of our finance situation with due diligence from our Treasurer Ian to establish improved documentation. It is invaluable for us to have an indication of our operating expenses including lease agreement, insurance,

Festivals

The Belgrave Lake Park Platypus Day returned in October after a 3-year hiatus due to covid. This was well attended with approximately 300 people and a range of local groups with stalls including Birdsland Nature Play Group, Friends of Belgrave Lake Park, Yarra Ranges Council and Melbourne Water all working together to provide greater awareness, engagement and educational opportunities to protect the Platypus and associated local biodiversity.

Mini-beast festival at Birdsland returned after three years in its absence. This is a great event to showcase the importance of the often-forgotten insect world. As much of our conservation efforts are broadly speaking directly toward the cute and fluffy mammals and birds, our invertebrate friends play an essential role in the environment too. They may be small but provide a valuable contribution to ecosystems with combined biomass exceeding many other groups. Eliza has provided critical role in coordinating community involvement and organisation with council to promote these events. We participated in SelbyFest alongside the Southern Dandenong's Community Indigenous nursery with a strong show of support to protect and maintain our unique local biodiversity. Thanks for Judy, Sally, Eliza, Catherine, Ian for their support to hold roster on for the stalls.

SDLG in the media

Our group was interviewed by the Ranges Trader newspaper contacted for comment on the federal State of the Environment report released in July this year. The results of this report highlighted the importance of protecting biodiversity. Regular posts on FB by Eliza and Eva have gained much community attention. An updated website established by Aaron and Eliza has provided and promoted awareness and engagement in our local community.

Singleton Reserve

We are pleased to announce the initial push by residents to remove all remaining Mountain Ash trees at Singleton Reserve at Mt Dandenong has been laid to rest. A detailed arborist report will provide the framework for future management, with natural features of the reserve by in large being protected.

Conclusion

Our group is consolidating with a clear set of objectives to work towards with our new strategy and operational plan. We continue to communicate and network with groups to maintain a broader relevance and purpose. We hear about similar emergent issues other groups are competing with. We continue to volunteer our time, for we recognise the benefits it brings to our local community our environment and for ourselves. Our work is promoting a more sensitive and ecologically conscious decision-making process to ensure the natural and cultural heritage of our local patch is protected and maintained.

We continue to encourage other people to join us, join our group or another group to actively participate in our local community. For what we can achieve will shape a more resilient community. Our participation gives us a greater chance of a healthy environment facilitating a healthy community.