



# FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

ISSN 2206-5709 (Online)

Number 110 April 2020 email: [friendsvic@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsvic@hotmail.com)

See our [web site](#)

## Environmental Volunteers Networking Event in Ballarat

More than 70 people representing 60 different groups attended an Environmental Volunteers Networking Event held in Ballarat on 29<sup>th</sup> February.

The event was co-hosted by VEFN and the Ballarat Environment Network (BEN) with funding from DELWP.



Peter Noble introducing workshop

The program started with groups introducing themselves. Some of the themes to emerge centred around promoting the work done by environmental volunteers, looking for ways to partner with other organisations, using social media to generate interest and spread the message about protecting species and caring for our green spaces. Many of the concerns raised related to issues of encroaching urbanisation, the threat of pest animals, including dogs and cats, and the spread of weeds. There is a lack of resources to manage these problems. There were also good news stories, about the re-emergence of threatened species when protection is provided.

*Continued page 2*

## COVID-19 & Environmental Volunteering

As the COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly developed, we have seen changing and sometimes conflicting advice about public gatherings and social distancing. As necessary as these changes are, it is sometimes difficult to keep up with the latest developments and advice.

In this article, FriendsNET brings together a range of advice and resources that environmental volunteers should find useful. Advice and restrictions will most likely change again and again as the virus progresses, so keep checking state and federal government web sites regularly.

Australia's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, says "So how long this will last, I don't know exactly. We have been saying months and I believe it will be months before we get past this epidemic." (Extract from the transcript of a press conference on 30 March 2020 <https://www.health.gov.au/news/deputy-chief-medical-officers-press-conference-about-covid-19-on-30-march-2020> .)

*Continued page 2*

## In this edition

- Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan.
- Victorian Volunteer Strategy update.
- 2020 National Landcare Conference.
- COVID-19: An opportunity for environmental justice?

Suggestions for articles for FriendsNET are welcome. Please email to [ecosystems@bigpond.com](mailto:ecosystems@bigpond.com) . If you want to include photos, please send as separate files in jpeg format, preferably in landscape.

**Disclaimer: Content in this newsletter does not necessarily represent the views of the VEFN committee. Articles are the responsibility of authors as named. All other content is the responsibility of the editor, Stephen Derrick.**

## Environmental Volunteers Networking Event in Ballarat continued

Kathryn Campbell from DELWP spoke about the Environmental Volunteering Plan and the actions that may come from that, including the Volunteer Naturally Interactive Map to make it easier for people to locate their closest environmental groups.

A lot of interest was expressed about the presentation by Matt King from the Cultural Fire Knowledge Group. He spoke about the cultural burning of Skipton Common that took place in 2019. It came about as a result of a partnership between Glenelg Hopkins CMA and traditional owners of the Wadawurrung. Matt stressed that it needs time and sensitivity for this to be more broadly shared.



Matt King, Cultural Fire Knowledge Group addresses the workshop

Rod Lowther from Geelong Field Naturalists spoke about the Geelong Nature Forum as an example of creating partnerships and engaging government decision-makers in environmental issues and recognising the value generated by environmental volunteers. It was first held in 2019 and drew a strong public response and built improved relations with the Greater Geelong Council.

Tess Marshall from Conservation Volunteers spoke about the work they do to assist groups by bringing together volunteers to work on specific funded projects. They can also advise groups on managing and training volunteers.

There were also presentations from environmental officers at Hepburn Shire and City of Ballarat, explaining their increasing involvement in environmental improvement and engagement with Environmental Volunteer Groups. It was conceded that it was a developing area for both Municipalities with limited staff support currently.

In considering “next steps” those present expressed strong support for the idea of holding regular such workshops to improve their contacts and knowledge of activities across the region.

Merrin Butler

## COVID-19 & Environmental Volunteering continued

We’ve all heard the term “flattening the curve” and we are all doing our best to comply with the public gathering and social distancing restrictions to help quell the virus. If, as seems likely, the pandemic continues for months – let’s say at least the next six months, what does this mean for environmental volunteers? As most people who do environmental volunteering know: plants need to be planted out or they will become pot bound; weeds will continue to grow; rubbish continues to accumulate in waterways and pest species continue to do their worst to undo our work. Many environmental volunteer groups have responded by cancelling events and activities, while continuing to try and keep members and volunteers engaged.

A number of groups have set out some guidelines and advice. Note that some of the advice listed here has been overtaken by new public gathering restrictions. However, I include advice and commentary from both Landcare Victoria and the VNPA as it covers a wide range of issues that groups and individual need to consider.

**Landcare Victoria incorporated (Email to members & groups 18 March 2020)**

*Dear LVI Member Groups, landcare support staff & friends,*

*We would like to acknowledge the significant impact the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on communities and individuals across the world. Our thoughts go out to those who have been directly impacted by the pandemic.*

*We have had a number of conversations with members over the last few days about how this impacts Landcare activities and as the situation rapidly changes, many organisations are taking proactive measures to reduce the strain and burden of the potential spread, including delaying or cancelling events and closing offices. To that end, LVI staff will be working remotely until further notice to avoid public transport, and we are transitioning to teleconferences and considering scaling back future*

events. Emails will be answered as usual and we are diverting phones over the next couple of days so please be patient as we work through this process and send us an email if you can't get through or don't receive a response.

### **Monitor & Act**

LVI Member Groups will need to take additional care when considering, organising or undertaking your normal activities, particularly if they involve vulnerable people. This might include enabling and validating social distancing at your event and having alcohol based hand sanitiser as part of your event kit, or transitioning to "virtual" events to maintain positive connections.

Some LVI member groups have already decided to postpone or cancel planned events, forums or workshops. Different groups will be make different decisions based on local needs and balancing the very real benefits of maintaining Landcare connections vs any public health risk – what is appropriate in an dense urban context may not be the same in other areas.

Critically it is important that groups continue to monitor and follow public health advice provided and take appropriate precautions, as the situation is changing rapidly. In Victoria, you can keep up to date via the 'Coronavirus COVID-19 daily update' from the Department of Health and Human Services -

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Other good sources of information are:

- Australian Government:  
<https://www.health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus> ;
- World Health Organisations resources: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- Western Pacific:  
<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>

As the situation is changing rapidly, it's worth checking the cancellation fees & dates from booked venues, catering etc as public health advice may require changes at late notice, so it's important to know your critical decision points in advance.

### **LVI Insurance & Risk Management**

From an insurance perspective, if groups are following the public health advice, this acts as the best defence against any potential claims of negligence, even if claimants aren't always reasonable. This means that groups need to be keep up- to-date with the changing public health advice while planning and conducting activities.

Ensuring steps followed to protect volunteers is well documented in the group's risk management plans is also very important for this and all other risks. The recommended protective measures against COVID-19 can be found at the below links including a number of printable resources available to have to hand in office/event locations:

- <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victoria-n-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>
- [https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202003/Reduce%20your%20risk%20of%20coronavirus Poster.pdf](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202003/Reduce%20your%20risk%20of%20coronavirus%20Poster.pdf)
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Mitigate panic by following the advice provided by credible sources. Have open discussions with concerned members & staff – everyone's situation will be different.

### **Resources for Employment**

The Landcare Employment Referral Service 1300 302 232 for advice on this and other matters.

Not-for-profit-law have also produced legal advice in relation to Employer Duties during a health crisis that may assist with staff



discussions around absences, leave entitlements and ensuring a safe workplace  
<https://www.nfplaw.org.au/covid-19-faqs>

### **Grants & Landcare Activities**

We have also been seeking advice from grant bodies regarding how our and our Member Groups' legal and contractual obligations interact with COVID-19 measures such as the postponement or cancellation of planned events obligated by the terms of current grant agreements.

If you are concerned about an LVI sponsored grant and may need a contract variation please contact us ASAP. For other grants please contact the grant body to discuss any foreseeable issues as soon as you can. Please keep in mind they are currently developing their responses so advice may change.

Specific grant programs have given us the following contacts for information:

Fruit Fly Grants: Jane Ryan (Senior Project Officer Agriculture Victoria) T: 03 5784 6012 M: 0400 978 431;  
[jane.m.ryan@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:jane.m.ryan@ecodev.vic.gov.au)

### **Landcare AGMS**

A number of LVI Member Groups, as well as Landcare Victoria Inc itself, are due to have AGMs in the next few months. We are seeking advice from Consumer Affairs Victoria about how these obligations interact with COVID-19 precautions.

## **Victorian National Parks Association (Email and news item 20 March 2020)**

Along with the rest of the community, we are concerned by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and we are thinking of you and your families and friends.

We want to reassure you that the safety and health of our members, volunteers, participants, supporters and staff are our first priority and that we are following the advice of health experts and government.

VNPA is putting in place measures to minimise the exposure of our people to the virus, while

continuing our work protecting nature across the state.

At this uncertain and challenging time, we here at VNPA are focusing on and encouraging our community to remember to cherish what we love.

Let's work together with kindness and compassion. Let's keep our thoughts on what is special to us. Let's focus on caring for ourselves, our loved ones and the natural places we love.

### *Postponing or cancelling events and activities*

We are either postponing or cancelling events, meetings and activities we had planned from now until at least the end of June 2020.

- All bushwalking and activities will be cancelled or postponed until the 30 June. There will be no activities listed on our website and we will not distribute the next printed activity program.
- All meetings or events planned at the 60L Green Building, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton will be postponed, cancelled, conducted by telephone or an online update will be provided.
- Staff are working from home, and will continue to monitor post, phone and email.

### *Continuing to care for nature*

Thanks to your wonderful support, our important work protecting nature still continues apace and there is still a lot you can do to protect and enjoy nature.

- We will continue to look for and share opportunities to encourage people to connect with nature at home.
- We are continuing our work to stand up for nature across the state and developing new ways to do this.
- Park Watch magazine will be posted and sent by email in April as per usual, with an array of informative and interesting stories.
- For those involved in ReefWatch or NatureWatch programs, keep an eye out for news.
- Visit [www.vnpa.org.au](http://www.vnpa.org.au) to stay up to date on campaigns, news and our

ongoing work, and subscribe for email updates at [vnpa.org.au/sign-up](http://vnpa.org.au/sign-up).

- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

### Connecting with nature

Time experiencing nature can be a valuable way to care for our physical and mental health, but at the moment we'll all need to think of creative ways to do this from home.

As the situation is changing rapidly please ensure you visit [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au) for the latest advice

For details on national parks, reserves, park closures, campsite closures and changes in conditions, visit the [Parks Victoria website](#)

If you need to keep kids occupied, try our Wild Families activity sheets with nature activities and wildlife facts which can be used at home. Activities include '16 ways to get to know a tree', and colouring-in.

## Volunteering Victoria (Email 1 April 2020)

The Department of Health & Human Services, which is overseeing the development of the Victorian Volunteer Strategy, provided the following useful links:

- Health information, updates and advice - [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)
- Resources for volunteering - [www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/resources-guides/covid19](http://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/resources-guides/covid19)
- Resources for community organisations - [www.vcross.org.au/analysis/covid19](http://www.vcross.org.au/analysis/covid19)

## Parks Victoria COVID-19 Update 1 April 2020

While most parks are still open, **all Parks Victoria managed BBQ facilities, water drinking fountains, picnic shelters and tables, rotundas, toilets and viewing platforms are also closed until further notice and many parks are closed. For the full list and more information see <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature/covid-19-update>.**

## Consumer Affairs Victoria advice 2 April 2020

CAV has responded to numerous queries about holding of meetings and delays to preparation of financial statements for incorporated associations by posting the following information on their web site.

*If your association is scheduled to hold a meeting, you must follow the restrictions on gatherings.*

*Under these restrictions, a person must not enter any single undivided indoor space, unless:*

- *no other person is in that space, or*
- *only one other person is in that space.*

### Holding a meeting

*If you need to hold a meeting you can:*

- **use a teleconference, videoconference or other means of electronic communication.** *The Associations Incorporation Act 2012 (the Act) permits members to take part in general meetings by using technology that allows members to clearly and simultaneously communicate with each other, regardless of the incorporated association's rules about this. The Act also permits meetings of the committee of an incorporated association to be conducted by use of technology that allows members to clearly and simultaneously communicate with each other.*
- **proxy voting.** *You must use a standard form subject to the rules of the incorporated Association. Members must be given a copy of the form with the notice of the AGM/Special General Meeting. A person acting as a proxy must act honestly and in good faith and exercise due care and diligence*
- **apply for an extension of time to hold the AGM.** *The Registrar is currently granting three-month extensions and waiving the usual fee. To seek an extension, complete our*

[Extension of time to hold an AGM or lodge financial statements form \(Word, 97 KB\)](#) and send it to [cav.registration.enquiries@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:cav.registration.enquiries@justice.vic.gov.au).

#### Financial statements

If this emergency makes it difficult to engage an independent accountant or auditor to review your financial statements, you may request an extension. Complete our [Extension of time to hold an AGM or lodge financial statements form \(Word, 97 KB\)](#) and send it to [cav.registration.enquiries@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:cav.registration.enquiries@justice.vic.gov.au).

## COVID-19 and parks in the United Kingdom

The pandemic is global and Australia is not alone in restricting use of parks and facilities. In the UK for example, "Parks will remain open but only for individuals and households to exercise once a day and communal spaces within parks such as playgrounds and football pitches will be closed. Exercising such as running, walking or cycling should be done alone or only with people you live at home with."

These form of restriction pose many questions for environmental volunteers and those who volunteer at community gardens for example. The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society notes that:

*"Working on your allotment is an excellent form of exercise and could be your one form of exercise a day. Many people depend on the food they grow at their allotment. For them going to the allotment is how they obtain basic necessities."*

You can read their full statement here <http://www.sags.org.uk/StopPress/COVID19LockDownTemp.php>.

The latest UK Government advice on social distancing and public gatherings can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>.

## A personal note

I no longer live in Melbourne, but still have connections with many people who do and also who live in other capital cities. The population

density and lack of parks and open space in some areas in cities makes it difficult to get outside to enjoy, fresh air and walk with nature for exercise and mental wellbeing.

Living as I do in a regional area, it seems like something of a blessing relative to the many disadvantages associated with the tyrannies of distance. Going for a walk or ride around my small town, it is unusual to see anyone as there are only a few hundred people who live here in a very low-density area. I am lucky that there are, as yet, no cases of COVID-19 in our town. However, many experts advise that it is just a matter of time before the virus spreads throughout regional areas. Consequently, it is prudent to act on all precautions, restrictions and advice. Better safe than sorry and I would hate to find that I had passed on the virus to a family member, colleague or friend.

Nevertheless, all this leaves me with some questions. I am involved with some local environmental volunteer groups and on one project, we are near to the point of replanting an area with hundreds of native plants and grasses. The plants need to be planted out soon as we cannot hold them for an extended period without the need to pot-on, or perhaps even risk losing some. Just as nature will not wait, neither will the plants. Planting can be done alone and the group hopes to get the plants in the ground by scheduling individual volunteers to plant batches at nominated time slots. Similarly we hope to deal with some weeding that needs to be done in the same manner.

For me, working in the park in this way combines physical exercise with a sense of achievement and it also feels good for mental wellbeing. I have other projects around town, building wooden planter boxes from upcycled materials; setting up ready-made planters and growing vegetables, herbs and flowers for community use. Again, for me this is both physical exercise and a source of pleasure. The planter boxes and the plants in them will not wait and need regular watering and tending as well as coordinating community members to harvest the produce. We have a set schedule for watering and care, so that this is shared with others and we do not breach public gathering rules.





Raised garden beds at the local community hall – zucchini, pumpkins, tomatoes and rocket. March 2020.

Should these type of activities and caring for your local park, reserve or waterway be allowed under the public gathering and social distancing rules? Breaking the back of the virus is critical. While I take that responsibility very seriously, I can't stay inside for months on end and see my local parks, waterways and veggie gardens suffer. Individuals and groups will need to assess all these factors and reach their own judgement.

Please share your ideas and practices about how we can care for the environment in these difficult times. By establishing virtual communities of interest, I hope these will continue and flourish in time.

**Stephen Derrick**

### Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Plan

Parks Victoria, in conjunction with Traditional Owner groups is preparing a new Landscape Management Plan for the greater Gariwerd area. A Consultation Summary Report has now been released.

Five principal themes emerged from the consultation (see p3 of the report):

- The need to reduce pest plants and animals to conserve the environment.

- The importance of education and information for visitors and recreational users to protect the environment, cultural heritage and to improve emergency management.
- The strong desire for more consultation between recreational user groups and Traditional Owners to build shared understanding and inform future management strategies.
- The need to explore opportunities to manage peak visitor times through dispersal and ballot/booking systems.
- The need to increase resourcing to ensure the environment is conserved and visitor impacts are managed.

Participants in the consultation process were also asked to contribute to the vision for future landscape management. They shared that in the future, the Grampians landscape should be a:

- Pristine natural wilderness
- Resilient, intact environment
- Premier recreational destination
- Place for everyone
- Well-managed landscape, and
- Landscape that connects people to cultural heritage.

You can read more about the consultation process and the next steps at Engage Victoria and download the Consultation Summary Report

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/grampians-management-plan> .

It is planned to finalise the Landscape management Plan and submit it to the Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change late this year.

### Victorian Volunteer Strategy consultation extended

The Victorian Government remains committed to developing and implementing a Victorian Volunteer Strategy to support and enhance volunteering.

The online consultation will remain open until 31 December 2020 at [engage.vic.gov.au/victorian-volunteer-strategy](https://engage.vic.gov.au/victorian-volunteer-strategy), and environmental volunteers are encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences.

There are two surveys available online;

- [Community life and volunteering](#), and
- [Volunteering leadership and support](#)

Workshops will be rescheduled later in the year, when it is anticipated that community gatherings will once again be safe. Volunteers and organisations can register their interest in attending a workshop at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/XDJ29L6](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XDJ29L6).

## 2020 National Landcare Conference – Abstracts due 24 April

Landcare Australia's website notes that preparations are continuing for the moment for the 2020 National Landcare Conference, which is due to be held from **11-13 November 2020**, at International Convention Centre, Sydney. Landcare Australia also notes that it is closely monitoring COVID-19 developments, and they will make a decision regarding the scheduling of the Conference as more information becomes available in the near future.

**Submission of abstracts:** Landcare Australia has extended until **Friday 24 April 2020** the date for the submission of abstracts and posters for the 2020 National Landcare Conference.

In the meantime, you are encouraged to promote this information to your groups and networks so they can submit an abstract for consideration by the program committee. The 2020 National Landcare Conference Steering Committee would like to ensure that the program is inclusive and that there is a diverse range of Landcare projects from across Australia.

**There are four conference streams for 2020:**

### **Sustainable Agriculture**

Innovation and technology, soil health, adaptation to climate change, integrating productivity and conservation.

### **Environment & Climate Change**

How to encourage individuals to take positive action to mitigate climate change with Landcare?

### **Community Partnerships in Action**

Building community capacity and resilience, communication and storytelling, volunteering, partnerships, building and sharing knowledge.

### **Landcare Impact**

Landscape, biodiversity, community resilience, mental and physical health of individuals, community wellbeing, agriculture productivity, economy.

**For more information or to submit an abstract:** including FAQs, go to <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/call-for-abstracts>

**For any questions not addressed by FAQs:** please email [abstracts@landcareaustralia.com.au](mailto:abstracts@landcareaustralia.com.au) or call Landcare Australia's events team on (02) 8440 8800.

## COVID-19: An opportunity for environmental justice?

With the onset of the global pandemic, environment groups around the world hope that this is a good time to take a close look at how humans live; our adverse global environmental footprint and how things could change for the better.

Local environment group, Friends of the Earth (FoE) has produced [Covid-19: Blueprint for Climate Justice – a climate stimulus package](#) which is important reading. FoE writes:

*In response to the economic impacts of the outbreak of the Coronavirus/ Covid-19, state and federal governments are now announcing rolling, large-scale stimulus packages to keep the economy afloat. These already total billions of dollars and are likely to be ongoing.*

*This is both a threat and an opportunity for the future of the economy, the climate and ecosystems at a time of overlapping crises.*

*Will we see the Morrison government attempt to force through subsidies for new coal mines and fossil fuel generators, bailouts of large corporations and guarantees for executive pay while regular people struggle to pay rent and emissions continue to rise?*

*Or will we take this opportunity to transform the economic system to get the climate crisis under control, and ensure the safety and health of people? We cannot return to business as usual capitalism.*

*Both the Covid-19 outbreak and the recent bushfire disaster have confirmed that society and the economy depend first and foremost on the health, wellbeing and safety of the community and nature. Many regional communities are trying to rebuild their lives in the fallout of the bushfires while now responding to Covid-19.*

*Free market capitalism cannot solve these immediate and long-term threats and has failed both people and the planet. We must look instead to systemic and transformative solutions.*

*Our goal must be to use the massive investment of public funds to start to position our economy to be fit for purpose for the reality of climate change. Simply locking us further into 'business as usual' will only put off the changes we need to make, or lock us into bad investments that make the climate crisis worse.*

Many analysts and scientists argue that our environmental problems are a symptom of human lives gone haywire. Writing in The Guardian recently, John Vidal asked "[Tip of the Iceberg – is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19?](#)".



Vidal draws a line between the emergence of serious zoonotic diseases (transmitted from animals to humans) such as Ebola and the emergence of Covid-19. It is a thoughtful piece and one that all environmental volunteers should read and take note.

*... a number of researchers today think that it is actually humanity's destruction of biodiversity that creates the conditions for new viruses and diseases such as Covid-19, the viral disease that emerged in China in December 2019, to arise – with profound health and economic impacts in rich and poor countries alike. In fact, a new discipline, planetary health, is emerging that focuses on the increasingly visible connections between the wellbeing of humans, other living things and entire ecosystems.*

Approaching a global population of almost 8 billion, these environmental problems present an enormous challenge. Whether a disease such as Covid-19 will be the wake-up call we need to undertake massive behaviour change – in our governments; institutions, corporations and individually – remains to be seen.

## Environmental volunteering groups take activities online

With the COVID-19 pandemic restricting public gatherings, many groups are increasingly looking for ways to do things online.

Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare is one example.

The group has been recording Westgate Park bird sightings systematically for 18 years and built up valuable data for now 162 bird species. The 2-year pollinator observation project, in partnership with RMIT, also gave the group new insights into insect/flower interactions.

Westgate Biodiversity now wants to extend this citizen science work into other areas of the rich biodiversity of the Park to see if they can increase their knowledge of what's there and how they might further enhance this remarkable habitat.

The workshop will bring together scientists and experienced observers of nature to help us develop ideas into projects. It will be by webinar.

If you would like to join the group for the workshop and/or want to be involved in projects, please register your interest here <https://westgatebiodiversity.org.au/naturewatch/>.

## Coastcare grants close 7 May

Applications for the Coastcare Victoria Community Grants 2020 are open until 7 May 2020.

The Coastcare Victoria Community Grants program supports community organisations to protect and enhance the coastal and near-shore marine environment. The program is funded by the Victorian Government's Sustainability Fund which seeks to build community capacity, support community adaptation and improve ecosystem resilience to climate change.

Grants of up to \$30,000 per project are available.

Two categories of grants are available in 2020:

1. Stewardship and Education
2. Strengthening Our Volunteer Groups

For more information about the grants and to apply see <https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-programs/Coastcare-Victoria/coastcare-victoria-community-grants>.

## WIRES grants close 30 April

**Overview:** the WIRES - Landcare Wildlife Relief and Recovery Grants 2020 are about implementing immediate response, recovery and resilience building projects for wildlife in bushfire and drought impacted communities across Australia. The grants program will provide networks and groups additional support to coordinate and fund projects to maximise the impact of their contribution to recovery efforts and strengthen outcomes for wildlife.

### Objectives:

- Improved outcomes for wildlife following devastating bushfires and drought across Australia, aligned with key government response priorities,
- Local communities supported to undertake priority short to medium-term wildlife support and associated habitat rehabilitation projects.

**Who are WIRES:** the largest wildlife rescue organisation in the country, WIRES rescues and rehabilitates native animals. They are also working on a range of relief and recovery plans to implement the best solutions to assist surviving wildlife and ensure the survival of remaining animals

**Funding available:** a total pool of \$1 million of funding is available for the **WIRES – Landcare Wildlife Relief &**

**Recovery Grants 2020**, which has been facilitated by unprecedented public appeals and donations.

**Grant funding:** eligible applicants are invited to apply for grants of **up to \$20,000 (ex GST)**.

**Guidelines/criteria & how to apply:** including a full list of eligible/ineligible activities etc are available [HERE](#)

**Applications close: 3pm on 30 April 2020** (successful applicants notified end of May)

**Project completion date & final reports: 18 June 2021**

#### **Eligibility:**

Landcare Australia will consider your application if:

- Your Landcare group/network or community-based environmental organisation (e.g. Friends of group etc) are undertaking works in an area affected by drought or bushfire in 2019 or 2020, and
- Your project is directly related to the implementation of bushfire- or drought-related wildlife recovery activities, such as:
  - survey and impact assessment
  - targeted research and citizen science
  - wildlife care (food, water, protection etc.)
  - habitat restoration (including nest boxes, hollows, revegetation, etc.)
  - revegetation, shelterbelts and fences
  - protecting waterways and managing erosion
  - managing weeds (including related training and workshops)
  - working with Traditional Owner groups.
- Protection and management of unburnt areas and refuges for drought and fire-affected wildlife
- Seed collection and plant propagation
- Contractors: e.g. researchers, surveyors, arborists, fencers etc.
- Tools equipment and infrastructure (shipping containers, pumps, water tanks etc.)

#### **Other conditions:**

- Projects to be undertaken in the next 12 months
- Projects can be conducted on public or private land (where permission granted)
- Multiple applications per group/network may be considered
- Joint applications and community partnerships are strongly encouraged.

**More information or questions:** go to <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/wireslandcaregrants> or contact Landcare Australia [grants@landcareaustralia.com.au](mailto:grants@landcareaustralia.com.au) or (02) 8440 8819.

## **Call for video content on Victoria's native grasslands**

Georgia Garrard of RMIT University is asking if anyone can help provide video footage on Victoria's native grasslands. I reproduce her request below.

This semester, I am teaching a subject called *Ecosystems and Human Impact* to students in RMIT's Master of Urban Planning and Environment. Pre-Covid-19, the course was to include a full-day field trip to urban grasslands around Melbourne. The aims of the field trip were:

- to actually get the students out into nature!
- to highlight the significance of Melbourne's native grasslands, and to learn about the management and conservation of this ecosystem in an urban context (ie. what works/doesn't work? what particular challenges/opportunities exist etc)
- to form the basis of an assessment in which the students write an advisory report on the future use of the Broadcast Australia site in Sydenham.

Because of the restrictions of Covid-19, I've been forced to transform my immersive fieldtrip into a virtual one. It's not ideal, but I think it is still possible to deliver a good field trip to the students through tools like Google Earth and Google Tour. These programs allow me to create virtual tours in which I can embed information (text, photos, videos) associated with particular sites.

I'm urgently seeking electronic or online content (preferably video) that could be used to provide some background to the students about native grassland conservation and management, particularly in urban environments. If anyone has anything that they'd be happy for me to include in my virtual native grasslands field trip, please contact me on 0413 087 163 or [georgia.garrard@rmit.edu.au](mailto:georgia.garrard@rmit.edu.au). Of course, I will make all the proper attributions to any shared content.

Thank you all in advance!

Kind regards,

Georgia

#### **Dr Georgia Garrard**

Program Manager | Masters of Urban Planning and Environment

Senior Research Fellow | [NESP Threatened Species Recovery Hub](#)

Senior Lecturer | School of Global, Urban and Social Studies