

## **Dumbleyung Landcare**

### **Making a difference in the Wheatbelt**



***Landcare Manager, Claudia Hadlow demonstrating tree planting Image: Amber Bateup***

A recent decision by the Shire of Dumbleyung to discontinue the long serving Landcare Manager position held by Claudia Hadlow, if nothing else, has shone a bright light on the amazing work of Dumbleyung Landcare Inc., combating salinity and protecting biodiversity in their patch of the Wheatbelt.

Claudia has worked as Landcare Manager with the group for a total of 18 years, commencing in 1992 and returned to Dumbleyung three times over a period of 30 years. Sadly, this will come to an end on 29 July 2022 when the role ceases.

As Landcare Manager Claudia has had a diverse role including coordinating the implementation of landcare project activities, dealing with enquiries, and applying for grants to ensure farmers are given extra incentive to undertake revegetation and protection of remnant bush to ensure biodiversity is maintained. Networking with farmers and linking them with research organisations and providing advice is also part of this local coordination role, vital in transitioning farmers towards more sustainable practices.

Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. is comprised entirely of volunteers, and has worked to arrest salinity, encouraging land users to adopt best agricultural and conservation management practices, and assisting them financially to alleviate degradation on a farm and catchment scale since 1992.

Todd Gray, Chair, Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. said, 'we are sad to be losing support through the Shire of Dumbleyung, and particularly upset to lose connection with Claudia. She has enabled the group to inspire broad scale changes in farming practice, increase farm productivity for our farmers, promote awareness in biodiversity, and assist with maintaining a healthy recreational resource for the community, downstream at Lake Dumbleyung'.

'This abrupt decision has come as a surprise to many of us here in the community. Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. is one of the longest standing offices that has been proudly supported by its Shire for 30 years. This makes it unique and valuable as we have a long recorded environmental history of this part of the Wheatbelt and the changes that have occurred'.

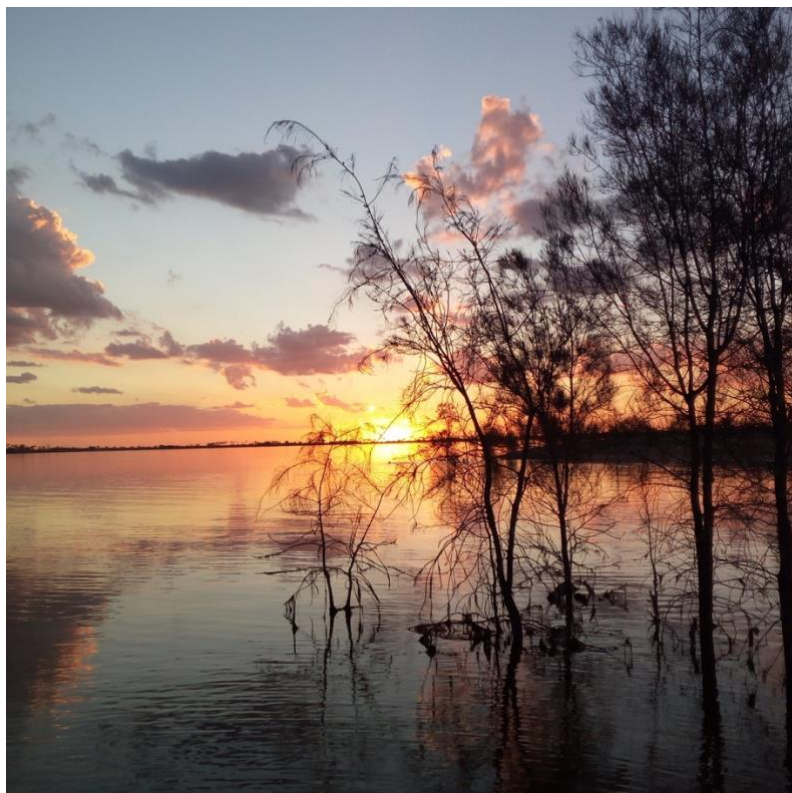
'We acted swiftly after hearing the news, forming an interim Landcare Steering Committee and distributing a survey to the community. We were very pleased with the 114 responses received supporting a full time landcare service remaining in the Shire and the possible establishment of a not-for-profit group to attract funds and work closely with the Shire. This is the start of creating a viable ongoing landcare service for rate payers', he said.

For decades salinity has been the insidious threat not only impacting farm productivity, but also the health of streams and lakes in the Dumbleyung region. Salinity has been developing since large scale clearing of the southwest agricultural began, a problem estimated to cost agriculture \$500 million per year.

'Lake Dumbleyung is a 5,200-ha saline lake, the largest deep-water lake in the south-west of WA. The lake became famous in 1964 when Sir Donald Campbell set the world water speed record of 444.71kph in his bright blue hydroplane named "The Bluebird".

The lake currently offers a valuable community asset for swimming, water skiing, bird watching and visitors to stroll around and visitors to enjoy the unique environment surrounding the lake, when it fills after flood events or unusually high winter rainfall.

***Lake Dumbleyung, a value community resource for the Dumbleyung community***  
***Image: Claudia Hadlow***



As this asset is at the drainage outlet for the Dumbleyung area it is imperative that the farmers are encouraged to maintain their enthusiasm to protect the environment from further degradation, continue to revegetate the landscape, and protect the few valuable bush remnants remaining. With 6% of the landscape effected by salinity and expanding every year, this is the top priority for the community.

'If we keep posting salt down the system it will be inevitable that the lake will turn hypersaline, making it unsuitable for community use and tourism ventures,' said Claudia Hadlow.

Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. plays an important role providing landowners with best practice management guidelines, current research data and where possible financial assistance for the implementation of on ground conservation and regenerative activities to combat salinity. Landcare activities such as tree planting in the upper catchment, deep drainage systems, surface water control, high water using pasture plants, saltbush and establishing saline tree species have all been supported by local farmers.

'The next generation will no doubt be the beneficiaries of these enthusiastic farmers who make an effort to ensure there will be a valuable living resource to hand on', said Claudia.



***Students are shown how to make their own mini composting systems called 'soil-ariums' | Image: Amber Bateup***

And educating future generations is one of Dumbleyung Landcare Inc.'s passions. Every year, the group conducts an environmental-based activity with the local school. During Term 4 of 2021, the group's Environmental Intern Amber Bateup organised a one-hour soil workshop at Dumbleyung Primary School. Students constructed miniature composting systems in jars, identifying invertebrate species using microscopes and iPads, and building a worm farm to integrate knowledge learnt.

One of the most effective methods to control the spread of land degradation from salt, water or wind is to revegetate. Tree planting has been happening in the Shire since the mid 1980's. Over a 3 year period 2000 -2003 over 190 ha of trees were planted with subsequent plantings of 200,000 trees in the years that followed.

More recently in July 2020, Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. and the community volunteered their time, assisting with an Activate the Wheatbelt tree planting weekend. 'Over 45,000 trees were planted by 150 volunteers who camped at Dongolocking Hall for two nights. A celebration event including a delicious meal was held at the Hall on Saturday night, followed by dancing to a live band and a DJ music van pumping out music to the very early hours of the morning,' said Claudia.



***The Dumbleyung community joins Activate the Wheatbelt | Image Amber Bateup.***

Dumbleyung Landcare together with the Shire of Dumbleyung and Activate the Wheatbelt, were recognised as a finalist in the environmental sustainability category of the 2021 Keep Australia Beautiful Awards for their work in the activation and rehabilitating degraded lands in the Shire.

Encouraging community members to conserve, protect and re-establish native flora and fauna is also a focus for the Landcare Committee. Red Tailed Phascogale, Western Mouse, Brush Tailed Possums, Chuditch and Carnaby's cockatoo are a few threatened species that can be found in the Shire.

Nesting boxes have been set up across numerous remnant bushland sites on private land, adjacent to the Tarin Rock region - a recognised hot spot for the species and will monitor their populations within the Dumbleyung Shire over a three-year period.

Chair, Todd Gray said, 'Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. was proud to have assisted Wheatbelt NRM in 2016 to conduct a 24-hour BioBlitz at Tarin Rock Reserves. Despite the inclement weather, over 65 people spent 24 hours surveying, recording and collecting flora species and monitoring the local fauna and birds. Over 300 new flora species were recorded. An amazing citizen science effort!'



***Red tailed phascogale in one of the installed nest boxes | Image: Marissah Kruger***



***Citizen scientists survey native vegetation on private property  
Image: Amber Bateup***

Monitoring private remnants and encouraging locals to be more aware of our unique native flora has culminated in attracting volunteers from the Wildflower Society of WA, the Dumbleyung community, and skilled botanists and ecologists. In October 2021 the group visited 15 hectares of private pristine remnant bushland where they surveyed high-quality native flora.

The two-day survey involved setting up quadrats, collecting, identifying, and pressing specimens and data entry. Over 1,000 specimen samples were collected and will be identified by volunteers who assist at the WA Herbarium, located in Perth.

'We are keen to raise awareness of the beautiful biodiversity that once thrived in the region and help the community to build biodiversity corridors to bring these critters back. Citizen science is a valuable tool we use to understand species and to raise community awareness,' said Claudia.



***The red fox, a major threat to biodiversity across the Dumbleyung Shire***

'After 30 years of providing landcare assistance to the rate payers and community of Dumbleyung, Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. is very proud of its achievements, said Chair, Todd Gray.

'The challenge now is to steer Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. to a new model. We are keen to continue to foster working links with all stakeholders including landholders, State and local government, and community organisations to maintain environmental values in the region. We need to seek funding for the implementation of landcare and sustainable activities in the Shire and financially assist land users within the Shire to achieve this goal.'

'We hope the Shire of Dumbleyung will continue to support the community with its efforts. In a time of climatic uncertainty, both globally and locally we need environmental advocates now, more than ever, to support rural communities with our changing climate. Without a Landcare Manager to lead and coordinate all these activities and encourage networking the viability of Landcare in Dumbleyung will remain in jeopardy'.

Contact Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. on [landcare@dumbleyung.wa.gov.au](mailto:landcare@dumbleyung.wa.gov.au) and follow them on social media @DumbleyungLandcare.

Control of the declared weed bridal creeper has been undertaken over the years in many parts of the Shire and Dumbleyung Landcare Inc. has conducted an annual fox shoot event in the Shire since 2006 together with distributing 1080 fox baits to farmers with permits.

The fox shoot is a game changer to reducing predator numbers in the Shire. About 20-30 farmers form teams and go shooting on the same night followed by a free breakfast, the tally count and prize giving. Since 2014 690 foxes, 20 wild cats and 287 rabbits have been shot during these events.

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