



Some commentators would say that food security and the stability of food prices is mostly an issue for the third world and that Australia as a net food exporter is largely unaffected by this. However this ignores the fact that our food commodity markets operate on an international basis, but so do our fertiliser markets, which have a major impact on our local food producers. It is interesting to note that BHP is currently making a takeover bid for one of the largest fertiliser producers in the world (Saskatchewan Potash), because it obviously sees the strategic importance of these finite resources in the future.

While Australia is not likely to run out of food anytime soon, we are all impacted by increasing food prices. A recent study by the University of Queensland says that Australian fresh food prices could increase by as much as 45% over the next decade as a result of domestic and international pressures. Given this level of price increase has already been exceeded locally for most of the last decade, it would seem to be a conservative estimate. At this rate higher food prices are not likely to be just an issue for low income families, but also for middle class Australia at the same time as we are likely to see prices squeezed on families due to higher petrol, energy and water prices.

Looking further down the track, the global population is expected to grow from approximately 7 billion to 9 billion within the next generation, with the middle class in India and China expected to eclipse that of the western world. This will introduce a new and large group of competitors for food for consumers in western economies such as Australia. Recently the Centre for Independent Studies claimed that the Australian population could be almost 30 million by 2050, and is likely to grow under almost all scenarios. This means that domestic demand is also likely to increase at the same time as international demand is increasing.

Therefore in the future we will be operating in a domestic and international context of increasing populations, increased competition for food from the rising middle classes of India and China, most likely less water, a potentially more variable climate, higher fertiliser and oil prices and the loss of productive farmland due to urbanisation, mining development and land degradation. All of these pressures to increase food production will lead to greater pressure on the environment either through bringing new land into production, or through the greater intensification of production from existing areas. The challenge will be how to increase food production while at the same time improving the sustainability of our production systems.

Improving the sustainability and productivity of food production systems both in Australia and internationally is not just of critical importance to society from an economic and food perspective, but it's also the environment that has a major interest in getting this right. It's important that we look at these issues not only on the basis of what the world looks like today, but also in the decades to come. This highlights that the Landcare ethic and its focus on delivering an integrated approach to issues on the ground in partnership between the community and government is just as essential now as it was 21 years ago.

## Ministerial Changes

As many of you will be aware, there have been changes to the Ministerial portfolios at the Federal level that impact on Landcare, NRM arrangements and programs such as Caring for Our Country. Minister Tony Burke, who is no stranger to this area, has taken up responsibilities for the environment (in addition to water and sustainable populations). I think this is the first time that an Agriculture Minister has gone on to become Environment Minister. Senator Joe Ludwig is now the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries. Dr Mike Kelly has been appointed Parliamentary Secretary assisting Minister Ludwig on a range of portfolio issues including Landcare. I recently met with the two Ministers and Dr Kelly and while the arrangements going forward are still being considered, I was heartened by their enthusiasm for this area. Both Minister Ludwig and Dr Kelly are keen to travel and meet with people working in this area on the ground, and the background that Minister Burke brings with him should also be an asset. The shadow Ministers for the Coalition remain unchanged with John Cobb looking after Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries and Greg Hunt the shadow Minister for the Environment.

## Australian Landcare Council

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig recently announced the appointment of 16 new members to the Australian Landcare Council (ALC) which is the Australian Government's key advisory body on Landcare. Minister Ludwig said that the Federal Government was committed to supporting the Landcare community which has been protecting and restoring Australia's environment and improving the landscape for farmers for the past 20 years and that the appointment of 16 outstanding individuals with demonstrated commitment to their local environment and communities will strengthen Landcare.

The Minister said that in particular he wanted the council to focus on outcomes, concentrating on what the government considers the central pillars of Landcare for the next 20 years, food security, responding to climate change and maintaining the environment. The council will work with the Landcare community, including farmers and Indigenous land managers, to help prepare Australia for the challenges that climate change presents to our productivity and natural resource management.

The 16 new members join the previously announced Chair of the ALC and former WA Agriculture Minister, Mr Kim Chance and provide an important converge across the country as well as expertise in farming, conservation, research, indigenous and other Landcare related facets. The 16 new members are Ms Kate Andrews (NT), Professor Snow Barlow (Vic), Mrs Pamela Brook (NSW), Ms Alexandra Gartmann (Vic), Dr Judy Henderson AO (NSW), Dr Rosemary Hill (QLD), Mr Peter Kenny (Qld), Mr Jock Laurie (NSW), Ms Coral Love (Vic), Ms Banduk Marika (NT), Mr John McQuilten (Vic), Mr Dennis Mutton (SA), Ms Vicki-Jo Russell AM (SA), Ms Sharon Starick (SA), Mr Andrew Stewart (Vic) and Mr James Walch.

## Queensland Landcare Conference

Some 230 people attended the 2010 Queensland Landcare conference to help 'Celebrate 21 years of Landcare' over the 3 day event held in Caloundra from 15 – 17 September. There were lots of theories, practices and stories shared throughout the event which began with 4 field trips throughout the beautiful Sunshine Coast region followed by a welcome reception held in the grounds of the lovely Rydges Oasis resort. The next two days were full of presenters, sharing their latest research, practices and local success stories. A diverse range of topics were addressed offering opportunity for healthy debate and discussion among delegates and presenters.



Professor Ian Lowe presentation about Landcare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Keynote presentations over the two days were a highlight of the program. Keynote addresses included Jock Douglas, one of the key drivers behind the establishment of the Landcare movement in Queensland; The Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley AO and Hon Stephen Robertson, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy spoke to delegates and Professor Ian Lowe left delegates with some take home thoughts about Landcare in the 21st century.

## New Landcare Grants Announced in QLD

At the Queensland Landcare conference Minister Robertson announced \$150 000 for new **Queensland Landcare Grants 2011**. Grants of up to \$5000 (excluding GST) are available to Landcare groups throughout Queensland including those in metropolitan, provincial and remote areas. Landcare groups working in partnership with other like-minded organisations may consider applying jointly. Grants of up to \$10,000 (excluding GST) will be considered for projects that are a genuine collaboration between two or more organisations. The grants will help Landcare groups develop small projects that manage or protect natural resources; and/or encourage Queenslanders to become involved in looking after these resources. Core, on-ground natural resource management (NRM) projects will be the focus. Grants are for project completion within six months only. Applications close Friday 12 November 2010. For more information go to <http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/funding/index.html>

**Queensland Natural Resources Awareness Grants 2011-** In addition to the Queensland Landcare grants, the Queensland Government has also announced the Natural Resource Awareness Grants 2011. Grants of up to \$5000 (excluding GST) are available to community natural resource management groups for the development of small projects that promote the importance of natural resources. Grants of up to \$10 000 will be considered where projects are a genuine collaboration between two or more organisations. The 2011 grant theme is 'Celebrating the contribution of youth and volunteers in natural resource management'. For more information go to: [http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/funding/nr\\_awareness\\_grants/index.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/funding/nr_awareness_grants/index.html)

## Focus Story on Landcare Groups

**What Landcare Groups Are Doing In The Northern Rivers For Carbon and Sustainable Farming:** The Richmond Landcare Network (RLN) includes more than 90 members groups in the Northern Rivers Catchments of NSW representing approximately 3000 individuals and family members and is a great example of the diversity and innovation within the Landcare movement with rural, peri-urban and urban activities. Agriculture and horticulture are still significant industries in the northern rivers area and these

remain a significant focus within the RLN. Since 2007, the RLN has received grants totaling \$400, 000 from the Federal Government's "Caring for our Country" program and the Northern Rivers CMA for the study and development of sustainable farming practices using "biochar".

One of the Landcare groups in the network, Soilcare Inc., is unique in Australia, focused on improving soils for sustainable farming and has a membership of 163 mainly farming families. Together with this farmer based Landcare group, members' commercial properties have been chosen for "biochar" trials in the following crops: avocado, coffee, corn, dry land rice, macadamia, pasture and sugar. A partnership was developed with Industry & Investment NSW, whereby all trials are supervised by soils scientific staff at their Wollongbar laboratories.

Richmond Landcare and others have lobbied Ballina Shire Council to build an EPA approved pyrolysis plant at their landfill site to process organic waste into "biochar" and electricity generation. Recently Council has agreed to take this project to the next stage, being the first Council in NSW to do so. Outside of the "biochar" project, Soilcare are holding several biological farming courses through TAFE NSW and funded by an Australian Government's Caring for our Country grant and the Northern Rivers CMA. On November 6, Soilcare will be hosting their annual Soilcare Expo at Wollongbar, with guest speaker Dr. Paul Hepperly from USA. Dr. Hepperly is an internationally recognized expert on soil carbon, composting and soil biology. After the Expo, Soilcare and Richmond Landcare are also organising Paul to conduct workshops at Grafton, Wollongbar, Casino and Tweed Heads, entitled "Regenerating Our Soils". Richmond Landcare has a dedicated sustainable farming officer on its committee and also is a participant in the North Coast Regional Landcare Network, which was successful in hosting the Regional Landcare Facilitator for the region. Richmond Landcare Network contacts:

**Biochar Project** - The project funded through Caring for our Country is testing contrasting biochars in mixed cropping, sugarcane, non-irrigated rice, and horticultural crops such as macadamias and coffee. Feedstock's which have been tested include animal manures, biosolids, greenwaste, forestry and agricultural crop wastes. It manages over 300 long-term test plots, which are used for both farmer demonstration (and extension activities), as well as intensive scientific evaluation. A cereal- legume rotation was established at Wollongbar in 2007 to test the impact of biochars derived from poultry litter and papermill wastes, comparing these to standard farmer practice, which includes annual application of fertiliser (urea 400kg/ha, single super 300kg/ha, muriate of potash 140kg/ha).



These replicated trials have shown biometrically significant increases in productivity due principally to changes in soil chemistry. Analysis has shown a reduction in soil acidity, and an increase in soil N, P, CEC and C. These changes in soil chemistry were sustained over the experimental period, reflected by the sustained improvement in yield in the biochar treated plots. An agro-economic assessment based on a gross margin analysis (Van Zwieten et al., 2010a) has shown that these biochars had values exceeding \$300/t. It should however be noted that in glasshouse studies, some biochars resulted in negative crop responses, possibly due to the temporary reduction in plant available N. This effect was not evident however for all soil types. Work is continuing both in the glasshouse and in the field to investigate the characteristics of biochar which impact on soil properties and plant productivity.

Also in glasshouse studies, the application of biochars derived from wood waste, poultry litter, biosolids and papermill wastes were shown to reduce the emissions of the potent greenhouse gas nitrous oxide from soil (Van Zwieten et al., 2010c). It was hypothesised that the biochar modified the availability of N in the soil, and possibly resulted in reduced denitrification when soil was flooded. This phenomenon will be studied in more detail as part of a DAFF funded biochar project administered by the CSIRO. Here, automated chambers will be deployed in the field for extended periods to test the impacts of biochar on nitrous oxide and methane flux. (Richmond Landcare contacts Ph: 02 6619 1582 email: [info@richmondlandcare.org](mailto:info@richmondlandcare.org) ([www.richmondlandcare.org](http://www.richmondlandcare.org)) Soilcare contacts Ph: 0408 359429 email; [info@soilcare.org](mailto:info@soilcare.org) ([www.soilcare.org](http://www.soilcare.org)). )

***If you are part of the broader Landcare movement and would like to have your work highlighted, please send a short article to me at [brett.dehayr@nrm.gov.au](mailto:brett.dehayr@nrm.gov.au)***

## Landcare Knowledge Archive

In September, the National Landcare Facilitator and Landcare Australia started the public call for information from those involved in the broader Landcare movement (groups, individuals, care and productivity groups, regional bodies etc) for PDF copies of publications that they have produced since the inception of Landcare, so that they could be made available to everyone on-line in the "Landcare Knowledge Archive". Some examples of the topics covered so far include soil carbon, history of Landcare, Landcare internationally, group planning, flora and fauna guides, conservation tillage, revegetation, agro-forestry and wetlands management. Topics can be searched by key words or also by location to see what has been happening across the country. The aim is not for this to be purely an historical record, but a knowledge base that is built on and added to as new material is produced.

So far we have had a great response with nearly 100 items received and being gradually loaded onto the Knowledge Archive. However, for this initiative to reach its true potential as a resource for the Landcare movement and to preserve some of the great publications that have been generated, we need your help. So if you are, or have been involved with the production of a publication which you consider should be available on the Landcare Knowledge archive, then send a pdf copy to the National Landcare Facilitator on [landcarearchive@nrm.gov.au](mailto:landcarearchive@nrm.gov.au). To visit the Landcare Knowledge Archive go to the resources section at [www.landcareonline.com.au](http://www.landcareonline.com.au).

## Junior Landcare

**:Westpac is helping students develop leadership skills through local environmental projects** - Your school can apply by 10th December, Friday For more information or to apply visit: [juniorlandcare.com.au](http://juniorlandcare.com.au). Grants of \$1,500 are available for schools to help students build their sustainability leadership through a project to improve their school or local community environment. Schools seeking to develop environmental leadership skills for Year 5 and 6 students are encouraged to apply. For more information or to apply visit <http://www.juniorlandcare.com.au>

**:Junior Landcare Sunflower Challenge** - For those who have little people in their lives, or those that do, you might be interested in this - its aimed at kids under 16 and they can take part in the challenge by competing to grow the tallest sunflower, the sunflower with the largest head or take the most creative sunflower photo. You can register on the Yates Junior Landcare Sunflower Challenge website ([www.juniorlandcarechallenge.com.au](http://www.juniorlandcarechallenge.com.au)) to receive your free giant sunflower seeds which you can plant in late October or early November and monitor your progress over the spring and summer months. You can grow your sunflowers at home or at school and will need to care for your plants during the hot summer weather. You are also required to log onto the Yates Junior Landcare Sunflower Challenge website once your flower has reached maturity to update the size of their giant sunflower and upload a photograph. The final winners will be announced in March 2011. This is a great initiative aimed at getting kids interested in their environment and where their food comes from. Registrations close 22nd October

## News

**Fire Weed Research** - Fire weed was introduced to the Hunter Valley from South Africa around 1918 and has spread north and south in coastal New South Wales and southern Queensland and is now invading pastures on the Monaro and Northern Tablelands of New South Wales, with significant impacts on productivity and the environment. It is responsible for illness, slow growth and poor conditioning in cattle and can result in death. Recently the Parliamentary secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Mike Kelly, said that the government has entered into a two-year contract with the University of New England to report on existing knowledge, undertake new on-ground research into fireweed ecology and gather data for the consideration of fireweed as a Weed of National Significance. Landcare and community groups such as the Bega Valley Fireweed Association, industry groups such as Meat and Livestock Australia, local beef and dairy associations and state agriculture departments will be invited to work with the University of New England as key stakeholders. The University of New England will also work with the CSIRO to investigate potential biological control agents in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

**Parliamentary inquiry into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan** - The Minister for Regional Australia, Simon Crean, the Minister for Water, Tony Burke and the Minister for Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, have announced that the Parliamentary committee for Regional Australia to conduct an inquiry into the impact of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The inquiry is set to examine the impact of the Murray Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA)

Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan on regional communities. It is likely to have a strong focus on understanding the human impact of any proposed changes. The Government is developing the terms of reference for the inquiry in consultation with the prospective chair of the Regional committee, Independent MP Tony Windsor. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig, said given the significance of agricultural production to regional Australia this inquiry will provide farming communities along the Basin with an opportunity to have their say. Some of the key issues that could be addressed include actual water usage levels, ways to increase water efficiency and mechanisms for delivering sustainable outcomes. The inquiry could hold discussions with local government, Regional Development Australia, Landcare groups, catchment management authorities, community and farming groups as well as individual stakeholders.

**National NRM Regions Working Group Landcare Statement** (September 2010) -The National NRM Regions Working Group (NNRWG) is a collegiate leadership group of the Chairs of Australia's 56 regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations. These organisations are a mix of State statutory bodies and not-for profit community groups whose 56 strategic natural resource management plans cover the whole of Australia. The NNRWG identified the need for a statement that recognises the important role of Landcare groups and other community-based groups in NRM and how regional NRM organisations collaborate with these groups. As well as the known and respected Landcare groups with the official caring hands brand, the term Landcare as used in this statement means all community groups who volunteer to restore and protect land water and biodiversity assets.. Our definition includes "bushcare", "coastcare", "friends of ", "agroforestry", and "agribusiness" groups.

We recognise that the level and nature of support for Landcare varies between regions (for example on coordinator employment and group funding) and this reflects the different NRM challenges and Landcare arrangements within regions. For example, the extent to which private land is managed by commercial farmers, and part-time farmers, the latter being more prevalent near large urban centres. Across Australia, Regional NRM organisations work closely with Landcare in planning and enabling the delivery of works on ground. Landcare, Landcare groups and individuals contribute to the collective achievement of regional NRM objectives.

The NNRWG recognises the frustrations felt by the community regarding changes to government funding for Landcare. We have continued to raise these concerns with the Australian Government and in our own States and Territories in support of the essential contribution made by Landcare to natural resource management. The NNRWG regard Landcare and all equivalent volunteer groups, land owners and land managers within their regions as essential partners in the delivery of NRM investments on private and public land. Their efforts help; secure long-term attitudinal changes in communities, building social capital, and invoking sustainable behaviour in production and consumption; Leverage (for every \$1 invested at least \$3 in value contributed) government investment with labour and land for conservation, and their work has flow-on benefits in regional economies.

The National NRM Regions Working Group will continue to promote the need for support of Landcare and equivalent volunteer groups and for improved investment in maintaining and sustaining group dynamics and building skills and knowledge as an essential investment in its own right.

**Multiparty climate change committee holds first meeting:**

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/en/media/whats-new/climate-change-committee-first-meeting.aspx>

## What's On Around the Country

**An introduction to Pasture Cropping Information Day: Victoria - Friday 22nd October**, Colin Seis, the pioneer of the Pasture Cropping Technique, will be on hand to explain the necessary steps required for successful Pasture Cropping. He will also explain the advantages of this technique and what it can achieve. After lunch, time will be spent at the Pasture Cropping trial site to discuss the practical issues of Pasture Cropping and answer any questions that you may have about the technique. A demonstration of Agrowplow machinery will also take place. Steers' woolshed "Clear Creek", 377 Nagambie Road, Avenel. Contact: Jacci Campbell, 5828 9274 or [office@campbellfarms.com.au](mailto:office@campbellfarms.com.au)

**SoilCare Expo - November 6, Wollongbar NSW** - A range of exhibitors and two presentations by Dr Paul Hepperly is an internationally recognized and featured speaker on soil carbon, composting, soil biology, and the capacity of mycorrhizae & carbon sequestration to address climate change. He has worked with farmers around the world to solve critical agricultural sustainability issues. for more information see [www.soilcare.org](http://www.soilcare.org)

**SoilCare Workshop - Northern Rivers NSW** - If you are interested in biological farming or just thinking about improving soil health on your farm, don't miss this great opportunity to attend one of the SoilCare/TAFE - 'Regenerating Our Soils' 2-day FarmReady approved workshops. Meet guest presenter Dr Paul Hepperly, an internationally recognized speaker on soil health, soil biology, carbon sequestration, composting and organic vs conventional farming system trials. For more information go to the SoilCare website at [www.soilcare.org](http://www.soilcare.org)

**Wetland Tender – Strathbogie Ranges'**: The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority together with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Landcare is implementing a Wetland Tender project that recognises the high value of wetlands (spring soaks and bogs) in the Strathbogie Ranges. Wetland Tender recognises that assisting landowners in working towards healthy and productive landscapes requires financial support. Landholders will be able to competitively tender for funding to manage wetlands on their property. The Tender aims to assist landowners in the management of wetlands (spring soaks and bogs) in the ranges by providing a payment to carry out management actions that are agreed to by the landowner and the Goulburn Broken CMA in a written management plan. For more information contact Jenny Wilson at the Goulburn Broken CMA on 0459 023 690 or [jennyw@gbcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:jennyw@gbcma.vic.gov.au)

**National Indigenous Land and Sea Management Conference -Leading Sustainable Traditions, 2 to 5 November 2010, Broken Hill:** for more information go to <http://www.caringforcountry.com/public/?p=17>

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To sign up for the Landcare Australia Ltd Landcare online newsletter go to <http://eepurl.com/ZsEw>

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