



NORTH EAST
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Landcare volunteers give, give, give to environment and economy

Landcare groups and members have contributed an estimated \$60 million in value to resource management in the North East Region over the last two decades.

Members of Landcare groups in the Region also use less irrigated water per hectare, are twice as likely to be a member of an industry group and are more likely to have undertaken stream stabilising works.

Recent assessments of Landcare in North East Victoria show that the voluntary movement is a major contributor to the economy as well as the environment, according to the North East Catchment Management Authority,

North East CMA Landcare Team Leader, Tom Croft, said there is plenty to celebrate in the 20th Anniversary year of the movement.

“2006 is a milestone year for Landcare in Australia. In our Region, Landcare members have given a significant amount of their time, energy and money over the last two decades,” he said.

Mr Croft said North East Landcare Groups and Networks have directly gained around \$10 million in funding from the Commonwealth and State Government since 1986.

“It is estimated that the average matching contribution from landholders and groups is around 5:1 of cash and in-kind to funding received. This means that Landcare has been responsible for contributing about \$60 million value to resource management in the region in 20 years.”

As with any voluntary movement, Landcare groups face highs and lows but the movement in the North East is predominantly healthy, according to Mr Croft.

“There is strong support from long-term participants and new people are joining, especially around urban areas. Five new Landcare groups and sub-groups have formed in the Region over the last three years and membership is increasing.”

The five newest Landcare groups reflect the diversity of the Region. Since 2003, groups have formed at Buffalo/Merriang in the Buffalo River Catchment, Falls Creek and Dinner Plain groups are now operational in Summer, and Felltimber is a peri-urban group in Wodonga. The NE Ecological Farmers are the most recent group to join Landcare.

Mr Croft said the forthcoming North East Regional Awards were an ideal way to celebrate the spirit of those who volunteer through Landcare.

“ The Awards recognise the achievements of individuals, groups and agencies across a range of categories, including river health, nature conservation, indigenous landcare and sustainable agriculture. They are free to enter and do not demand huge amounts of paperwork from those completing nominations.”

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Mr Croft said that, to date, over 880 years of active service to Landcare has been recognised through the Awards.

“ In this special anniversary year, we’re encouraging people to begin planning for their entries as soon as possible, ” he concluded. Closing date for entries is June 30th.

For further information, entry forms or to arrange an interview/photograph with members of Landcare groups in the North East, please contact:

Tom Croft at the North East CMA Tel: **02 6024 9107** or email: tom.croft@necma.vic.gov.au .

Further information on Landcare or the Awards is available at <http://northeast.landcarevic.net.au>

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Landcare – some key stats:

- There are over 700 groups in Victoria, and around 4000 across Australia.
- There are more than 50 Landcare Groups and Networks in the North East, with around 3000 members in 2006.
- So far in 2005/06, the North East CMA Landcare Coordinators and Landcare Groups in the North East have run more than 50 events and activities involving some 1400 participants.
- While the first official Landcare groups in the North East formed in 1988, there were community groups such as Farm Tree, Catchment and Soil Conservation Groups operating prior to 1986, which took on the broader roles of Landcare.
- The last Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that the North East had the highest rate of Landcare membership among farmers in the state (48.5%).
- The 2004 North East Landholder survey found some significant management differences between Landcare member farmers and non-members between 2000 and 2004. These included:
 - Landcare members were more than twice as likely to also be a member of an industry group
 - Landcare farmers were more likely to have fenced their land according to land class
 - Landcare farmers were more likely to have established or renovated perennial pastures
 - Landcare farmers who irrigated used less water per hectare on average
 - Landcare farmers who irrigated were twice as likely to have irrigation reuse schemes
 - Landcare farmers were more likely to have undertaken stream stabilisation works
 - Landcare farmers planted more than 5 times as many trees as non-Landcare farmers.