

grow *west*

A sustainable future for landscapes west of Melbourne



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the current state of play



The striking rural landscapes west of Melbourne must be rescued! A range of environmental problems are currently causing serious damage, including major soil erosion, salinity, and extensive invasions by weeds, rabbits and foxes.

These issues threaten the prosperity of communities both locally and downstream. Ultimately, the degradation of these waterways contributes to the pollution of Port Phillip Bay, one of Victoria's major tourism and recreational centres.

Local landholders can't fix this all alone. The task is too big, too costly and too complex. However the Victorian community can fix the problem by participating in one of the largest and most exciting landscape improvement projects Australia has ever seen...



A sugar gum plantation outcompetes Serrated Tussock.

our plan for the future

The Growling Grass frog, an endangered species of the Bacchus Marsh area.



The Grow West project is turning back the tide of environmental degradation, initially by working in an area of 50,000 hectares of land between Bacchus Marsh and Ballan, straddling the Western Highway and only 60km west of Melbourne.

10,000 hectares are being converted to sustainable landuses tailored to suit each individual site. This is one of the most extensive land restoration programs ever undertaken in Victoria. Projects to date have been completed on both private and public land and range in size from 1 ha to 170 ha. Both farm forestry and revegetation projects have been undertaken. Future projects may include the establishment of saltbush pastures, development of alternative agricultural industries, and the education of small rural landholders in property management.

This major Victorian project offers a unique opportunity for all sectors of the community and government to work together to achieve major environmental change.

Turning the Grow West vision into reality is an exciting project, and its not too late for you to get involved!!!



Good planning is essential.



achievements to date

Achievements on the ground

- > 1685 ha of biodiversity plantings
- > 215 ha of commercial tree plantations
- > 68 ha of land covenanted under Trust for Nature.

Showing Grow West to the world

- > Numerous tours for government agencies, politicians and non-government organisations
- > Area toured by Deputy Secretary, US Dept of Agriculture
- > 25 media articles
- > 35 roadside signs erected at project sites
- > Grow West website in development
- > Inaugural Grow West Art Prize awarded to Janice Webster in 2005
- > Business Plan & Communications Plan published.



The Grow West Implementation Committee.



Education and knowledge

- > 12 workshops held covering pasture management, seed collection, farm forestry and more
- > Numerous tours for school groups, universities and landholders
- > Revegetation booklet and CD in preparation
- > Benchmarking of bird populations in revegetated areas underway
- > Land capability assessment underway
- > 'Planning the Planting' sessions: 130 landholders identify 2300 ha suitable for landscape change
- > Native saltbush grazing trial underway
- > Seed orchard trial sites established.

Developing partnerships

- Productive alliances developed with:
- > Private Sector: Sponsorship arrangements in place with Medibank Private and eTree-Computershare
 - > Public Sector: DSE, DPI, VicRoads, Moorabool Shire, Southern Rural Water, Parks Victoria
 - > Community Sector: Pentland, Rowsley and Coimadaí Landcare Groups, Ballarat Regional Treegrowers, Ballarat Regional Seedbank
 - > Funding sourced from National Landcare Program, Natural Heritage Trust, Commonwealth Games Environment Program and Work for the Dole
 - > Formation of Implementation Committee by the CMA with representatives from community, government, and business sectors
 - > Community consultation sessions attended by 75 participants.



Ornithologist Charles Silveira working on our bird study.

grow west

landholders working together

"The hammer almost rolls down the hill on some of the slopes we have planted". So says Nela Buelter, who with husband Rolf started an indigenous revegetation program on their 33 ha property at Rowsley Valley some six years ago. Previous owners had set the ball rolling, establishing 1000 indigenous plants and cypress hedges to reduce windspeeds.

Nela has greatly benefited from the advice, support, and free trees offered by neighbours Anne and Denis Everard. Local Landcare coordinators have also helped with access to various grants, a Work for the Dole project, and volunteer treeplanting. Through Grow West, Nela and Rolf planted 2000 indigenous trees this year, bringing the total over six years to 8000 and easily beating Nela's target of 500-1000 trees per year. Nela recognizes the many environmental benefits of treeplanting. "After a few years, we started to realize that treeplanting is actually weed control". Together with her ever-growing list of bird species seen on the property, and the recent return of wallabies and koalas, it seems the multiple benefits of revegetation are being enjoyed on the Buelter property.



Nela Buelter checking her 2005 tree planting.



Two years ago Nela and neighbour Denis Everard knocked on the door of newly arrived neighbours Kate Mudford and Mark Ferris to welcome them and introduce them to the challenges of weeds, rabbits and erosion. With loans of equipment and bountiful advice, Kate and Mark were rapidly drawn into the fight against environmental degradation. "Our first tussocks were sprayed before the furniture arrived", says Kate. "So much of what we do depends on the cooperation of our neighbours".

As many landholders in the Rowsley Valley have found, rabbits and weeds respect no boundaries, so working together on such issues is essential to success. Kate and Mark have just completed their first major planting of 3000 trees with the assistance of the Grow West Project, with plans to eventually establish native grasses underneath. They are currently assessing suitable landuse options for the remainder of their erosion-prone property, including the establishment of perennial crops such as olives, and the possibility of grazing alpacas in the longer term.

business and industry benefits

In the current financial year, Grow West will plough some \$1.5 million into the local community through the purchase of a range of goods and services including fencing materials, trees, tree guards, chemicals, fertilisers, and project labour and management.



Education is an important part of our work.



corporate sponsors benefit

Through the eTree scheme, corporations donate \$2 when a shareholder elects to receive company reports electronically. Part of this money is then donated to Grow West, raising over \$100,000 for tree planting over the last two years.

Business & Industry can contribute to the success of Grow West by sponsoring a Grow West site or through provision of competitively priced goods and services.

The benefits to local business and industry include:

- > High public profile of involvement due to the scale and nature of the project
- > Opportunity to build relationships with regional and local community groups
- > Demonstration of commitment to the local community and the environment.

Medibank Private aims to offset paper use in their offices by sponsoring treeplanting through Grow West. Over the past two years Medibank Private has contributed \$28,000 plus the labour of some 90 staff at planting days, resulting in 6,500 trees in the ground.

Particular benefits for our corporate sponsors include:

- > Excellent exposure and visibility of our work, as major interstate road, rail, and air routes bisect the area
- > Proximity to Melbourne, with a high public profile which has attracted significant interest both locally and nationally for its vision, its approach, and its results to date
- > Future development of carbon credit schemes may benefit corporations involved in large scale tree plantings
- > Corporate sponsorship packages are designed to meet the interests and needs of individual companies.



Field days provide a great opportunity for information exchange.

grow west

community groups are involved



Grow West is a huge project with many components, so there is room for many people and organisations to play an active role. We will find a way for your group to make a contribution!!!

We are currently working with the following community and environmental groups to achieve our vision:

- > Rowsley, Pentland Hills and Coimadai Landcare Groups
- > Landcare Australia
- > Greening Australia

Benefits for your group or organisation include:

- > Direct contribution to large scale community works in the Grow West area
- > Development of working partnerships with other groups, government organisations and business participants
- > Increased community awareness and education on practical solutions to environmental issues
- > Our commitment to acknowledge and profile groups involved with Grow West.



government involvement



The Grow West vision actively implements many policies of local, state and federal government departments in the areas of:

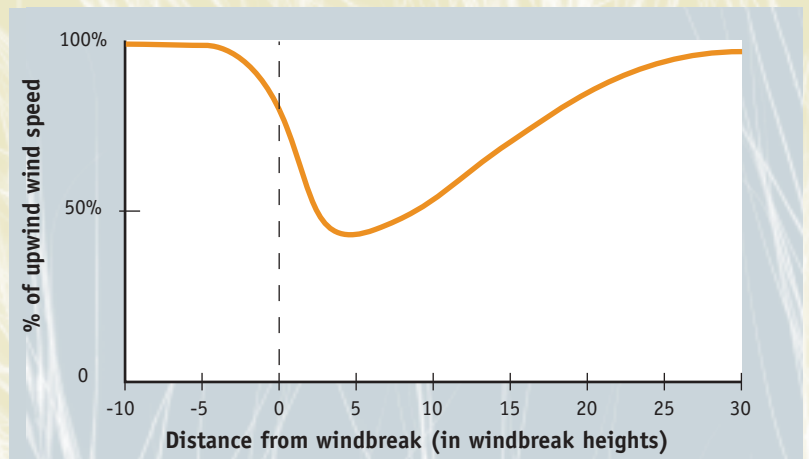
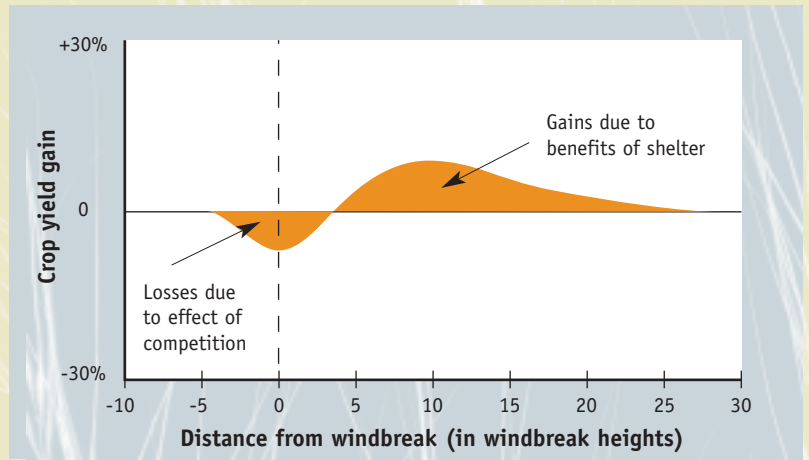
- > Environmental protection
- > Rural economic development
- > Sustainable land management
- > Water quality protection
- > Control of noxious weeds and pest animals
- > Local employment opportunities
- > Development of working partnerships with business and community

Grow West offers all levels of government the opportunity to implement policies in a co-operative way.

Moorabool Shire is actively involved in Grow West through membership on our Implementation Committee and through a significant annual financial contribution. Additionally, in conjunction with Medibank Private, Moorabool Shire have undertaken the revegetation of 4 ha at Hillview Reserve in Bacchus Marsh.



economic benefits

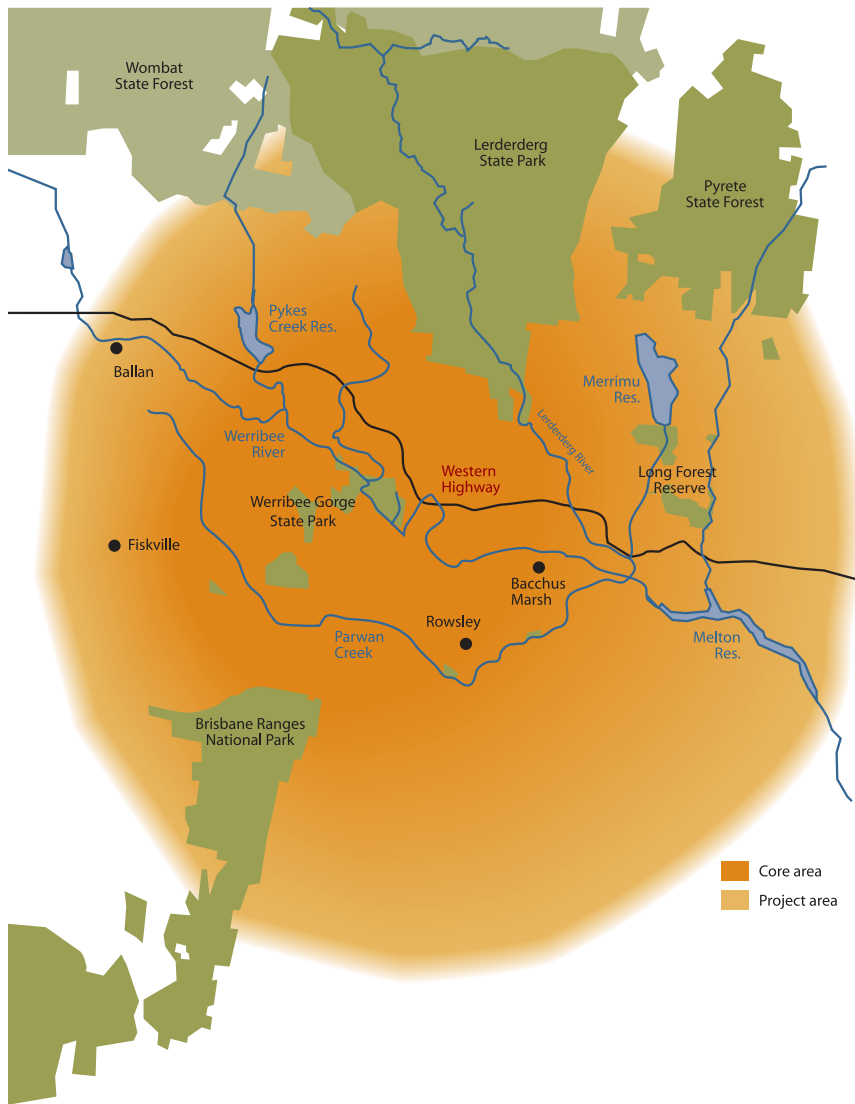


Well designed windbreaks can significantly reduce windspeeds and increase crop yields.

- > Properties which are heavily infested with serrated tussock and other declared weeds sell for significantly less than similar weed-free properties. Tree planting greatly reduces serrated tussock infestations. ⁱ
- > Research in South-Western Victoria found a 50% reduction in lambing losses where shelter was provided. ⁱⁱ
- > Increased yields of 25-45% can be achieved in crops of wheat, lupins and oats when shelter is provided. ⁱⁱⁱ
- > Areas of indigenous vegetation provide habitat for native birds and insects, which in turn feed on various insect pests of pastures, including pasture scarabs and wingless grasshoppers. ^{iv}



Farm forestry provides economic benefits to the landholder, and environmental benefits to the entire community.



Grow West contacts

General enquiries:
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¹ Incentives for Sustainable Land Management: Community Cost Sharing to Conserve Biodiversity on Private Lands, a Guide for Local Government. Environment Australia, Biodiversity Group. Revised Ed. 2001.

² Bird, 1981. Dengate, 1983.

³ Fitzpatrick, 1984.

⁴ Bird, P.R. Farm Forestry in Southern Australia: a focus on clearwood production of specialty timbers. DNRE, 2000.

⁵ Reproduced from Abel, N. et al, (1997) "Design Principles for Farm Forestry", RIRDC. Funded with assistance from Joint Venture Agroforestry Program.

