



**GOULBURN  
BROKEN**

CATCHMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITY



# Working for Victoria (WfV)

**November 2020 – June 2021**

Delivering on key Natural Resource Management activities  
within the Goulburn Broken catchment

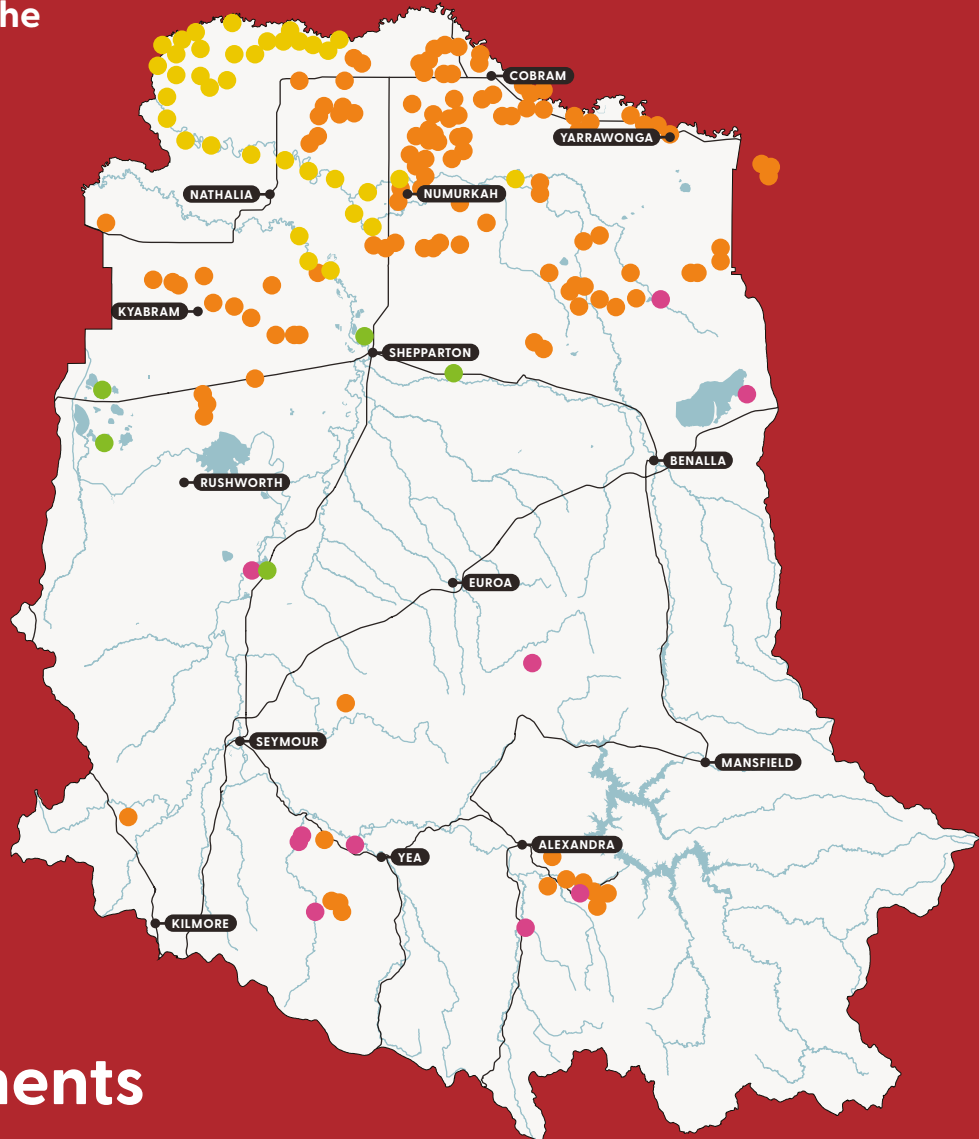
Providing employment opportunities for  
regional workers impacted by COVID-19

**Working  
for Victoria**



## Activities across the Goulburn Broken catchment

- Vegetation works
- Rubbish removal
- Weed control
- Fencing



## Achievements

<b>41</b> People employed	<b>32</b> Full-time equivalents employed for 29 weeks	<b>21,620</b> Hours worked
<b>32%</b> Female crew members	<b>113 kg</b> Seeds collected	<b>16,000</b> Trees propagated
<b>7.9 km</b> Fencing	<b>13.7 ha</b> Vative vegetation planted	<b>170 ha</b> Area where rogue fruit trees have been removed
<b>Over 200 m<sup>2</sup></b> Rubbish removed across 3,493 ha of public v		<b>Training in</b> First Aid Industry White Card ACUP Chainsaw use Traffic Control

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# Highlights

Below is a list of some of the highlights from the Working for Victoria program compiled from responses from the Crew members, Programmed Skilled Workforce (Labour Hire supplier) and Goulburn Broken CMA staff.

- Getting things done that would otherwise not have been done.
- Working outdoors and improving the environment.
- Seeing the personal development of the crew members, develop new skills, training and qualifications, confidence, leadership skills and self-esteem.
- CMA Staff getting a buzz from teaching the crew members.
- The gender balance within the program.
- Work was done locally, and we had ownership of the achievements.
- 100% of crew members showed interest in improving the environment (genuine passion).
- Meaningful work, therefore, crew members wanted to get the work done.
- Greater appreciation of what the CMA does and acknowledgment that the environment needs support.
- Connecting CMA with the community.
- The friendship and support developed between crew members. Close knit teams.
- Crew members happy to be used for promotion of the program and complimentary on the work they were doing.
- Readiness for future employment.
- The programs willingness to deal with issues adaptively.
- A coordinated effort to share. The Partnership approach of the employment model between the GB CMA, Programmed Skilled Workforce and other agencies.
- What we were able to achieve in a Covid world!



# Message from the CEO



## **Chris Cumming**

CEO, Goulburn  
Broken Catchment  
Management Authority

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA) had the privilege of being able to deliver the Working for Victoria (WfV) program, to provide employment and training opportunities to local people impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The program was extremely successful in achieving increased employment activity with 41 local people employed throughout the program to exceed the initial target of 25 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions by delivering an incredible 32 FTE.

It is also very pleasing that the program was also able to deliver significant natural resource management works across the Goulburn Broken catchment, specifically focusing on four main work activities of:

- Riparian Fence Maintenance
- Native Seed Collection, Propagation and Targeted Revegetation
- Wild Fruit Tree removal
- Rubbish Removal from State and National Parks

WfV crew members contributed over 21,600 hours to natural resource management works, including the propagation of around 16,000 native plants and removing over 200m<sup>3</sup> of rubbish that had been dumped within our regional, state and national parks. The works have greatly benefitted the environment and communities throughout the Goulburn Broken catchment.

The Victorian government's Working for Victoria Fund provided \$1.45M to the GB CMA via the Agricultural Workforce program (\$0.91M) and the Jobs to Deliver Positive Environmental Outcomes in Victoria's Catchments Program (\$0.54M). This is a considerable amount of money available to support the people employed directly through the program, and also redistributed into the regional economy.

We at the GB CMA would like to acknowledge the efforts of the organisations that helped us achieve the considerable economic, environmental and social gains provided by the WfV program. Special thanks must go to Programmed Skilled Workforce, Parks Victoria, Goulburn Broken Seed bank & Euroa Arboretum, Goulburn-Murray Water, Moira Shire, the GMV Regional Fruit Fly Project, and the Greater Shepparton City Council.

However, we really must say a very special thank you to the 41 GB CMA Working for Victoria team leaders and crew members for their dedication, enthusiasm, passion and efforts. You have been a credit to the region and have represented yourselves and the CMA well. We hope you maintain your connection to the natural environment, and we wish you all the best for the future.



## Responding to COVID-19

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had a significant impact on Victorian communities with many people finding themselves unable to return to their pre-COVID employment. The uncertainty and economic impacts place considerable stress on individuals and their families, as well as the regional communities.

The Victorian Government's \$500 million Working for Victoria Fund, helps people who are unemployed or have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic find new opportunities.

The GB CMA has a strong history of implementing employment programs to assist communities' transition through difficult times such as drought and the fruit industry turnaround. The GB CMA 'Working for Victoria' project again provided employment opportunities for crew members to gain experience working on key natural resource management projects across the Goulburn Broken catchment while also receiving targeted training and developing new skills.

## The WfV Crew Members

90 applications were received for the GB CMA WfV program, with 41 successful to participate. Initial funding was for 25 FTE over a six-month period, however with a slow start with recruitment and a steady turnover of crew members, the program allowed for additional people to be employed.

One thing that was noticeable compared to the GB CMA's previous employment programs was the high diversity of crew members. There was a much greater range of ages, ethnic backgrounds and education levels, and a relatively even gender balance compared to past programs.

The crew members were initially placed into five teams of up to five across the catchment. Each team had a Team Leader and up to four crew members. A sixth team was created in mid-April 2021. Each team was able to participate in all work activities to provide variety, experience and skills in the range of natural resource management works the GB CMA is facilitating across its catchment.



## Some Individual Stories



### Robert King-Tongal

Tongala's Robert King had recently retired from the CFA after 20 years when he found himself looking for a new challenge.

His timing wasn't great because work opportunities were drying up in central Victoria as businesses closed due to Coronavirus (COVID-19).

"Then this (Working for Victoria) opportunity came up and it sounded perfect, so I went for it," Mr King said.

His crew was assigned the task of clearing rubbish along rivers, creeks and other public spaces.

"We've been working on the Broken Creek system and it's amazing how much rubbish is there.

"People just don't like putting rubbish in the bins. It just blows around everywhere and gets into the waterways and kills fish.

"It feels good to help get that back on even par with nature."

Mr King, who was appointed as a team leader, said he enjoyed the role and had developed a strong camaraderie in his small group.

"We get along great. We are all committed to the environment and to looking after it for our kids."



### Shane Jackson

Shane Jackson was looking for a sign to tell him which way he should jump when he was urged to apply for the Working for Victoria program.

"I was recovering from a health issue and I thought the program would be a great opportunity to get outside. It was one of my better decisions and I haven't regretted it once," Mr Jackson said.

"I don't want to sound over-the-top, but I have literally loved every second of it. The people I've worked with have been fantastic.

His team has mostly worked to clear rubbish from creeks, rivers and public spaces in the catchment.

"It's been very rewarding to know we're doing something positive for the environment and in a nutshell, it's been my favourite job I've ever had in my life."

The former butcher said his time with the program had solidified where he'd like to take his career in the future.

"I've worked inside my whole life, but I've discovered that I like working outside and feeling the sun on my face."

Mr Jackson said the program had run smoothly after some minor glitches at the start.

"I feel looked after and I appreciate that. It just makes you want to get out of bed and come to work every day."



## Hannah Botta

In 2020 Agriculture Science graduate Hannah Botta was supposed to be in Western Australia completing a Carbon Farming placement as part of her final year.

“And then Coronavirus (COVID-19) hit and all my plans went out the window,” Ms Botta said.

The 23-year-old had been working with the Euroa Arboretum when she was alerted to the Working for Victoria program.

“I applied and was successful, which was great because it meant I could continue working with the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seed Bank.”

Her crew harvested seeds from native plants right across the Goulburn Broken catchment.

“We’ve been going around different regions of the catchment from Benalla to Seymour and across from Yea to Rushworth,” she said.

“We then take the seed back to the Seed Bank in Euroa where we clean and process it before it’s propagated into plants.

“It’s been so interesting. Awesome really. I’ve loved it. Everyone in the team has loved it.”

As team-leader, she said it had been rewarding to watch people develop new skills.

“We spend most of the week in the bush and on road-sides and it’s amazing how quickly you get to know the plants.”

She said she believed the work her team undertook would have meaningful outcomes .

“Being able to harvest seed to be spread around the catchment and create habitat belts will go a long way to safeguarding the genetic future of the region.”



## Hannah Burke

Cobram’s Hannah Burke was nearing the end of her studies in Environmental Science when Coronavirus (COVID-19) struck last year.

“I was already starting to keep an eye out for jobs when I came across the Working for Victoria ad,” Ms Burke said.

The 23-year-old was working part-time at a hardware store when she applied for the program.

“It made me realise that I really wanted to be outside and working in nature.”

She was admitted to the program and promptly appointed to a team-leader role.

“I’m young, I suppose, to be a supervisor, but it has been a great experience because I’ve been able to develop my leadership skills and be responsible for what gets achieved at the end of the day,” Ms Burke said.

Her crew had been involved in woody weed and rubbish removal.

“It’s been excellent because we did the jobs that need doing but hadn’t been done due to a lack of time and money.

“We’ve been able to support different organisations and do the jobs they just can’t get to.”

She said the program helped cement the direction she’d like to take her career.

“I was training to be become a park ranger but my work in the program has shown me that role involves a lot of people management.

“But I’ve really loved the field work and that’s where I’d like to concentrate in the future.”





## Robert Cook

A good experience with a previous work program motivated Seymour's Robert Cook to apply for the Working for Victoria program.

"I'd done work with the CMA before through Revegetation Victoria and it gave me a passion to look after our bushland and waterways," Mr Cook said.

This time his crew was involved with the removal of Willow trees and Blackberry bushes from riparian zones.

"I've also done quite a lot of fencing, which is hard work but very good for my fitness," he laughed.

He said it was rewarding to visit some of the areas in the catchment where he had previously been involved in replanting projects.

"It's just so great to see the native vegetation that we planted years ago is now established along the creek lines."

Mr. Cook said he was made aware of the program when his partner saw an ad calling for applicants.

"My partner knew I would be keen because I had often spoken about how much I enjoyed working under the GB CMA with Revegetation Victoria.

"It came up at the right time. I was looking for a change and it's been well worth it."

He said he would pursue a similar type of work when the program concluded.

"I don't want to go back to being in a factory. I now know I really enjoy working outdoors."

The grandfather said he took pride in the work he knew to be improving the environment for generations to come.

"It's really good to see that what we're doing his having a positive impact for my two grand-kids."



## Michael Hawley

Michael Hawley was working as a chef in a busy Melbourne restaurant when Coronavirus (COVID-19) struck and the restaurant shut its doors.

He stayed working at the restaurant while it continued to prepare food for takeaway but a cut in hours meant it wasn't worth the long commute .

"I found out about the program through Jobs Victoria and I've really enjoyed the work we did," Mr Hawley said.

Having grown up in Canada, the 19-year-old said one of the best elements of the role was his number of up-close-and-personal encounters with Australian wildlife.

"As I was riding my motorbike one day, I came across a huge mob of kangaroos. I often see wallabies and echidnas too. It's a real thrill," he said.

As part of the Yea crew, he'd developed a number of new skills and qualifications and was unsure about returning to the kitchen.

"This has opened my eyes. I like cooking but I now know I like working out in nature as well.

"I love the Australian landscape. Much flatter and open than what I'm used to. But very beautiful."



## Joanna Beard

Joanna Beard was the youngest participant in the program, fresh from school, the 18-year-old planned a working gap year before starting university in 2021.

“Best laid plans,” she laughed.

Instead she applied for the Working for Victoria program and was assigned to the seed bank team working out of Euroa.

“It’s great because we get to see each stage of the process which involves the collecting, the cleaning and the picking out,” Ms Beard said.

“It’s been a good opportunity to learn and be outdoors on the land. That’s been the best part for me.”

She planned to commence a journalism degree in 2021 and hoped to report on environmental issues.

“I just wanted to gain a better ecological understanding of the bush and I thought this would be a good way of doing it.

“I had learnt about some elements and understood it theoretically, but it’s been really enjoyable to have a hands-on approach.”

## Where are they now?

It is very pleasing that most of the crew members have moved on to some form of employment or further studies/training. Several of the crew members have indicated that they will be looking at future employment in the environmental field, either undertaking further studies, employment with land managed services, starting their own landscaping business or field work.

Other pathways the crew members have indicated that they will follow are:

- Nursing
- Retail
- Customer service
- Store person
- Factory work
- Sound and lighting production company
- Construction
- Semi-retirement



# NRM Activities Delivered

## Riparian Fencing Maintenance

The capacity of riparian land to provide a wide range of values relies upon its condition, particularly the width, connectivity, and the quality, quantity and structure of the vegetation present. The major threats to riparian land are those that affect one or more of these key attributes. One threat to the condition of riparian land is uncontrolled stock access to riparian land and the bed and banks of waterways. Stock can contaminate water and erode the banks by trampling (Victorian Waterway Management Strategy 2013).

A priority action under the Goulburn Broken Waterway Strategy 2014-2022 (GBWS) is to undertake strategic riparian works including fencing to maintain and prove the health and resilience of targeted waterways. Throughout this time and for nearly two preceding decades, the GB CMA has partnered with landholders to construct thousands of kilometres of riparian fences. Over time, many of these have fallen into disrepair, no longer preventing stock access to waterways. The Working for Victoria program provided the means to undertake necessary maintenance works and restore waterway protection from stock.

Over the course of the program, Working for Victoria crews completed 7.9 km of riparian fence maintenance and replacement. The works were undertaken at the following waterways and localities:

- Goulburn River (Ghin Ghin, Thornton)
- King Parrot Creek (Flowerdale, Kerrisdale)
- Acheron River (Taggert)
- Dirty Swamp Creek (Strathbogie)
- Copers Creek (Willowmavin)
- Lake Nagambie lagoon
- Merton Creek (Merton)
- Show Creek (Winton)
- Boosey Creek (Lake Rowan)

Crew members in the Working for Victoria program came from a variety of backgrounds with differing skill sets such as hospitality, natural resource management, logistics and transport, university study and defence just to name a few. Over the course of the program, crew members gained skills in planning and logistics, procurement, teamwork, people management and fence construction including standard seven wire, ring lock and electric fences. Crews repaired and hung gates, and shared their newly acquired skills to with landholders. The GB CMA received a handwritten letter from a grateful landholder to this extent. The letter is transcribed below.

*Dear Sir,*

*The purpose of this letter is for me to express my gratitude to you for the fencing project recently undertaken at my property. The team, led by Robert, consisting of Jo, Jess and Trevor (working for Victoria) and supervised by Collin and Sue (GB CMA), did a great job. They were patient and kind enough to let me assist when I could and I learned a bit!*

*Many thanks and keep up the good work.*

*Kind regards,*

*Landholder at Acheron River, Taggerty*



## Seed Collection and Propagation - Euroa Seed bank and Euroa Arboretum

The revegetation of a diverse range of native indigenous flora is required for many reasons in the Australian landscape. Without a good continuous supply of native seed there is limited opportunity for native plants to be propagated in nurseries or seed available for direct seeding revegetation programs across the Goulburn Broken catchment.

The State Government's 2037 Biodiversity Strategy has a target of 10,000 hectares of revegetation per year across Victoria. The Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy future aim is to increase vegetation on private land to 30%.

The Working for Victoria crew in Euroa began working with the Euroa Seed bank and Euroa Arboretum in November 2020 and completed their employment in June 2021. There were 8 crew members employed through this period. The crew consisted of a range of demographics and skill sets from school leavers to business owners, to unemployed and near retirees.

A unique environment, the Euroa Seed bank and Euroa Arboretum provided a safe, industrious, purposeful and social workplace with many crew members commenting on the importance of social connections after a long period of lockdown in 2020. The social aspect of this work at this time cannot be underestimated. Many crew members said they would continue the work if it was to be funded further. They really enjoyed the work and the company.

Kim Wilson Seed bank coordinator said... 'The crew has been a wonderful asset to the broader community and catchment, their legacy will last on-ground in restoration projects for many years with their seed harvesting and the maintenance they achieved across our seed production sites.'

The output of work was impressive too:

- Seed collected from 79 species
- Seed Collected and cleaned = 113 kgs
- Plants propagated = 16,000
- Flora surveys = 20

Native seed and revegetation projects is in great demand in the northern plains and ranges of Victoria to restore 'Country' and native habitat, for Cultural reasons, such as Traditional Owner foods, medicines, for carbon sequestration and oxygen production, to provide ecosystem services for agriculture and horticulture, to increase populations of threatened flora and fauna species, for repair of land degradation (erosion and salinity), to improve water quality, stabilise ecosystems and soils and for many other beneficial needs of species to survive on this planet.

All this relies on an adequate supply of a genetically healthy native seed supply. Goulburn Broken Seed bank is tasked with coordinating a sustainable seed collection and distribution of species mixes across the Goulburn Broken catchment in Taungurung and Yorta Yorta Country.

The labour requirement for such a task is enormous and often Seed banks are overlooked or under-funded to be sourced adequately to achieve such targets. The dilemma is, that Seed banks and seed collection falls precariously between considered a private enterprise and a public responsibility. The truth is that it needs both these systems to fund such a massive task. If we consider how much physical effort was required by pioneers to clear native vegetation (habitat) across the country, to restore only 30% of that country will require a very large financial and labour investment.



## Fruit Tree Removal

Queensland Fruit Fly attack a range of major crops in the region including pome fruit, stone fruit, tomatoes, berry fruits, cherries, citrus and grapes. With the Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) Horticulture industry equating to \$545 million, the Queensland Fruit Fly has the potential to cause significant economic harm to the horticultural industry. (GMV Fruit Fly Regional Action Plan 2019-20).

The GB CMA Working for Victoria project worked closely with the GMV Regional Fruit Fly Project to improve Queensland Fruit Fly management in the region.

The crews removed countless rogue fruit trees and woody weeds from public land including the road reserves and Goulburn-Murray Water channel reserves across the catchment.

This activity required considerable planning to develop appropriate procedures, including traffic management plans to enable safe removal of the trees and coordination with local government and GMW.

The Working for Victoria crews contributed to the GMV Fruit Fly Regional Action Plan's objective:

- to strengthen fruit fly management through coordination and collaboration between industry, government and community,

This also leads to influencing the plan's key outcome:

- to maintain and improve domestic and international trade of fruit from the GMV.

Working for Victoria crew members received training to obtain their Traffic Controller Certificate which they see will be a useful skill and qualification for future employment opportunities.





## Rubbish removal from State and National Parks project

Dumping of rubbish is becoming a much too frequent occurrence across northern Victoria, especially within the Regional, State and National Parks along the Lower Goulburn River, Murray River and Broken Creek. Communities are becoming frustrated with the blatant disregard by some for these natural environments, which are a main feature attracting visitors to the region.

The Working for Victoria employment crews have covered approximately 3,500 ha of public land, cleaning up over 200 cubic metres of camping refuse, used tyres, general household waste and general refuse that has been illegally dumped.

As a result, the amenity of these areas has been significantly improved. Local communities are appreciative of the work being done as it makes these areas a much more inviting place for locals and tourists to visit.

It is assumed that by improving the amenity of these areas from the removal of the dumped rubbish by the Working for Victoria crews employed by the GB CMA, the region will attract more visitors to enjoy the regions parks and spend their tourist dollars in the local communities, boosting the local economy.

Also, by having the crews out and about in the parks, there is less opportunity for rubbish to be dumped in these areas.

The works were coordinated in partnership with Parks Victoria as the landowner of most sites.

[Link to Video of WfV crew picking up dumped tyres from the Broken Creek at Numurkah](#)



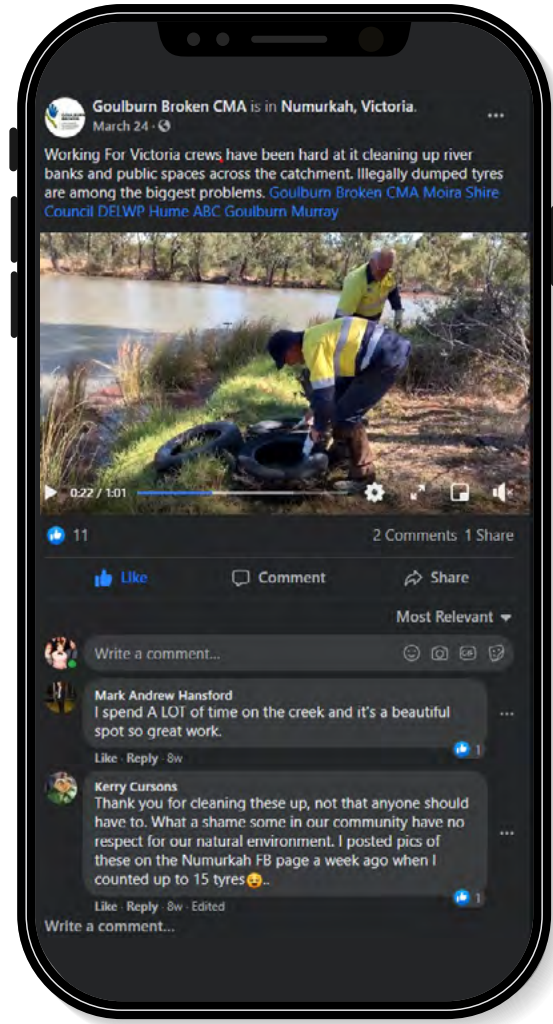


## Other Activities

Additional work activities have also been delivered as part of the Working for Victoria program.

The utilisation of the work crews assisted in the delivery of ongoing GB CMA and partner programs, such as watering of past plantings during the hot summer months, weed control (Blackberries etc) and sandbagging drainage lines at Winton Wetlands.

These provided the crew members with variety of work as well as opportunities to mix with other work teams and get greater value for their time in achieving multiple outcomes while already working at a site.





# Health, Safety and Training

All crew members were inducted into the GB CMA Health and Safety plan processes. In addition to this, the crew members were also inducted to the GB CMA COVID Safe Plan as part of our COVID management.

Where working on public land managed by other Agencies, crew members were inducted into the Agencies OHS processes. For example, Parks Victoria.

All crew members received training in First Aid and Construction Industry white card, and most were provided training in chainsaw use, chemical use (ACUP) and Traffic Management Control.

Each day all crew members were required to sign into the GB CMA contact tracing app and participate in a Take 5 site assessment prior to beginning work. The GB CMA supervisors and program staff conducted regular site visits and process audits on the teams.

Program Skilled Workforce also conducted site visits and on occasion random drug tests.

Crew members were provided with iPads to ensure they were kept up to date with OHS updates (including modifications or restrictions for COVID), for completing the Take 5 assessments and completing Hazard and Incident reports as they arose.

It was great to see that the crew members took the OHS requirements and their safety on site very seriously and we are very proud of how they adapted to the GB CMA systems and ensured a safe workplace.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreements (ACHLMA) notifications were completed to determine if there were any concerns with the types of work and potential impact on cultural heritage sites.



# Reflections



## Greg Laidlaw

### Programmed Skilled Workforce

This project provided an opportunity for us (Programmed), in partnership with the GB CMA, to deliver a quality program with long lasting effects on the people involved and the surrounding environment.

The project highlighted the importance of strong two-way communication and the necessity to address issues as they rise.

Many aspects of business are reliant on the people involved and the planning that goes into achieving strong results or outcomes. The foundation was set early, and the standards didn't diminish over the course of the project.

It was clearly on display the commitment of the GB CMA to the crew members. This was evident in the training provided, that many will be able to carry with them for their future careers.

Programmed were privileged to be the selected provider of labour for the project. Similar to the crew members, it will be a project that the organisation can look back on as a building block for the future.



## James Burkitt

### GBCMA Working for Victoria Project Coordinator

This has been one of the most satisfying projects I have been involved in my time working in NRM.

To see the learning and development of all the people involved in the program, from the crew members, CMA staff, agency partners, Programmed and even myself. We have all gained something special from being involved in the project.

The CMA would not be able to deliver on many of the critical NRM works needed throughout the catchment without the physical labour resources these programs provide. These programs are cost effective and deliver on multiple outcomes that benefit, the community, the environment and the regional economy. It really is a pity that it takes a crisis before there is investment in such fantastically productive and beneficial programs.

I really would like to thank all the people involved in the program, with special mentions to the 20 plus GB CMA staff from all parts of the organisation who adjusted their usual work priorities to be available and support the WfV program. In particular, the delivery program supervisors who went above and beyond to plan and ensure the work crews understood the tasks, had the tools and equipment needed to do the job and kept busy for the term of the program.





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