



A FRUITFUL JOB-PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP



Fruit Industry Employment Program

2013-2014





FRUIT INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (FIEP) BY NUMBERS*

40 participants	39,917 hrs of environmental works	1,093 hrs of accredited training
95% of participants were satisfied with FIEP	100% of appropriate people who wanted a job got one	1,500 ha of weeds controlled
67 km of fence removed, repaired and built	7,500 native seedlings planted	700 nest boxes built or hollows salvaged
52 kg of seed collected and cleaned	15 tonne of rubbish removed	50 km of tracks slashed and cleared

NUMBER OF FIEP PARTICIPANTS IN EACH PARTNER AGENCY



-  Total employed
-  Regularly employed

Note: Some of the 40 participants were shared or moved between partners. Participants were employed for widely varying timespans.

* see page 21 for detailed results

“The existing agency relationships meant the Moira Shire could sign up to the FIEP promptly and with great confidence.”

Gary Deayton, Moira Shire

“Rural people are proud people. They don’t want handouts. They deserve and occasionally need support.”

George Themilis, former fruit grower and FIEP participant

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THE FIEP STORY

CHRIS NORMAN, CEO, GOULBURN BROKEN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (CMA)



SPC Ardmona's April 2013 announcement of major fruit intake cuts was a massive blow to growers who supplied SPC Ardmona, with huge flow-on effects to the regional economy and broader community. Contracts to growers and related businesses are worth more than \$100 million to the local economy.

A rapid response to SPC Ardmona's announcement was needed, and, with the support of Fruit Growers Victoria, the Goulburn Broken CMA conceived the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP).

Goulburn Broken CMA's trusting long-term relationships with partners once again proved critical, with implementation of FIEP starting within six weeks of ministerial approval.

Experiences with drought, flood and fire recovery programs taught the Goulburn Broken CMA that large environmental benefits could be achieved while providing disaster-impacted rural people with timely support and a new focus.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (now known as the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) acted swiftly, making FIEP possible with \$2 million of state government funds. Department of Environment and Primary Industries head office staff then provided strong guidance while letting the CMA do what it does best: drive partnerships for on-ground benefits.

Forty people affected by the reduced fruit intake worked under FIEP, supervised by the Goulburn Broken CMA or its partners: Moira Shire, Greater Shepparton City Council, Parks Victoria, and Goulburn-Murray Water.

The results in this report, including lessons for future programs, are from monthly FIEP steering committee reports and a thorough evaluation of participant and partner organisation experiences.

FIEP participants contributed almost 40,000 hours of environmental works, including 1500 hectares of weed control and 67 kilometres of fencing, while receiving significant income, skills training, and informal social network support.

An added benefit is that participants have become advocates within their social circles for agency approaches to catchment management. Ninety per cent of participants were satisfied that FIEP achieved good results for the environment.

While FIEP experiences and training have enabled many participants to gain employment in alternative sectors or increase their contributions within the fruit industry, it remains concerning that 37 per cent of surveyed participants were still unsure what they would do next.

This report shows how our resilient and skilled rural people can be supported by Goulburn Broken CMA's genuine partnerships to achieve exceptional on-ground results.

Thank you to our FIEP participants, Programmed (FIEP's staff provider), and our regional and head office partner-agency contacts.

Thank you also to Corey Wilson, Goulburn Broken CMA's FIEP Manager, who very capably and diligently ensured FIEP was implemented to a very high standard.

**Chris Norman, CEO
Goulburn Broken CMA**

COMMUNITY REACTIONS



Jenny Houlihan, Councillor, City of Greater Shepparton

This employment program was very beneficial to our community in many ways and helped see us through a tough period when the local fruit industry hit hard times.

Something effective needed to be put in place relatively quickly and this was done with a timely investment by the Victorian Government, through the Goulburn Broken CMA, in partnership with other agencies, including Greater Shepparton City Council.

Not only did this program provide much needed employment, it enabled Council to complete additional works such as weed control (especially Chilean Needle Grass), tree planting and other activities beneficial to the local environment.

The program strengthened local partnerships and cushioned the disadvantage of unemployment for participants, many of whom have now been able to return to orchard work or move on to other industries.

This has been a remarkably successful program and I would like to thank the staff of the Goulburn Broken CMA, the FIEP workers and Council staff for their contribution, especially Paul Dainton for his role as a works supervisor.

John Wilson, General Manager, Fruit Growers Victoria Limited

When SPC Ardmona announced its dramatic reduction in fruit intake in 2013, many growers were caught unawares because they had been expecting their quotas to take a haircut, but instead they were guillotined. Sixty-seven suppliers no longer had a home for their fruit and another sixty had their quotas halved.

The shock was immediate. Some workers were immediately sacked because production had to stop. Bulldozers were brought in and redundant trees were removed where growers could afford it. Others just left their trees untended because they did not have the cash-flow funds for removal.

On the personal level, workers and some orchardists could not see how they were going to keep food on the table. It was a dire situation that required quick action, not only for the financial needs, but also for the sake of the mental health of those directly and indirectly affected.

The Fruit Industry Employment Plan was one of several initiatives conceived to provide support for those affected by the cutback. It was a concept that provided a win-win outcome for the work providers and the disenfranchised workers of the orchard industries.

It was initiated quickly and, by aligning the interests of stakeholders, it has been a huge success. The workers who have been involved have reported their gratitude, but more importantly they have taken pride in the work they have done. They have maintained their dignity in a difficult time.

Fruit Growers Victoria Limited strongly commends this initiative and recommends it as a model for the future.



In February 2014, a fire covering almost 10,000 hectares destroyed habitat, farm infrastructure and pastures around Wunghnu and Numurkah. The Goulburn Broken CMA swung Fruit Industry Employment Program crews into action within 24 hours.

Pat Rochford Beef farmer, Wunghnu

"The morning after the fires, we found our 22 cows and their calves wandering on the roads. We had lost most of the fences, so when we heard that funding was available for fencing we contacted Corey Wilson from the Goulburn Broken CMA.

"Corey made the whole process very simple. The Fruit Industry Employment Program very quickly enabled the removal of old fencing debris, establishment of a new fencing line and the erection of the new fencing. The labour employed was highly skilled and the fencing is of a very high standard.

"Having someone coordinate the process and communicate with us at all times was a great benefit. We have been able to put stock back onto the property and graze it to reduce fuel load in time for the current fire season."



Russell Smith Mixed farmer, Numurkah

Crews employed through Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority's Fruit Industry Employment Program are helping Wunghnu and Numurkah landholders affected by fires that swept across the area on February 9...

...Program coordinator Corey Wilson said crews from the authority, Parks Victoria and Moira Shire Council employed were helping remove and replace fire-damaged fences along more than 20 km of creeks and wetlands adjoining private property...

...Russell Smith, who runs a 40 hectare mixed-farm operation bordered by the Broken Creek and Kinnairds Wetland, said the quick response to fix more than 1 km of damaged fences on these boundaries was fantastic.

"All our strainer posts were damaged – it's such a help they (the FIEP crews) got on to it so quickly," Mr Smith said.

"I've got cows just about ready to calve and they've been stuck in a tiny paddock. Once the boundary fences are fixed, I'll be able to get onto the internal ones."

Extracted from the Shepparton News, February 28, 2014



CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY #1

Working mum gets a ticket to the future

NAME

Kerrie Wilson

AGE

42

LOCATION

Cobram

OCCUPATION BEFORE FIEP

Orchard worker

HOST ORGANISATION

Moira Shire

TIME WITH FIEP

7 months

MAIN TASKS

- Remove weeds on roadsides between Cobram and Barmah
- Revegetate reserves

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED & TRAINING THROUGH FIEP

- Chainsaw
- First aid
- Truck driving
- Chemical use

After working on orchards for more than 20 years, **Kerrie Wilson** believes the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP) has opened many new doors for her.

Kerrie, the single mother of four-year-old Flynn, was unsure of her future, given the uncertainties facing the fruit industry and the need to keep paying her mortgage.

Kerrie described the FIEP as “awesome”.

“There should be more programs like that,” said Kerrie.

“It has been great working with so many different people at the Council, Yorta Yorta, Parks Victoria, DEPI and others.

“I’ve been like a sponge – I’ve learnt so much from so many and getting all the tickets was really cool.”

As part of a two-person crew, Kerrie removed woody weeds on 150 kilometres of roadside in areas adjacent to the Barmah National Park.

Kerrie enjoyed planting and caring for trees, having previously worked at a native plant nursery for five winters.

“I loved seeing what the trees looked like fully grown and in their natural environment,” said Kerrie.

Kerrie appreciated the opportunity to work with Moira Shire.

“James (Walters) was a great supervisor and Council does so much around town that people don’t know about – it’s incredible,” said Kerrie.

“Being a contract worker, I am used to working fast because the more you do, the more you get paid, but this job taught me how important it is for everyone to be safe, which can mean slowing down a bit.

“ I’ve been like a sponge – I’ve learnt so much from so many and getting all the tickets was really cool. ”

“I’ve been a farm worker all my life and now I have more confidence and contacts to look at different jobs,” said Kerrie.

Following FIEP, Kerrie began with Goulburn-Murray Water before returning to work with Moira Shire.

“I love working in land management and I feel very lucky to have found out about FIEP,” said Kerrie.

You get the feeling the free-spirited Kerrie’s hard work is largely responsible for her luck.



Kerrie’s work with Moira Shire included planting trees and destroying weeds.

CASE STUDY #2

Third-generation fruit grower grafts onto the office

NAME

George Themilis

AGE

59

LOCATION

Shepparton East

OCCUPATION BEFORE FIEP

Fruit grower

HOST ORGANISATION

Goulburn-Murray Water

TIME WITH FIEP

11 months

MAIN TASKS

Office work at Tatura and Shepparton, including:

- Database development
- Asset recording
- Document scanning

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED & TRAINING THROUGH FIEP

- First aid
- Various software

George Themilis speaks with such passion about agriculture, the fruit industry and its role in the future of Shepparton and Australia, it's hard to believe he sold his long-held family orchard in 2013.

George's fruit growing heritage runs deep: his great-grandfather, grandfather and father were Greek-Macedonian farmers. His grandfather and father emigrated and bought an orchard at Shepparton East in 1946.

George explains that the dramatically reduced demand for his fruit from SPC Ardmona was the last straw.

"It's human nature to keep hanging on and hope for things to improve, but there are large risks," said George.

"I'm one of the casualties of the steep decline in fruit prices and increased production costs, but I am also a glass half-full person.

"My wife and I know that you've got to earn money to put food on the table," he added.

The Fruit Industry Employment Program offered the right opportunity for the 59-year-old.

"I hope the days of working hard physically all day are behind me, as I often used Excel and Word to manage the orchard. I enjoy computer work.

"Luckily, the Goulburn Broken CMA was flexible, which meant I could do office-based work with Goulburn-Murray Water.

"I learnt a lot about different software on-the-job," added George.

George is well connected locally through his active involvement in the fruit growing industry, land and water management committees and other community organisations over many years.

“Going from being an irrigation customer to an employee (of Goulburn-Murray Water) has given me a different level of network and I have met a lot of people through this job,” George explains.

“Rural people are proud people. They don’t want handouts. They deserve and occasionally need support,” said George.

“It is a reality check and somewhat frustrating to be now looking for employment after having employed many people over many years.

“Programs like FIEP fill a gap and are an interim measure – even more could be achieved if governments ran more of them and broadened their scope.

“I hope the experience and skills I have gained will enable me to get a full-time job,” said George.

“All-in-all, FIEP has been very worthwhile. I enjoyed the opportunity to acquire new skills and meet many people that otherwise would not have been possible.”



George is at ease in the office environment, saying that he enjoys computer work.

“ I hope the days of working hard physically all day are behind me... I enjoy computer work. ”

CASE STUDY #3

Third-generation fruit grower jumps the fence

NAME

Shannon Pool

AGE

33

LOCATION

Invergordon

OCCUPATION BEFORE FIEP

Fruit grower

HOST ORGANISATION

Goulburn Broken CMA

TIME WITH FIEP

7 months

MAIN TASKS

- Re-fence burnt areas
- Build nest boxes

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED & TRAINING THROUGH FIEP

- First aid
- Chainsaw refresher
- Chemical-use refresher
- Fencing

Shannon Pool's quiet manner masks his fierce determination to bounce back after being knocked down.

"On top of terrible prices for fruit and high costs, SPC Ardmona said it would not take our fruit anymore," said Shannon.

"We couldn't survive just on the market fruit, so that was the final nail for us – we lost the orchard my grandfather started 50 years ago.

"It is hard for Mum and Dad, working so hard all their lives to then have nothing."

Shannon, 33, had been doing "pretty much everything that has to be done on an orchard" since he left school at 15.

Shannon, his wife, Catherine, and 12-month old son, Ajay, live on the houseblock in a landscape that was once covered in fruit trees.

After most of the family's land was sold in 2013, Shannon worked indoors with Murray Goulburn for nine months.

Shannon's transition to FIEP was much more to his liking because of the outdoors work.



Tree hollows salvaged from the 10,000 ha fire for the Turquoise Parrot project.

“Everything about the FIEP has been great – the work, the training and the coordination.”

“Everything about the FIEP has been great: the work, the training and the coordination,” said Shannon.

His main task was to re-erect fences burnt in the 10,000 hectare fire near Wunghnu and Numurkah.

“I knew nothing about fencing,” said Shannon.

Shannon is using skills and confidence acquired through FIEP to start his own business as a fencing contractor, having recently acquired a post-rammer and tractor.

“The FIEP has helped pay some bills and given me new skills to start again,” said Shannon.

Although he has always loved the bush, Shannon said his work with FIEP had increased his understanding of how it “works”.

“One of our jobs was to create nest boxes and another was to salvage tree hollows for native animals,” said Shannon.

“I never knew so many animals lived in hollows.”



Shannon stands in front of the fruit trees that have become part of his past.

CASE STUDY #4

Orchard supervisor's family wins from a work in the parks

NAME

Dale Jannenga

AGE

35

LOCATION

Kialla

OCCUPATION BEFORE FIEP

Orchard supervisor

HOST ORGANISATION

Parks Victoria

TIME WITH FIEP

15 months

MAIN TASKS

From Echuca to Barmah to Yarrowonga, varied tasks included treating weeds, fencing, maintaining public amenities (picnic areas, bush toilets, etc), clearing tracks

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED & TRAINING THROUGH FIEP

- First aid
- Chainsaw
- Construction (induction)

The household budget got very tight when father-of-six orchard supervisor, **Dale Jannenga**, 35, was laid off in 2013 after 11 years of service.

"I was one of twelve made redundant from the orchard and I knew many across the fruit industry had left the area," said Dale.

"I didn't know what to do and having no income for six weeks was a real killer – the FIEP (Fruit Industry Employment Program) came along at just the right time."

Dale was placed with Parks Victoria in Shepparton at the start of the FIEP in August 2013.

And Dale has taken to Parks Victoria like a squirrel glider to a tree hollow.

"The career change has turned out to be life changing – not just for me, but for the whole family," said Dale.

"Everything about the job was enjoyable and I am much less grumpy at home – I'm much easier to live with, and that is what really matters, even though the pay is less."

Dale usually spent alternate weeks based out of Parks Victoria's Shepparton and Yarrowonga work centres.

"I love being in the bush and was lucky to be placed with Parks Victoria because I've had the best variety of jobs, from fencing and spraying weeds to inspecting campsites and maintaining picnic areas.

"They've been a great bunch to work with, the Parks Vic. people – you can always ask questions and they ask me questions too," said Dale.



Dale hits the target in his new fire-fighting career with Parks Victoria.

Dale, a keen four-wheel drive enthusiast, hopes his FIEP work leads to a career where he can encourage many public land users to have a greater respect for the bush.

“The amount of rubbish people dump or just leave behind is ridiculous,” said Dale.

Dale’s FIEP highlight came at the end of FIEP – he earned a 26-week contract with the Parks Victoria summer fire crew.

“ I didn’t know what to do and having no income for six weeks was a real killer – the FIEP came along at just the right time.”

CASE STUDY #5

Freelance fruit-picking father of three part of Goulburn-Murray Water team

NAME

Johnny Tonizzo

AGE

37

LOCATION

Strathmerton

OCCUPATION BEFORE FIEP

Freelance fruit picker

HOST ORGANISATION

Goulburn-Murray Water

TIME WITH FIEP

15 months

MAIN TASKS

- Sprayed weeds

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED & TRAINING THROUGH FIEP

- First aid
- Chainsaw
- Chemical-use
- Truck driving
- Weed identification

Johnny Tonizzo, 37, was a freelance fruit picker for 11 years before starting with the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP).

“I was good at picking fruit and loved the money and lifestyle, but the job isn’t what it used to be,” said Johnny.

“The days of a freelance picker are nearly done and dusted – you need to be part of a contract crew now, which completely changes the work environment.

“I have a ten-year-old and two kids under two, so I can’t go off and pick capsicums at Bowen during the winter anymore – I needed a more permanent job so I could stay and support my family,” said Johnny.

Johnny had been planting native trees with a local business when the FIEP opportunity came up.

“I was with FIEP from the outset, starting with Greater Shepparton City Council’s arborist crew, and I really enjoyed my time there,” said Johnny.

But when his wife was about to have a baby, Johnny requested a move so he could be closer to home.

“I was very grateful to be given work at Cobram by another host organisation, GMW (Goulburn-Murray Water),” Johnny said.

“GMW has been fantastic – I’ve worked with a great crew and GMW deserves a lot of credit for the focus on employee safety.

“It’s also great to be part of a team again, with everyone chipping in and helping each other out – as a freelance fruit picker, you work on your own.”

“The days of a freelance picker are nearly done and dusted.”

Johnny sprayed arrowhead in many channels and drains as well as noxious weeds along the banks.

And the exciting times for Johnny did not end with the conclusion of the FIEP – he was successful in applying for a permanent position, based at Cobram.

“I love going to work with GMW,” said Johnny.



Johnny sprays an arrowhead infestation in one of his new employer's channels.

CASE STUDY #6

Family fruit grower keeps orchard and catchment healthy

NAME

Pargan Bhatti

AGE

32

LOCATION

Ardmona

OCCUPATION BEFORE FIEP

Fruit grower

HOST ORGANISATION

Goulburn Broken CMA and Greater Shepparton City Council

TIME WITH FIEP

3 months and 6 months

MAIN TASKS

- Spray weeds
- Fencing
- Plant trees

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED & TRAINING THROUGH FIEP

- First aid
- Fencing
- Chainsaw
- Tree & weed identification

Pargan Bhatti, 32, is very grateful for the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP) because it provided him with a paid job as well as the opportunity to talk with others impacted by the downturn in the fruit industry.

“It was good to know other farmers who were in the same shoes,” said Pargan.

“It affected the whole region, not just us,” said Pargan.

“I know some FIEP workers in their fifties and sixties who had to pull half their fruit trees out and had no income.”

Pargan has grown pears, cherries and peaches with his father and brother at Ardmona since 2002.

Pargan explained that over the last few years they have had to dramatically increase production for the fresh fruit market, which has become very competitive.

“The FIEP offered farmers the chance to earn money so they wouldn’t have to sell out,

and it helped out the CMA (Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority) and other organisations too,” said Pargan.

“Nobody would have sprayed Chilean needle grass if we hadn’t.

“The qualifications and training provided by FIEP are very useful and the coordinators at my two host organisations, Corey Wilson (Goulburn Broken CMA) and Paul Dainton (Greater Shepparton City Council), were very helpful.

“I learnt a lot about fencing – I even use special new knots now when building our trellises.

“The fencing skills are something all farmers can use, including to earn income off their own farms.

“First aid is also important for farmers – they have their own workers who need looking after.

“FIEP taught people about

“It was good to know other farmers who were in the same shoes.”

working in a team and communicating. Many were very used to just working on their own.

“I certainly got to know the area better and the social contact was important.”

Pargan said his FIEP crew helped volunteers plant a couple of thousand trees near Benalla as part of the regent honeyeater project, helping volunteers.

“I didn’t know there were so many different types of tree.

“The flexibility of being able to temporarily leave FIEP and return to our orchard for harvest was very important for me.”

Pargan said that taxpayers’ money should be used for something like FIEP because “you can see what’s done for the money.”

“Are there any more programs like this one coming?” asked Pargan.



Pargan Bhatti appreciated FIEP's flexible work arrangements.

PROJECT PARTNER RESULTS AND REACTIONS

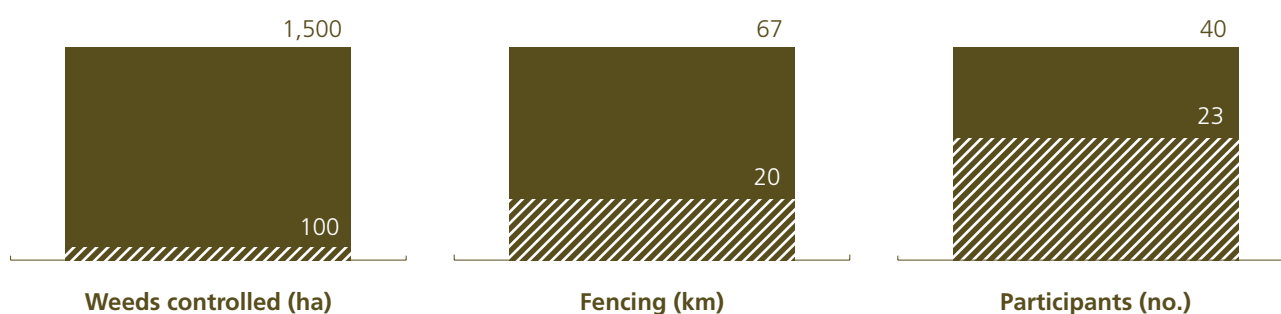
FIEP action results for each partner

ACTION	TOTAL	PARTNER				
		Greater Shepparton City Council	Goulburn Broken CMA	Goulburn-Murray Water	Moira Shire	Parks Victoria
Weeds controlled	1500 ha	300 ha	-	650 ha	300 ha	250 ha
Roadside weeds	43 km	13 km	-	-	30 km	-
Fence						
Built (new)	47 km	-	37 km	-	5 km	5 km
Repaired	20 km	-	3 km	2 km	1 km	14 km
Seedlings						
Planted	13,000	9,000	1,000	-	3,000	-
Guarded	9,000	5,000	1,000	-	3,000	-
Watered	18,000	14,000	1,000	-	3,000	-
Nest boxes constructed	400	-	330	-	70	-
Seed						
Collected	40 kg	-	10 kg	-	30 kg	-
Cleaned	12 kg	-	12 kg	-	-	-
Hollow logs replaced	300	-	100	-	200	-
Habitat logs replaced	70 t	-	-	-	70 t	-
Rubbish removed	15 t	3 t	-	2 t	6 t	4 t
Channel or drains maintained	370 km	-	-	370 km	-	-
Mulch spread	150 m	150 m	-	-	-	-
Open native space managed	500 ha	400 ha	-	-	50 ha	50 ha
Tracks cleared	50 km	-	-	-	-	50 km
Cattle grids maintained	5	-	-	-	-	5
Signs erected	5	-	-	-	-	5
Controlled burn works	30 ha	-	-	-	-	30 ha

Project partners

Agreed FIEP targets and results

Target
 Result



Moira Shire

NAME

James Walters & Gary Deayton

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Moira Shire

POSITION

Environmental Services Technical Officer and Natural Resources Officer

FIEP PARTICIPANTS

7 (usually 4 at any one time)

ACCREDITATION GAINED

First aid, chemical use, chainsaw, truck driving

FIEP ACTIVITIES

- Emergency and fire recovery works
- Control weeds
- Fencing
- Plant and maintain native seedlings
- Salvage hollows and construct nest boxes
- Remove rubbish
- Collect and clean native seed for revegetation

300 ha of weeds controlled

6 km fenced

3,000 native seedlings planted and maintained

Getting works on the ground through the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP) was straightforward, according to Moira Shire's Natural Resources Officer, Gary Deayton.

"We have had a lot of joint-agency experience in recent years through drought and flood employment programs and a fire recovery program," said Gary.

"The FIEP built on these very successful programs as well as the strategic-level partnerships developed in the Goulburn Broken Catchment over many years.

"The existing agency relationships meant the Moira Shire could sign up to the FIEP promptly and with great confidence," said Gary.

Environmental Services Technical Officer, James Walters, said that Moira Shire's FIEP crews were "huge value", far exceeding targets set for them.

Gary said the crew members' work ethic was extraordinary.

"They worked in well with our Moira Shire teams and we would be pleased to recommend them to prospective employers," said Gary.

"They were hard working, used to working outdoors and showed initiative when it came to getting the job done," said James.

"They attacked woody weeds in high value conservation sites, complementing community-led projects like the Broken-Boosey Conservation Management Network and the Superb Parrot Project.

"They were also critical with fire recovery along the Broken and Nine Mile Creeks. Works included re-fencing Black Swamp, weed control, and revegetation at Kinnairds Wetland.

"Moira Shire staff and the FIEP are all extremely disappointed that FIEP is finishing," said James.



Sam Grasso and Kris Ramankutti (FIEP participants), Gary Deayton (Moira Shire), Kerrie Wilson and Darren Watson (FIEP participants), James Walters (Moira Shire).

Greater Shepparton City Council

NAME

Paul Dainton

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Greater Shepparton City Council

POSITION

Coordinator of Native Open Space

FIEP PARTICIPANTS

13 (usually 7 at any one time)

ACCREDITATION GAINED

First aid, chemical use, chainsaw

FIEP ACTIVITIES

- Storm recovery works
- Control weeds
- Fencing
- Plant and maintain native seedlings
- Remove rubbish

300 ha of weeds controlled

9,000 native seedlings planted and maintained

Paul Dainton, Greater Shepparton City Council's Coordinator of Native Open Space, said that the FIEP achieved far more for the environment than was expected.

"The first crew got so much done that we had to put another crew on," said Paul.

Apart from revegetating large areas, Paul said that FIEP crews had helped the council complete maintenance and follow-up work it would otherwise not be able to do.

"We were able to spray Chilean needle grass, a restricted weed in Victoria, on roadsides to stop it from spreading," said Paul.

"The FIEP also provided the additional manpower needed to help clean up after storms and high winds, water street trees and maintain water-wise native plantings at the new Vaughan Street precinct and Kialla Lakes.

"It was great to have people with chainsaw and chemical handling skills who could just get in there and get the job done.



Greater Shepparton City Council's Paul Dainton

"Participants were generally very happy, getting training, an income and gaining a greater appreciation for the environment.

"The FIEP was uncomplicated to manage, with Corey (Goulburn Broken CMA) and Peter (Programmed) keeping us well informed," said Paul.

Parks Victoria

NAME

Neville Wells and John Hutchison

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Lower Goulburn National Park and Murray River Parks

POSITION

Shepparton and Yarrawonga Team Leaders

FIEP PARTICIPANTS

4 (usually 2 at any one time)

ACCREDITATION GAINED

First aid, chemical use, chainsaw, truck driving

FIEP ACTIVITIES

- Fire recovery works
- Control weeds
- Fencing
- Plant and maintain native seedlings
- Remove rubbish
- Track clearing
- Maintain amenities
- Planned burning

250 ha of weeds controlled

19 km fenced

Parks Victoria's Shepparton Ranger Team Leader, Neville Wells, says that you only have to look at the list of results to know how successful the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP) has been.

"It's hard to believe you could get such ready-made workers for the work we do," said Neville.

"Fruit growers and workers come with a lot of transferrable skills, from handling chemicals and vehicles to handyman skills.

"The timing of the program has been great.

"With all the fires last year, it meant regular staff were away a lot and less urgent, but nevertheless important, jobs wouldn't have got done without the FIEP crew.

"We were able to integrate them with our other crews and expose them to a wide variety of locations and challenges, from Echuca to Yarrawonga to Shepparton.

"There's no doubt there will also be a PR (public relations) benefit for Parks Victoria: they have gained a good insight into the work we do and the challenges we face, and they are communicating that back into their communities," said Neville.

"This project has achieved a lot and none of it would have happened without the FIEP," said John Hutchison, Parks Victoria's Yarrawonga Ranger Team Leader.

"The crews worked alternate weeks based out of Shepparton and Yarrawonga. Corey (Goulburn Broken CMA) placed the right people for the Parks Vic. jobs: they had a lot of maturity and common sense, which is what you need when working in the forest.

"I am very pleased to see Dale (Jannenga) come through the entire program and gain a 26-week project firefighter position in Shepparton – this is what the program was designed to do," said John.

"I am sure Parks Victoria would be very supportive of a similar project in future," said Neville.



Neville Wells and FIEP participant Dale Jannenga inspect a site.

Goulburn-Murray Water

NAME

Roger Baker

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Echuca to Yarrawonga

POSITION

Coordinator Aquatic Plants East

FIEP PARTICIPANTS

13 (usually 7 at any one time)

ACCREDITATION GAINED

First aid, chemical use, chainsaw, truck driving

FIEP ACTIVITIES

- Identify and control weeds
- Maintain channels and drains
- Fencing

650 ha of weeds controlled

370 km of channels or drains maintained

Roger Baker has worked for Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) and its predecessors for 37 years and said he has never experienced a program like the Fruit Industry Employment Program (FIEP).

"I must admit, I entered into FIEP with a degree of trepidation, but I have been very pleasantly surprised," said Roger, GMW's Coordinator Aquatic Plants East.

"The participants were virtually 'ready-to-go' because of their experience in handling chemicals and heavy vehicles and we achieved excellent results – far in excess of the targets.

"The spirit of partnership between FIEP's agencies created direct and open relationships, which ensured that any problems with performance were dealt with quickly," said Roger.

Corey Wilson, Goulburn Broken CMA's FIEP Manager, said that having crews manage arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea* species), a 'weed of national significance', from channels and drains close to high conservation value streams like the Broken and Boosey Nine Mile Creeks was an absolute bonus.

"The crews also followed up and eradicated infestations in and along these streams," said Corey.



Goulburn-Murray Water's Roger Baker.

"Everyone was a winner and the controlling of the weeds ensures a more reliable water supply to irrigators," said Roger.

"More than 700 kilometres of arrowhead were sprayed across the three centres."

GMW's three FIEP crews were based at Cobram, Tatura and Shepparton.

Roger said that an added benefit of FIEP was that participants got to learn about water delivery challenges from GMW's perspective.

"I hope many of them are now talking about the challenges and solutions within their communities," said Roger.

"It has been very satisfying that some of the participants gained extra skills and one is now employed with us on a long-term contract."

Programmed Integrated Workforce

NAME

Peter Bullen

POSITION

Area Manager

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Goulburn and Murray Valleys

FIEP PARTICIPANTS

Employed all FIEP participants: 40 (usually 22 at any one time)

ACCREDITATION GAINED

first aid, chemical use, chainsaw, construction, truck licence (facilitated by Programmed)

FIEP ACTIVITIES

- Participant performance
- Occupational Health and Safety

Peter Bullen is the Goulburn and Murray Valleys area manager of staff provider, Programmed, which had been involved in similar programs with the Goulburn Broken CMA before.

“The scope of our task was very familiar, although this group was particularly used to working outdoors and doing jobs like spraying weeds,” said Peter.

“The outputs achieved were huge – there was an obvious gap, and it achieved a lot.

“It would be good to do more programs like this, only with broader eligibility criteria.

Peter valued how well FIEP was administered, including the directness of communication and the healthy spirit of collaboration.

“The (FIEP) steering committee functioned really well.

“While it’s obviously good from a commercial perspective to be involved with a program like this, it’s great to be part of something that gives people a leg up.”

Peter said that Programmed had re-employed FIEP participants with several clients.

“Our customers are only happy if we have staff who perform on our books, so we are always on the look-out for good attitudes and work ethic, as well as skills,” said Peter.



Programmed's Peter Bullen

Lessons for future programs



Corey Wilson, FIEP Manager,
Goulburn Broken CMA

FIEP was evaluated independently, using data from a participant survey, interviews of participants and partner-agency contacts, and monthly reports to the FIEP steering committee.

The evaluation uncovered several new lessons and reinforced many learnt by the Goulburn Broken CMA and partners over many years.

Ingredients for successful regional employment programs

Regional environmental employment programs are responsive and achieve excellent results when:

- roles of partner organisations are clear and complementary, enabling each to contribute its specific expertise
- relationships between partners (especially individuals within them) are long and strong

- the general attributes and needs of program participants are thoroughly considered
- personnel from funding bodies regularly monitor progress, while allowing funds and time for coordinated, locally-based and tailored decisions.

Mobility across host organisations

Programs achieve more works when participants can move between host organisations because participant attributes can be better matched with tasks, including when seasonal or crisis responses are required.

Participants also experience a greater variety of challenge when they work with more than one host, as several FIEP participants did.

Transferrable skills of farmers and farm workers

Large-scale, highly visible changes can be achieved using farmers and farm workers: they generally have initiative, a strong work-ethic, can work independently, and have skills that are readily transferred to environmental and outdoor amenity work.

The three targets agreed with the Victorian Government were greatly exceeded: number of participants 174% (achieved 40, target 23), weed control 1500% (achieved 1500 ha, target 100 ha), and fencing 335% (achieved 67 km, target 20 km).

Other benefits of regional employment programs

Participants often become new advocates for government programs.

Many participants become long-term employees: host organisations and participants get to 'try each other out' through employment programs.

Programs like FIEP expose many participants to rigorous health and safety measures, which is likely to reduce their risks when working for other organisations, including small business such as farms.

Options beyond physical labour

Office-based options for employment programs are likely to become more important as an increasing number of workers reach an age when prolonged physical activity cannot be sustained.

Transition beyond the employment program

While participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with FIEP, 37% of survey respondents did not know what they were going to do next. Perhaps more could be done at the end of employment programs to help them transition to the next phase of their lives.

FIEP IN THE MEDIA

FLAME TREES

Goulburn Valley grower Doug Brown destroys his tree trunks after his APC contract was cut.
 Photo: JDE PHILLIPS



Goulburn Valley crisis deepens
FRUIT SQUEEZE

By CIMARA PEARCE and ALEX SAMPSON

GOLDBURN Valley fruit growers are expected to burn 250,000 unwanted trees before spring.

The dramatic event — which will see 10 per cent of peach and plum trees burnt nationwide across the state — follows SPC Australia's decision in April to slash its fruit intake by half.

Growers have had little of comfort of export that they are unable to sell following the announcement, warning early growers will operate in a loss this season.

Others will have to become independent growers. Doug

APPLICANTS 'INELIGIBLE'

Open season on jobs

By CIMARA PEARCE

SEVERAL unemployed people from outside the fruit industry are understood to have applied for a Victorian Government funded employment program for Goulburn Valley orchardists.

Fruit Growers Victoria general manager John Wilson said some ineligible people "not directly impacted" by SPC Australia fruit intake cuts earlier this year had applied for the rescue program to guarantee an income to struggling farmers and their employees in the industry.

"I understand there have been approaches from people within the industry and approaches from unemployed people in the region who are not in the industry," Mr Wilson said. "This does show the need for more programs like this around the country."

The *Weekly Times* understands most ineligible people who have applied for the program are not suitable because



Management Authority — the group administering the program — said "the ad is pretty clear about who is eligible and who is not".

The advertisement, which has been running in local media says: "To be eligible for this employment program, applicants must be fruit growers, long-term fruit-growing industry workers or fruit-growing service providers who reside in the Goulburn Broken Catchment and will be unemployed or

Work program for orchardists

By Darren Linton

The Victorian Government's \$2 million Fruit Industry Employment Program will open for applications today.

Victorian Agriculture and Food Security Minister Peter Walsh said the program offered

ment Program provides an alternative source of income to growers and workers in the short term, in exchange for their help with environmental restoration and protection projects in their region such as weed and pest management, fencing and erosion control," Mr Walsh said.

Broken Catchment Management Authority are supporting the program.

"It is a similar program to those which ran successfully in Victoria following recent drought and flood events," Mr Walsh said.

The catchment management authority and Department of Environment and Primary

ment agency had been appointed for the program and applications were open for environmental projects that were likely to begin this month once training was completed.

"We expect about 100 ha of weed control and 20 km of fencing to be completed under the program together with a range of other beneficial tasks along waterways and wetlands

Support needed before disease breaks out

Government assistance for the fruit industry is moving too slowly as growers warn tough seasonal decisions will have to be made soon.

Although most trees are now in hibernation, growers must decide whether to prune or spray their trees, which may become redundant this season.

Shepparton East orchardist Vera Fleming said the employment program announced by the government would assist mainly orchard staff, she said many growers who still had a property to manage would not be able to take it up. She said the industry needed

transition support to enable growers to clear their property to avoid pest and disease threats and enable them to exit the industry.

"The whole process has been very slow," Mrs Fleming said. The support for the food workers came immediately and they're not going to close until 2016.

"It seems as though the nation does not value our food security." Some of the grower impatience bubbled over in a meeting of growers last week.

John Diantropoulos questioned City of Greater Shepparton Mayor Henry Houlihan over why rate

concessions weren't available and what else the council was doing. He was unhappy with the response.

The council has engaged consultants to help prepare a report which will be used for lobbying and a submission to the industry Commissioner regarding the impact SPC Australia has on the region.

Cr Houlihan said the council was well positioned to provide data that detailed the economic impact of current issues facing SPC Australia and the local community.

Fruit Growers Victoria general manager John Wilson said the

results of his organisation's survey of growers had been provided to the council after identifying data was removed.

"This survey has become useful in lobbying governments as there seems to be little objective information around," Mr Wilson said.

Meanwhile, the VFF Horticulture Group is backing Goulburn Valley growers in their quest for assistance to remove unwanted fruit and redundant trees.

The group pointed to the high risk that unwanted trees presented, and said they needed to be removed before bud-burst which could result in potential outbreaks

of disease and proliferation of Queensland fruit flies.

The group warned of a major pest and disease disaster in northern Victoria.

Government assistance would be small in comparison to the economic damage resulting from a lack of government action, the VFF Horticulture Group argued.

Last week Federal Member for Murray Sharran Stone presented 1128 signatures as part of a petition to the Federal Parliament informing members of the fact that SPC Australia can no longer compete with very low-cost imported preserved fruit and tomatoes.

Fruit squeeze hurts Goulburn V

From Page 1

The package will give growers access to financial and personal counselling and see the development of a stakeholders group for future farming viability in the area.

Growers and staff will also have access within weeks to a program providing full-time work within the Goulburn Valley. The FGV report estimated orchard revenue would drop by \$10.4 million and more than 1500 jobs would be lost.

Without said growers still needed access to loans to remove unwanted fruit and trees and transition to new varieties.

This needs to be done before the trees bud in spring to prevent incursions of fruit fly and other pests and diseases, he said.

"Minister Walsh said from the start he was unwilling to produce a grant for straight-out tree removal," Mr Wilson said.

"We respect the Minister's position but will continue to present a case."

Some growers have said they don't have enough money for the fruit to burn their trees.

Victorian Farmers Federation horticulture president Sue Dinger said the impact from SPCA's intake cuts was "devastating."

She welcomed the Victorian Government's support package but said growers needed access to concessional loans to help them through the challenges.

"The Victorian Government is continuing to work with the Commonwealth to finalize an-

negotiations for the Farm Finance concessional loans and we are also exploring further potential actions that can provide support to the Goulburn Valley's local economy," Mr Walsh said.

SPCA general manager Peter Kelly said the company was committed to ensuring there was Australian food processing.

"We welcome any effort that will help our growers, and the food processing and horticulture industries as a whole, to overcome the reduced demand for Aus-



Scorched: Rizzi Shalhoub stands in the charred remains of fruit trees at his Grahamvale property last week.

Industry boosted

Horticulture and dairy would be a beneficiary of the Goulburn Valley Industry and Employment Fund, Deputy Premier and Regional and Rural Development Minister Peter Ryan said last week.

He was in Shepparton to announce an initial \$5 million from the Victorian Government to go into the fund to leverage industry, investment and employment opportunities and support a strategic long-term plan for the region.

He gave the Goulburn Valley's \$2.2 billion dairy industry as an example of an industry that was doing well and could benefit from the scheme.

Mr Ryan said initiatives to be funded could include Goulburn Valley companies looking to add local staff, update technologies or expand their workplaces.

The plan will see a committee of Goulburn Valley industry and community representatives

Jobs set up for growers

Orchard workers and owners put out of a job by SPC Ardmona's fruit intake cuts will be eligible for work in fencing, weed control and other conservation projects as a result of the Victorian Government's \$2 million employment program.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries are delivering the Fruit Industry Employment program and it is expected to be similar to the drought and flood recovery employment programs the CMA has run in the past.

Between 20 and 40 workers affected by the intake cuts

will be eligible for work in fencing, weed control and other conservation projects as a result of the Victorian Government's \$2 million employment program.

"We will advertise for orchardists and orchard workers who will be unemployed or under-employed as a result of the fruit intake cuts, to apply for the positions."

About 100 ha of weed control and 20 km of fencing are expected to be completed

intake cuts to carry out environmental works during this transition stage will help keep these skilled people in our communities, build capacity and future employment opportunities through training programs create people's understanding and appreciation of the value of protecting environmental assets, and keep fruit growers gainfully employed.

Learning new skills

Two of the six new Fruit Industry Employment Program participants are being trained in fire recovery skills at Mansfield, Western Victoria.

The program, run by Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and supported by Greater Shepparton City Council, Moira Shire Council, Goulburn-Murray Water and Parks Victoria, received \$2 million from the Victorian Government last August to provide training and employment to orchardists and orchard workers while the industry transitioned to the state of damage to SPC Ardmona's fruit intake.

This week former Cobram orchard workers Kerri Wilson and Ali Vasilak joined Moira Shire Council crew members Darren Watson and Krishnan Karanabati to continue planting, weed control and rubbish removal activities at Karamulla Wetland, which was badly burnt when fire swept through the area in February.

Mr Watson, the crew's team leader, said they had recently planted more than 600 native plants, such as giant daisy and silver wattle, poplar and birch, and covered in plant mulch to protect them before weather conditions became unsuitable.

Mr Watson and Mr Karanabati have been involved in the FIEP program since its inception and were devastated that a lot of the weed control and revegetation work they had done at the wetlands last year had been destroyed by the fire.

"It's been rewarding though to see how well things come back after the good rain we had and the 1600 Mm environmental water delivery," he said.



Employment scheme bears fruit

Four Fruit Industry Employment Program crews will start work on environmental projects with City of Greater Shepparton and Moira Shire Councils, Parks Victoria and Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority this week.

Goulburn Broken CMA received \$2 million from the Victorian Government to deliver the Fruit Industry Employment Program to secure jobs for orchardists, workers or those affected by SPC Ardmona's fruit intake reduction.

Goulburn Broken CMA chief executive officer Chris Norman said 18 people had undertaken first aid training

and completed chemical user and construction card qualifications and would be employed.

"While many of the program participants have a range of relevant skills, it's important they have the opportunity to update their qualifications, and acquire new ones, that will help them with their long-term employment opportunities," Mr Norman said.

He said work crews would work with agencies around Shepparton, Tutira, Cobram and towns across the catchment's north to undertake weed control, fencing, rubbish removal and infrastruc-

ture work.

"And other activities that protect and enhance local waterways and landscapes," Mr Norman said.

He expected to recruit more program participants in the coming months.

"The orchard industry told us that a flexible work program would best meet their needs."

"Therefore we expect some people will be part of the program for only a couple of months while others may seek six to 12 months' work."


Mr Norman said the FIEP aimed to keep fruit growers and their workers gainfully employed while longer term

horticulture industry transition decisions were made.

"Importantly too, during time of uncertainty a change, the program will encourage people to mix with others and talk about a share their experiences, rather than feel isolated and forgotten."

For more information about how to apply for FIEP positions, phone Toni Jacobson at Programmed Integrated Workforce on 5831 7676.

Applications can be made in person at the Programmed Integrated Workforce office at 193A Corio St, Shepparton.



Fruit Growers, Fruit Grower Workers, Fruit Grower Service providers

We are currently seeking Team Leaders and Labourers for Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority's Fruit Industry Employment Program.

The program is expected to run until June 2014 and we offer low casual/seasonal rates in the Shepparton, Mansfield and Cobram areas.

Mail duties will include weed eradication, stock fence vegetation, infrastructure maintenance and other duties in shearing, tree felling and waterways. Employees will wear uniforms and complete First Aid, Construction and Agrib Chemical user training as part of the Card and Safety course. Hourly rates for these positions are \$28.95 (Team Leaders) and \$24.55 (Team Labourers).

To be eligible for this employment program, applicants must be growers, long term fruit growing industry workers, or service providers who reside in the Goulburn Broken and will be unemployed, or underemployed as a result of 2012 fruit intake cuts. Applicants will be required to complete a statutory declaration providing details of their horticulture industry circumstances as part of the application. Note SPCA Process workers are not eligible for this program.

For more information regarding these positions contact Toni Jacobson at Programmed on 03 5831 7676. Applications to be made in person at our office at 193A Corio St, Shepparton.

PROGRAMMED
Integrated Workforce

Making

"A welcome breathing space for orchard workers being part of the Fruit Industry Employment Program. Last Friday the \$2 million Victorian Government program offers paid work up to 12 months to fruit growers affected by the Ardmona fruit intake cuts earlier this year.

The program is part of a \$70 million package directed to the Goulburn Valley following the industry workers gathered in Shepparton East irrigation channels to begin spraying arrowhead channels of eight environmental protection workers in the City of Greater Shepparton and Moira Shire.

In coming months crews will work on projects such as weed control, fencing, infrastructure and landscaping activities, and waterway protection around Shepparton and Cobram."

Spray create

Goulburn-Murray will employ nine staff to weed spraying and employment program.

The program, run by Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, offers employment support people affected by SPC Ardmona's fruit intake at SPC Ardmona.

G-MW manager Chris Norman said it was a chance to gain extra spraying season work.

"The nine staff will be employed for a period of 12 months and the MCA will be providing support during this time."

s from horrific and in-
 abuse.
 history also shows the indus-
 the Government and the re-
 countries are not able to
 attain those standards.
 is fatuous for the Aust-
 live animal export indus-
 think that it can influence
 animal welfare standards
 divide by being involved in
 item that in itself reeks of
 al cruelty, animal abuse
 lack of control.

for fruit growers to work on
 environment restoration and
 protection projects with the
 cal Catchment Management
 Authority following the
 nouncement of SPC's decis-
 to cut fruit intakes.

This was just one of seven
 aid measures announced.
 This month, the \$1 billion
 Regional Growth Fund fund
 its 1000th project, having in-
 vested \$300 million into pro-
 jects totalling \$1.25 billion.

The RGF co-invests in re-
 gional and rural projects an-
 programs that may otherwise
 have not come to fruition.

Through the 49 projects in
 the RGF's Economic Infra-
 structure Program alone, more
 than 3500 direct jobs and 4750
 indirect jobs have been deliv-
 ered to country Victoria.

Victoria's regional unem-
 ployment rate dropped to 4.6
 per cent in May this year, down
 from 6.3 per cent when the pre-
 vious Labor Government left
 office in November 2010.

Good things are happening.

**Minister for Regional
 and Rural Development
 Peter Ryan**

P. Ryan, meet P. Ryan

GV TASKFORCE HEAD BRIEFS POLITICIAN NAMESAKE ON INDUSTRY, JOBS PLAN FOR AREA



DARREN LINTON
 Deputy Premier



Seeing double: Goulburn Valley Industry and Employment Taskforce head Peter Ryan (left).

Deputy Premier and
 Regional and Rural Develop-
 ment Minister Peter Ryan
 met up with his namesake
 — Doukie's Peter Ryan, who
 heads the Goulburn Valley
 Industry and Employment
 Taskforce.

The Deputy Premier
 received a briefing from the
 taskforce that he established
 in the wake of SPC's Australia
 slashing government contracts.

The taskforce is in the pro-
 cess of developing a Goul-
 burn Valley Industry and
 Employment Plan that is
 due to be presented to Min-
 ister Ryan by December.

The objective of the
 Goulburn Valley Industry
 and Employment Plan,
 announced in July, is to
 diversify the economic base
 of the Goulburn Valley and
 encourage the region to
 capitalise on new export
 opportunities. Minister
 Ryan said.

"It also aims to examine
 emerging industry sectors
 and build on the capacity
 needed for the transition to
 a sustainable future."
 The Victorian Govern-
 ment's Goulburn Valley
 Industry and Infrastructure
 Fund will support the plan,
 which has initial seed fund-

ing the future of the Goulburn
 Valley and it does have a
 great future," Minister Ryan
 said.

"They are looking under
 their terms of reference at
 building on some of the
 niche strengths of the re-
 gion, and of course, self-evidently
 that is the horticultural sec-
 tor, issues around the dairy
 industry, all the benefits

**THEIR PRIME INTEREST IS THE FUTURE
 OF THE GOULBURN VALLEY AND IT DOES
 HAVE A GREAT FUTURE. — PETER**

\$5 million was to accommo-
 date the initiatives that
 came directly out of the plan
 and associated investment
 proposals by the private
 sector. The plan also
 provided for the task-
 force to further assist
 industry groups, in-
 cluding tourism, agricul-
 ture, manufacturing, in-
 formation technology
 and health services.

JEANNETTE POWELL
 Member for
 Shepparton District

COMMUNITY UPDATE

More support for Goulburn Valley fruit growers

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting
 Goulburn Valley Fruit Growers, their families and the
 wider community.

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Peter Walsh
 recently announced the Government will establish a
 Goulburn Valley Fruit Growers Strategic Stakeholder
 Group and will fund a \$2 million employer-
 led program for the region.

The Strategic Stakeholder Group will be chaired by
 local Peter Ryan, former principal of Doukie College,
 former CEO/Director of Goulks, current member of
 the board of GV Health and chair of the Goulburn-
 Broken Catchment Management Authority. Mr Ryan
 has a strong understanding of the skills, requirements
 in the Goulburn Valley.

Membership of the group will include their govern-
 ment, local government, Rural Finance and service
 representatives from Goulburn Murray Water,
 Regional Development Victoria and the Department of
 Environment and Primary Industries.

The working group will help develop an industry-
 led response to ensure the Goulburn Valley region
 remains viable and productive farms. It will identify
 risks including economic, biosecurity and social issues
 as well as looking for new opportunities. The group
 will also provide advice on potential rules for the State
 Government and its agencies.

The Goulburn Valley fruit growers will also be
 supported through a Fruit Industry Employment
 Program. This program will provide paid work and
 training for fruit growers to work on environmental
 restoration and protection projects such as weed and
 pest management, fencing and erosion control.

work will further assist
 industry Transition and
 to the future region. This
 it with expert assistance
 in finding options and
 things will assist eligible
 they need to transition to

growers would also be
 \$2 million employment
 1 month program similar
 address which provided
 and help producers
 and business. This is
 the challenges facing
 identify but it will pay a
 alternative income in the
 program will be delivered
 Catchment Management
 Department of Environment and

were announced by the
 to the Goulburn Valley
 age announced earlier
 services Package will be
 be delivered in partnership
 of agencies including the
 urban Services, Goulburn
 Social Counselling Service,
 ag, Council of Shepparton,
 Valley Family Care.

100 packages which will
 set of contacts for financial
 and social services, as well
 and marketing advice and
 and information sessions.
 It is widely aware that
 will have deep impacts on
 if the wider community and
 all stakeholders in this tough

a Milestone?

For 100, or celebrating
 wedding anniversary?
 guests can send a letter
 commemorative certificate
 to people celebrating
 one (03) 5831 6944.

For more information
 about fire recovery
 assistance, phone the
 Murray Shire Council
 recovery office on
 5842 2664.

Jeannette Powell
 Electorate Office:
 5 Wougham Street
 Shepparton, 3630
 PH: 58316944

Government plan aid Goulburn

ULD like to add to *The
 Times'* coverage of
 around Shepparton and
 economies. "Growers in
 ate fight to survive" (WT
 D).

week, I announced the
 Valley Industry and
 Employment Plan, to be driven
 Shepparton committee and
 with an initial invest-
 of \$5 million from the
 Government.

plan aims to diversify
 and was en-

Statement a change

"It gives me time to look around for
 other employment. I'm do-
 ing a course on internet te-
 chnology and I'm looking at a small
 come breathing space," he
 said. Former Shepparton East
 manager Stephen Petrovski
 decided to leave the fruit in-
 dustry when SPCA announced its
 plan to cut fruit intakes.
 "It's too uncertain. You don't
 know your future will go. I
 want to see what's going on. I
 am now team leader," he said.
 Petrovski, 60, said he was hop-
 ing to be eligible for permanent em-
 ployment after six months. "It's a
 bit of a challenge for me," he said.
 State Member for Shepparton
 Jeannette Powell said she
 would help growers who
 were affected by the cuts.

Government scheme creates jobs

ray Water will temporary-
 staff to help with its annual
 as part of a fruit industry
 program.
 The scheme, run by the Goulburn
 Catchment Management Author-
 ity, will create employment
 opportunities for people
 affected by cuts to fruit
 intakes.

ing director Gavin Hanlon
 said the scheme for the water authority
 will support during the busy
 season, which starts next month.

Fruit workers give fire help

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS FIXING FENCES DAMAGED IN WUNGHNU COMPLEX FIRE

Cross employed through
 Goulburn Broken Catchment
 Management Authority's
 Fruit Industry Employment Program are
 helping Wunghnu and
 Numburk landholders
 affected by fire the mope
 across the area on February
 27.

The authority received
 \$1 million from the Victorian
 Government last year to
 deliver the program for
 orchardists or orchard work-
 ers affected by SPC
 Australia's orchard closure
 program in 2011.



Getting job done: Orchard worker Shashikumar Mishra is helping Wunghnu Complexes for recovery efforts.

been wreck in my paddock.
 Once the boundary fence
 was fixed it'll be able to get
 to the fence line. I was
 relieved they had
 got through the fire safely,
 although they will had a
 few trees that were
 lost."

of the planning that has
 done has also been
 "great," he said. "I
 Michael and Shashikumar
 Mishra, who has been
 employed through the
 program since August last
 year, said it was rewarding
 to know the crews were
 providing practical assist-
 ance to landholders.

"It's good to get our
 own know you're helping
 older farmers," Mr Mishra
 said.

No takers for fruit industry aid

MAJORITY
 have been offered
 a \$2 million pro-
 gram to help
 growers who
 have been
 affected by
 the SPC
 program.

There were only 77 people
 registered to receive the
 program, which was
 designed to provide
 paid work and training
 for fruit growers who
 have been affected by
 the SPC program.

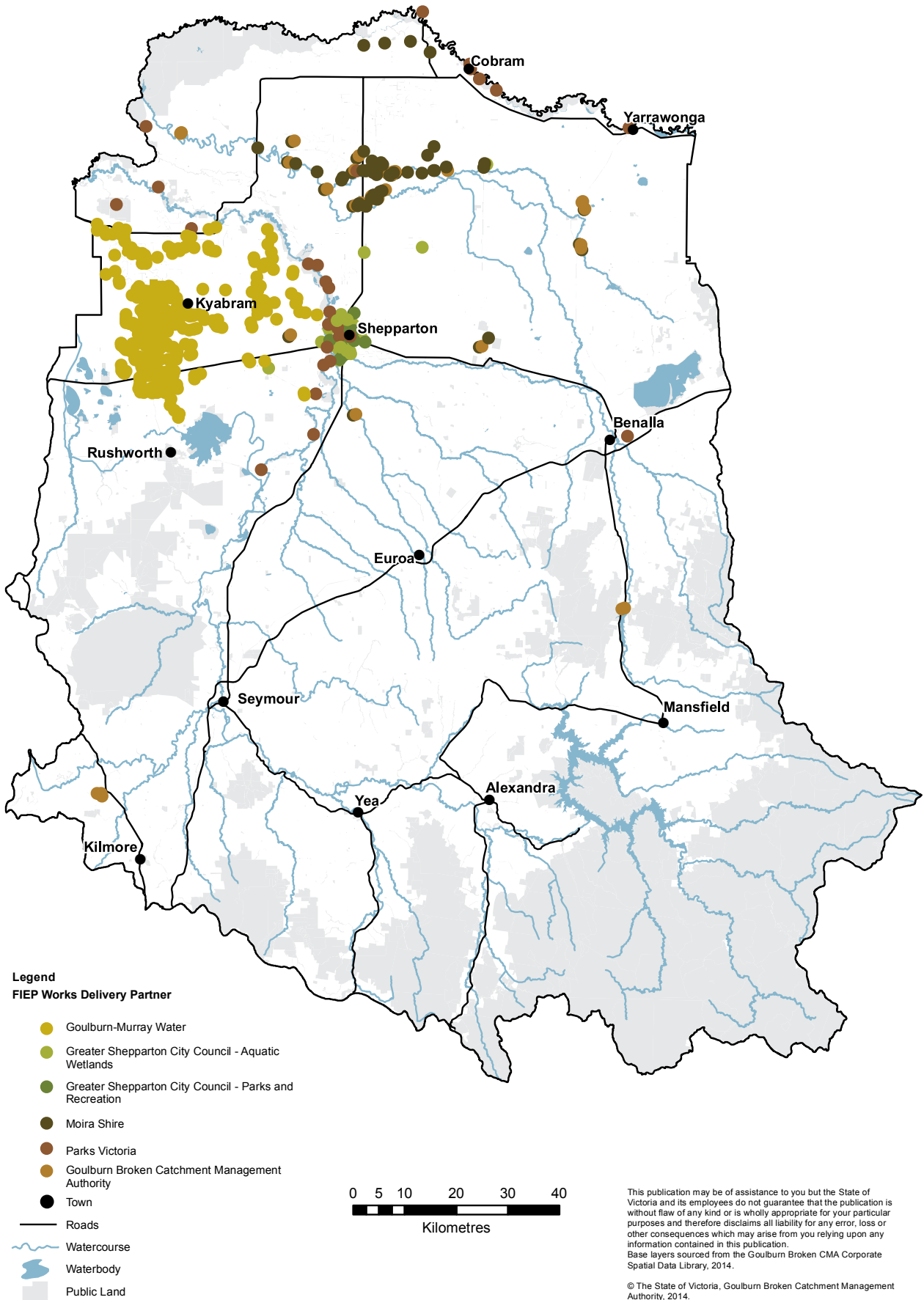
Value fruit industry
 on opening up new
 markets and helping
 growers diversify and
 expand. The plan will
 be funded by the
 Victorian Government
 and the Department of
 Environment and
 Primary Industries.
 "We're looking for
 people who are
 interested in
 developing their
 business and
 creating jobs for
 themselves and
 their families."

HAVE YOUR SAY
 Submit the Government
 your ideas on how to
 improve the
 website
www.times.com.au
 NOW

FIEP WORKS MAP



FIEP works between September 2013 and November 2014





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