



EUROA ARBORETUM – GROWING COMMUNITIES, PROPAGATING LOCAL INDIGENOUS PLANTS

When the Hume Highway Euroa bypass opened to traffic in April 1992 a 27 hectare Vicroads depot in Euroa became surplus to requirements. A group of enthusiastic locals lobbied for the site to become parkland for the Euroa community. Lyle Jeffery, the then Euroa Shire Engineer, and Sally Mann, the site's first coordinator, suggested the site become an Arboretum.

More than twenty years on their vision is not only a reality but a thriving business focused on growing both local indigenous plants and community capacity to achieve landscape integrity.

Testament to the progress of the Arboretum is the calibre of the 2015 Committee of Management which is buoyed by some of Australia's leading environmental champions who have helped put the polish on an ambitious three year strategic plan.

Committee members include Shirley Saywell, President, the 2012 recipient of the Goulburn Broken CMA's Hubert Miller Perpetual Trophy for service to waterway health in the catchment; Professor Kate Auty, former Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (2008-14); Winsome McCaughey AO, former Lord Mayor of Melbourne and CEO of Greening Australia Ltd; and Professor Snow Barlow, a plant physiologist and agricultural scientist who is Foundation Professor of Horticulture and Viticulture at the University of Melbourne.

The Euroa Arboretum's vision is to be a showcase of ecological restoration and stewardship that will radiate out to influence the land management practices of the broader, surrounding communities and environmental outcomes of the surrounding landscapes.

▲ *Main Image: Local support for the Euroa Arboretum has seen the creation of an artist's wall on the site.*





▲ Cathy Olive, Kate Stothers and Julie Hall with Silver Banksia plants in the Euroa Arboretum nursery.

Cathy Olive has been the part-time coordinator of the Euroa Arboretum since 2010 and has been instrumental in developing the ecological support side of the business and growing the nursery's contribution to the financial bottom line.

Cathy says, "The first major plantings in the 1990s were an eclectic mix of Australian native plants and not specifically from the local area. Now the site comprises all 22 native Ecological Vegetation Classes of the Goulburn Broken region.

"In 1999 Paul Thompson, who collaborated on the design of the Australian Garden in Cranbourne, provided us with a master plan for the site and we continue to implement that plan.

"Water is an important feature of the site. Excavations for materials to construct the Freeway overpass embankments created a 43 megalitre

dam. In 2003 a Chain of Ponds was created from a drainage line cut to divert water flow off the Hume Freeway to the on-site dam. The ponds were planted to represent the local creek and river systems. In consultation with Strathbogie Anglers Club, the dam was stocked with Rainbow Trout and Redfin for recreational fishing.

"The Arboretum and nursery has strong community support and benefits greatly from the work of volunteers. We have around 25 volunteers over a month, including three volunteers who run our stalls at the markets. We could not survive and thrive without them," says Cathy.

Kate Stothers has been with the Arboretum since 2013 and is assisting the Committee of Management with the strategic plan. According to Kate the plan focuses on five areas:

1. Recreation, Demonstration and Open Space - the site is managed for conservation and is a focal point for educating people on ecological restoration techniques and goals. Planning is underway for a community conference centre to be designed in collaboration with Indigenous Architecture and Design Victoria and local Indigenous people.
2. Community Environmental Education and Support – staff participate in field days, workshops, cultural heritage training and a schools program. Professional development, training and peer-support are provided to Landcare Coordinators and other NRM professionals. The Arboretum

now delivers the highly regarded five-day residential Box-Ironbark Ecology Course, which has run for the last 16 years.

3. Nursery and Indigenous Seed Production - the Nursery is one of very few indigenous nurseries around north-east and central Victoria. Sales to local farmers, landholders and agency staff, and at the Euroa Farmer's Market, all provide revenue and increase the Arboretum's profile. Indigenous seed is collected and sold to the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank.
4. Provision of environmental services - the Arboretum aims to become the key link between best-practice environmental stewardship and landholders in the region.
5. Research - the Arboretum seeks opportunities to increase the scientific literature on environmental restoration. The grounds, the seed production areas and the nursery, will become study areas for students and researchers to collaborate with the Arboretum on identified research questions.

The Euroa Arboretum works with a variety of partners including the Goulburn Broken CMA; the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Conservation Management Networks (CMNs); and local Landcare Networks and groups.

For more information phone the Euroa Arboretum on 0429 127 399.



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