

Delwyn makes a difference



Catchment Champion

Ryan Good, Alex Lavis, Ellen Lavis,
Shannon Leahy, Dougal Robb and
Matilda Robb

Lowesdale Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Murray Catchment Management Authority and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to natural resource management issues. www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. www.wirraminna.org

Murray Darling Association

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. www.mda.asn.au



Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. www.envirostories.com.au

Delwyn make a difference

Authors: Ryan Good, Alex Lavis, Ellen Lavis, Shannon Leahy, Dougal Robb and Matilda Robb

Teacher: James Southam

School: Lowesdale Public School

Catchment Champions

In 2013, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about 'Catchment Champions', people who have made important contributions to managing natural resources in their local community. The program was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment management authorities.

The Catchment Champions books are part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program.



Catchment Management Authority
Murray



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Catchment Management Authority
Murrumbidgee

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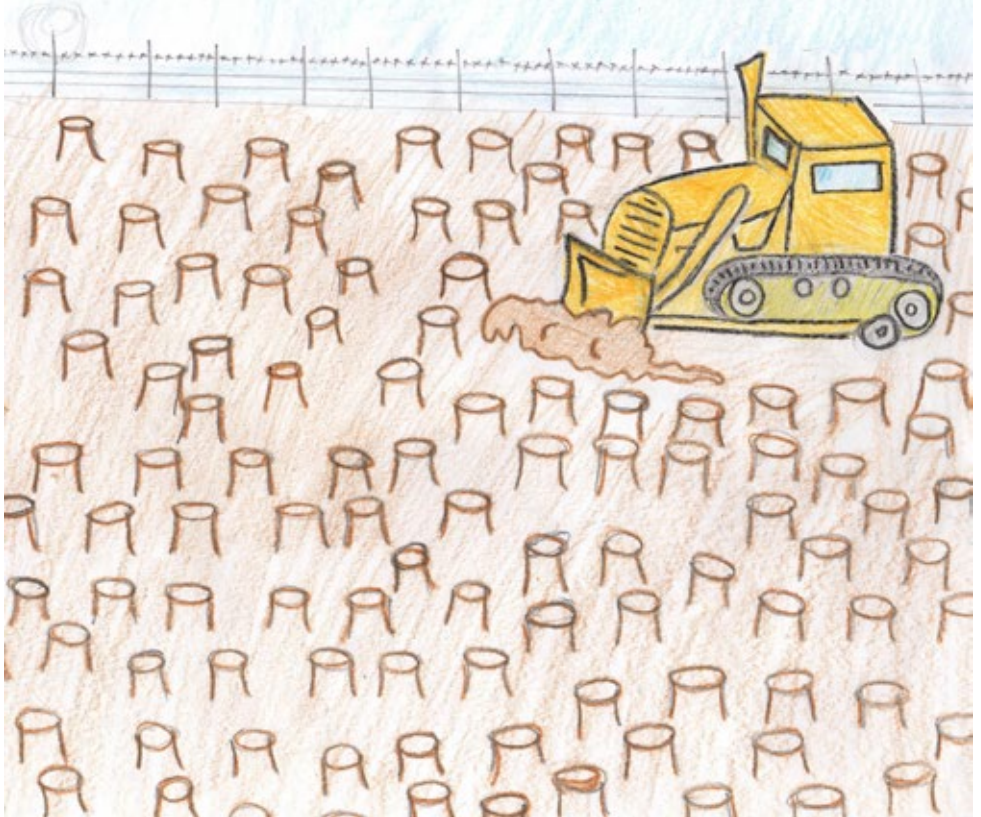
Our Catchment Champion is Delwyn Clifton. She is a well-known member of the Buraja-Lowesdale community, near Corowa, in the New South Wales Riverina. Delwyn is known as a farmer, environmentalist, Landcare member, wife and mother. Her passion for environmentally sustainable practices has influenced and benefited our rural community, which forms part of the Murray River Catchment.

Photo: Delwyn Clifton (right) with Wodonga Albury Towards Climate Health spokeswoman Lizette Salmon (Source: The Border Mail, Matthew Smithwick)



Childhood

Delwyn grew up on a dairy farm near Rochester, Victoria. The family farm also had dry cropping of cereal crops. She remembers that when she was younger there was a small native forest on the farm. One day she came home from school to find that it had been bulldozed. She remembers that there was hardly any wildlife around after that.





Family

Delwyn met her husband Andrew while visiting Corowa. After they were married they moved to Andrew's family farm, 'Fairfield', in the Buraja-Lowesdale area. They produce crops, wool and lambs. They have four children; Rhyce, Ryan, Mason and Harrison who share Delwyn's interests, studying such fields as landscape architecture, biology, business and agriculture.



Influences

Having seen the loss of habitat resulting from clearing at her childhood home, Delwyn has long been aware of the need for native vegetation and biodiversity. She remembers the Savernake Environment Day, a meeting of concerned landholders, as a turning point in wanting to farm in a more sustainable manner. This also encouraged Delwyn and Andrew to become involved with Landcare at an early stage.



At Fairfield

On 'Fairfield', Delwyn and her family have carried out tree planting along roads, to create corridors of tree cover, linking areas of natural bushland. These corridors, as well as attracting native birdlife, form 'living haystacks' for stockfeed.

They have increased the tree cover to around 18%. Some farms have only 1%.

Delwyn was excited to see an endangered quoll on her farm.



Corowa District Landcare

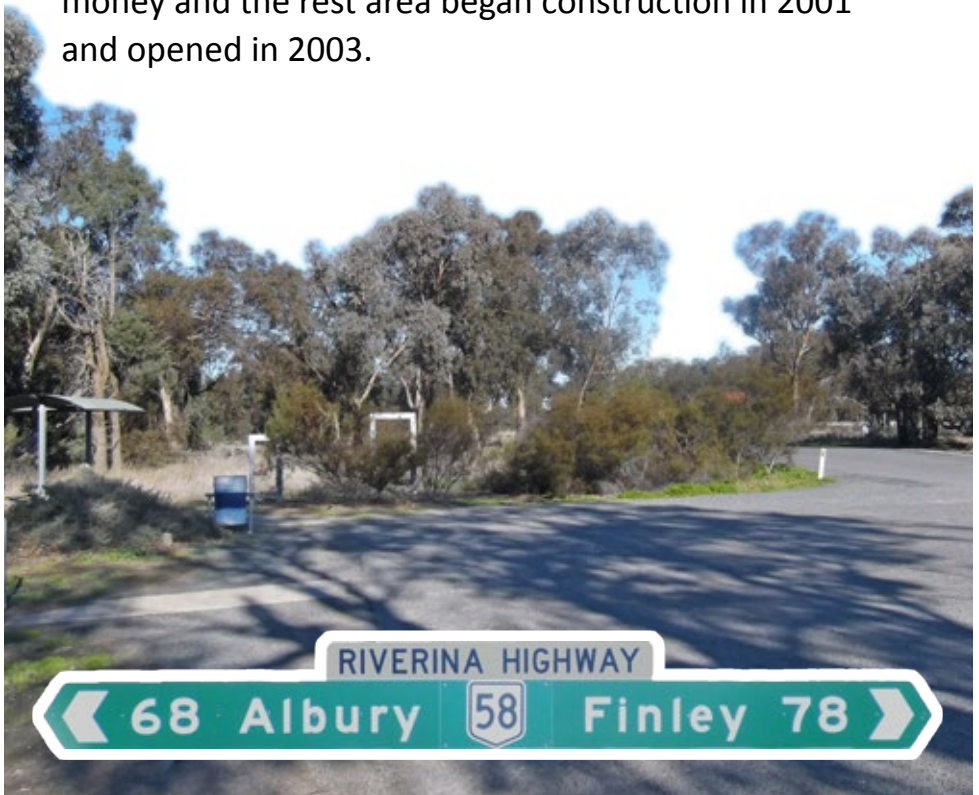
Delwyn was one of 30 founding members of Corowa District Landcare which was formed in 1996. Currently 140 members are signed up. Landcare groups are formed when the community notices natural resource issues in the area. Corowa District Landcare has been involved with revegetation, threatened species conservation, wetland management and many more on-ground works. Since 2011 Delwyn has held a role as the Eastern Murray Community Support Officer.



Buraja Rest Area

Originally people who stopped at the Riverina Highway - Urana Road intersection would just drop their rubbish. Delwyn went to the Roads and Traffic Authority to ask if a proper rest area could be built. They explained that unfortunately rubbish is found on all roadsides.

She tried again months later, bringing up that it was dangerous not to have a proper rest area because parked trucks were blocking drivers' view. That got their attention and they agreed. A year later the RTA had the money and the rest area began construction in 2001 and opened in 2003.





Delwyn invited Lowesdale school to help with plantings at Buraja rest stop. Together with children, parents and community members they have helped plant over 500 trees and shrubs. Delwyn has helped Lowesdale Public School choose and plant native species on the school grounds. She will continue to help the school with revegetation around the new tennis court and other plantings.





Recognition

Delwyn won the Community Inspiration Award and was a finalist in the Individual Carer of the Land and Primary Producer categories in the 2009 Murray Catchment Resource Management Awards. She was a regional winner of the 2009 Conservation Farmer of the Year. However, other farmers observing and adopting more sustainable practices is the best recognition of all.



Future Directions

Delwyn plans to promote the introduction of dung beetles in all seasons, because they improve the soil. Dung beetles are not as widely used and understood as they could be. She also wants to continue to plant saltbush because kangaroos don't eat it. Delwyn will continue to encourage others to link bush areas with corridor plantings, to provide a biodiverse habitat.

In her words...

We feel with farming, that it's all about balance. What is sustainable today ... may not be tomorrow.

We are farmers...however we look upon ourselves more as custodians of the land, who wish to leave the land in better shape for the next generation.

So for these reasons we chose to join the local Landcare group 17 years ago, in search of information to not only protect our large remnant areas, but to build on them and learn how to increase biodiversity in a farming system.

Delwyn Clifton





Back Row: Delwyn Clifton and James Southam. Middle Row: Ryan Good, Shannon Leahy, Ellen Lavis and Dougal Robb. Front Row: Alex Lavis and Matilda Robb.

2013 Year 3-6, Lowesdale Public School

The 2012 and 2013 Creative Catchment Kids writing program was showcased at the Seventh World Environmental Education Congress, held in Morocco during June 2013.



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Catchment Management Authority Murrumbidgee