



**No 158**  
**March**  
**2024**

# AABR NEWS

Australian Association of Bush Regenerators  
*working with natural processes*

## AABR NATIONAL FORUM

Speakers include Tein McDonald, Craig McGrath, Brian Bainbridge, Lincoln Kern, Ian Davidson, Liam Gallagher, Jillian West and Uncle Shane

**More information and booking, go to**

<https://www.aabr.org.au/event/aabr-national-forum/>

## SYMPOSIUM presented by AABR & TAFE NSW

**Auditorium at Ryde Tafe, 250 Blaxland Rd, Ryde 2112 \$20 – \$130**

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# President's Perspective

Bush Regeneration is one of those sweet professions or activities where practitioners can be satisfied that they are engaged in a positive thing. There are few moral or ethical dilemmas and I can't think of any regenerator, volunteer or paid, that would not be proud about telling others about what they do.

One area where angst can arise is the scale of pace of what we do in comparison to the ongoing destruction of habitat, either through land clearing or through gradual decline from ongoing poor ecological management.

We are constantly bombarded with horrifying figures about deforestation and habitat clearing, especially in NSW and Queensland. A recent Guardian article shows that over 2m ha of bush have been cleared in Queensland alone in the last 5 years. Across Australia, the largest single purpose for clearing of native habitat has been for agriculture.

There are a few interesting points to consider here. Some of the best private land habitat managers in Australia are farmers, so we know that agriculture and biodiversity can coexist. We also have the Landcare movement; one of the largest social and environmental movements in Australia and there are hundreds of thousands of farmers and rural landowners actively managing their land for biodiversity and restoration. On the down side, much of the land being cleared for agriculture is classified as 'regrowth'... previously cleared land that has only been regenerating for a certain, legislated period of time.

To many involved in the restoration of ecosystems, clearing of regrowth is an irony. These areas are those that demonstrate a significant amount of resilience, often because they were only cleared relatively recently or have only had low levels of ongoing disturbance. Yet, while the government and other funders/resourcers ply (very appropriately!!) significant funds

(yet orders of magnitude less than needed!!) into restoration of ecosystems, resilient or not, there is no coherent national strategy to research and map out what areas of 'regrowth' are needed to recover to create the core and connected habitats needed to preserve all of our species and ecological communities and to allow evolutionary (and climate necessary) processes to occur.

I won't enter the debate about landholder responsibility here, and whether or not we should pay people/companies to not clear vegetation on their farms, but I will argue that a lot of regrowth would be an easy and relatively cheap avenue to reaching the 2030 Kunming Montreal targets, especially that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.

I acknowledge that there are many individual landholders allowing and managing regrowth and many programs from governments and NGOs to assist, encourage and fund this, but our biodiversity and extinction crises, mapped against cumulative impact, climate change and a surge in biosecurity emergencies means that we can't continue with an underfunded, shotgun approach. There is a range of legislative and regulatory reform going on around Australia, with a range of new mechanisms to be rolled out. This could be positive, but we need our governments to ensure that there are a suite of mechanisms, that target the spectrum of those who would engage, from the altruistic to the financially mercenary in a strategic way, with sufficient resources so that we can demonstrably recover and maintain all of our native species.

Peter Dixon, President  
[president@aabr.org.au](mailto:president@aabr.org.au) or call 0478 741 111..

## Welcome to new AABR Members

### Congratulations on Accreditation

Joshua Gray

Michael Towle

Michael Ward

Travis Jolly

### Members

Aina Alaan

Bronwyn Alder

Charlie de Jager

Christian Kuzevski

David Allworth

Dylan Rosen

Elisha Duxbury

Gary Clark

Gerarad 'Gez' Watt

Heather-anne Kemp

James Meade

Jayden Walsh

Jeanna Wilson

Jenni Olsen

Jonathan Nester

Julian Raja

Kelly Bollinger

Lewis Peach

Lincoln Downes

Mack Clarke

Marina Zhang

Meredith Cosgrove

Michael Rykers

Mitchell Young

Oliver Collocott

Oliver Arjonilla

Rachel Nelsson

Richard Anderson

Robert Crane

Rodney Bright

Samuel Hazeldine

Teagen Armstrong

### Not For Profit

Bankstown Bushland Society Inc.

Friends of the Escarpment Parks Inc

### Business

J M Bushland Maintenance

Arboregreen-Head Office

Ecology Consulting Pty Ltd

*"AABR acknowledges Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations of this continent and recognises their custodianship and continuing connection to its land, waters and community.*

*We pay our respects to the Elders past and present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of Indigenous peoples across the nation."*

# Restoration of Littoral Rainforest

Scott Meier, AABR Board Member  
BARRC (Bushland and Rainforest Restoration & Consulting).

Littoral Rainforest (LRF) occurs in small pockets along the east coast of Australia from Cape York Peninsula into Victoria and is often described as being confined to within 2km of the ocean or major estuary. It is a fire sensitive community that often presents as the shortest form of 'rainforest', sometimes less than knee height. It grades into a taller rain-shrubland then develops taller and straighter trunks behind the protective 'leading edge', especially as the site levels or descends into sheltered creek-lines with additional protection from drying and salt laden winds and fire.

This closed canopy mesic vegetation community can inhabit rocky and exposed coastal cliffs, and the sheltered corners provided by headlands. But it also occurs on aeolian sands, alluvial deposits, sedimentary soils and volcanics located in other fire protected locations.

Littoral Rainforest is listed as Critically Endangered under the *Federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC)*. The Act's listing advice estimates 16,135ha remaining LRF in Queensland, 1,624ha in NSW and 279ha in Victoria. LRF is listed as Endangered under the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (2016)*.

In NSW, the area where I reside, Alex Floyd (1990) in his climactic classification, places Littoral Rainforest in the subtropical subformation, grouped under the *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* (tuckeroo) – *Acmena* spp. (lillypilly) alliance, and identifies 5 suballiances of LRF within: *Syzygium luehmannii-Acmena helilampera*; *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*; *Lophostemon confertus*; *Drypetes – Sarcomelicope – Cassine – Podocarpus*; and *Acmena smithii – Ficus* spp. – *Livistona – Podocarpus*.

In our contemporary landscape LRF is often highly fragmented, near residential areas and recreation areas. Many of the remnants are tiny, with an estimated 433 patches in NSW - the majority in the 1-10ha patch size (EPBC Listing advice). These patches are often impacted by recreation, coastal erosion, changed hydrology and heavy weed invasion.

## Use the correct strategy for the leading edge

In my experience, working on the east coast of NSW, LRF is among the least understood vegetation communities when it comes to restoration. Incorrect strategy can greatly lengthen restoration timeframes and severely impact otherwise intact canopy which can take decades to repair.

It is imperative to understand that the 'leading edge' of Littoral Rainforest canopy in many locations is almost continually pruned by drying, salt-laden breezes and winds that can be very strong. Established LRF often presents with a canopy that appears as a manicured hedge (see photo 1). The leaves are often smaller, thicker, and stiffer than equivalent species occurring beyond the leading edge and are tightly packed with only defoliated branch tips projecting beyond the otherwise uniform and carefully curved and closed canopy. This canopy is usually tangled with an array of native vines that help bind the shrubs or trees together and buffer against coastal storms. Should a canopy break appear, vines are often the first to fill the gap and protect from wind entering beneath the canopy.



Photo 1: contrast of tightly pruned LRF and coastal erosion.

Allowing wind beneath the canopy of LRF can have long term consequences for the vegetation upwind of the canopy gap. I have witnessed bush regeneration projects where leading-edge LRF weeds have been comprehensively removed and canopy height upwind has been severely affected and remains less than half the original height more than 20 years later. Photo 2 shows the effect of removing leading edge weeds and cutting dead and living trees for firewood. In this situation, young, straight, and similar age tuckeroo sp on the skyline indicate a historic germination or equivalent low-canopy release event and subsequent competition for light amongst many trees.

Most LRF trees, in my experience on the NSW coast, cannot develop this tall and straight habit in isolation. Following the removal of leading-edge vegetation and wind barriers, it is a common occurrence for the remaining taller trees to steadily die as is demonstrated in this photo. I have observed the trees of the headland portrayed in photo 2. They are thin and fall over a period of many years, and now these few remain. It is unlikely that any of the isolated trees in this photo will survive to the point where the subcanopy joins the emergent canopy. As a point of interest, the sclerophyll component of the canopy in the left of this photo probably informs us of the indigenous management of this small headland.

When considering removal of weed species from the leading edge of LRF, it is crucial to estimate the canopy 'step' height that will be created, the size of the gap and the speed with which other species will fill the gap. Such a scenario can be encountered when controlling lantana or bitou bush on the leading edge. In many of these scenarios I would recommend pruning of woody weed species or selective branch removal, to allow natives to develop and harden their new-growth prior to further weed pruning or complete weed control - this may take several years. Additionally, it is often best to leave the woody weed frame in place to allow native vines to utilise

Photo 2: Isolated tuckeroo in the distance indicate the previous form of vegetation in the foreground.



the structure as a trellis, also the remaining controlled weed frames and leaves offer minor wind protection.

Careful attention should be paid to larger rainforest trees when they are heavily overgrown with vines or woody climbers, be the vines or climbers native or exotic. In the first instance it is advisable to control only 10% of the smothering plant. As the new growth develops amidst the remaining canopy infestation, further vine pruning can occur. Failure to stage canopy development will most likely see a significant flush of fragile new growth. This can subsequently be wind pruned and killed to the extent that the tree will be required to reshoot from much further down the trunk and effectively reduce the canopy height of the tree by 90%. In the event of successful canopy development, the remaining vines or weedy climbers must be regularly assessed and pruned to prevent the newly forming branches from collapse by the rapid growth of remaining vines etc. This attention to detail is usually not required when restoring other types of rainforests.

Leading edge LRF restoration may be required to commence many metres in front of established shrubs and trees. This can be done with a diversity of groundcovers, trees, shrubs and vines and any suitable structure. Simple post & wire 'message fences' may be required to exclude pedestrian access. These fences can then have material attached to form a temporary wind barrier (photo 3). Groundcovers such as kangaroo grass, blady grass and scaevola are often an important first shelter for spontaneous (natural) or facilitated (assisted) regeneration of trees and shrubs whose germination can be triggered by gentle disturbance during selective weed removal. Fast growing *Acacia* sp are ideal for sheltering exposed rainforest shrubs with sparse foliage and this allows them to develop a full protective barrier of leaves.

A note with respect to wind barriers in aeolian wind-blown sand environments. These temporary fences can at times become completely buried by shifting sands and may be very difficult to remove. In these situations, it is often best to construct the fence and wind barrier from natural materials that can remain on site and decompose over time. I have

seen many dune restoration sites with countless meters of plastic 'silt-fence' buried with no intention of removal. This plastic refuse has no place buried within dune systems where significant indigenous artefacts and burials often occur.

It usually does not make sense to remove existing woody weed barriers to wind and unwanted access simply to replace them with a constructed barrier. Living barriers usually offer much better protection and can be fashioned over time to suit changing conditions. Weeds such as lantana and bitou bush are often ever present in the surrounding environment and their removal may contribute little to propagate



Figure 3: Wind barriers constructed from timber and hessian and installed following inappropriate woody weed removal. Note the extensive new growth on the *Rapanea variabilis* in the foreground.

availability. Ultimately it is the well-developed ecological community that plays the greater role in the minimisation of the spread of these weeds, however each site must be carefully assessed in order to make this and many other decisions regarding restoration.

Assisted or facilitated regeneration of LRF is often dominated by fast growing pioneer species in the early stages of a project. Species such as *Acacia longifolia*, *Trema tomentosum*, and *Androclava fraseri* can transform canopy gaps in 1-2 years and can help reduce the maintenance required from large invasive grasses, vines or other smothering exotics and natives. I find that it is important to assess the impact from each of these early succession natives and exotics. Many of the weed species do not require comprehensive control and may protect later phase germinants and suckers from herbivory, foot traffic and scorching sun. A goal during restoration of LRF should be to facilitate the development of as many mature phase trees as possible and this may involve canopy lifting or pruning any of the regenerating or remnant vegetation; placing woody structures to protect seedlings; training spikey and other vines across edge gaps and into the canopy. Pioneer species such as those listed can go from dominance to senesce and die within 3-4 years from germination, so succession must be considered from the outset. Many rainforest species are particularly capable of migrating long distances and experienced regenerators should look to encourage natural regeneration wherever possible, but not to the extent that broader areas receive inadequate attention and the vine load on immature canopy or other significant threats are not addressed.

Restoration of LRF can be a very demanding undertaking, especially in smaller remnants with many edges having low

resistance to weed invasion. Restoration should be undertaken by experienced practitioners with adequate resourcing over meaningful timeframes. In many LRF restoration projects, canopy release over the widest possible area is the priority. This will promote rapid canopy development of existing vegetation which will assist with control of sub-canopy weed growth rates and weed diversity.

Comprehensive control or eradication of weed species should be reserved for ecosystem transformers or for other important reasons, such as on an eco-tone between LRF and sclerophyll vegetation surrounding the endangered magenta lillipilli (*Syzygium paniculatum*). This species will often germinate in close proximity to parent trees following disturbance. But it is much less likely to survive as a seedling with dense ground-cover competition from the likes of the fast-growing exotic grass *Ehrharta erecta* or other smothering natives and exotics of differing life forms. *Tradescantia* sp. can often be initially contained but later fully controlled following canopy closure or when resources allow for detailed works. Many native pioneer species will readily compete with moderate density weed competition and as this native pioneer canopy develops, weeds and strangling vines can be thinned. Later phase rainforest species will readily germinate under closed or partial canopy dominated by pioneer species, and are more likely to survive without groundcover competition in contrast to pioneer species that can usually tolerate greater groundcover competition. As with all restoration projects, adaptive management is required and prescriptions can vary on a metre-by-metre basis or remain broadly uniform throughout the project area or a region.



Photo 4: Juvenile littoral rainforest in trouble, probably following bitou bush removal. Here native vines are being actively trained onto the young trees to help reduce the impact from wind.

Photos: Scott Meier

## Reference Ecosystems and assessment

Although I'm bringing the discussion regarding 'reference ecosystem' towards the closure of the article, this must be carefully considered - ideally prior to project commencement. Principle 1 of the *SERA National Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration in Australia* is: 'Ecological Restoration practice is based on an appropriate local native reference ecosystem'. This topic warrants detailed further discussion beyond this article, but by way of introduction I might reflect upon one coastal site with which I've been involved for 20 years. The site is approximately 1 km long and 80-100m wide and contains at least 8 vegetation communities - these being: graminoid (grass), heath, swamp sclerophyll and 5 mesic communities. Three of the mesic communities are LRF, one sub-tropical and another dry rainforest. These communities blend. Additionally, vegetation community succession is in play, which continues to be influenced by historical indigenous and colonial management and by ongoing natural disturbance such as wildfire. Five of these communities are listed under the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (2016)* which adds complexities to management as does habitat considerations, management restrictions, resourcing, restoration practicalities and permanent hydrological changes. Inability to 'read' these communities and their life cycles accurately will heavily impact restoration outcomes and cost, as does the inability to combine the other listed considerations.

Triage of a site is amongst the most difficult of restoration tasks. Rapid on-ground site assessment and the need to commence restoration activity in a short timeframe is commonplace. These early steps are best undertaken with

all the relevant representatives from funders to managers, owners (traditional & otherwise) and practitioners. As per a medical practitioner, I find that assessing for threats is a critical early step. With respect to vegetation, I find it very important to distinguish the specific role of facilitating seedling regeneration from stabilising the site and addressing the most pressing threats. Threats can be from erosion, nutrient runoff, flooding or vines and many other directions - the most impacting threats should be controlled or contained over the largest possible area - generally prior to seeking regeneration or applying reintroduction such as planting or propagule dispersal. This is often because of the practicalities of avoiding damage to desirable seedlings and regrowth while attempting to arrest threats such as erosion or heavy weed infestation that requires efficient control techniques.

We must also consider that threats can be written into site specifications, and in my experience they regularly are. If so, these issues will probably need to be addressed prior to on-ground works commencing.

Amidst the broader restoration backdrop of goodwill and many stellar and pioneering restoration outcomes there is, in my opinion, a significant amount of restoration practice and management that is poor and unacceptable and does not do justice to the millennia of indigenous management, the pioneers of our industry or meet the urgency of global biodiversity collapse. I envisage a revitalised restoration movement, celebrating depth of practice and knowledge, with broader voices brought to the table along with a spirit willing to address our individual and collective missteps - ecodaptive management. How privileged are we to undertake such restorative action in the socio-natural sphere?

## AABR Fest 2024: The Return of the Regenerators!

Get ready to mark your calendars because the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators is back with another experiential gathering - AABR Fest: The Return of the Regenerators! Happening from Friday May 24th - Sunday 26th at the picturesque Kariong Scout Camp, this event promises to be a haven for bush regenerators and enthusiasts of ecological restoration alike.

AABR Fest isn't just an event; it's a vibrant, family friendly community gathering where participants can immerse themselves in learning, networking, and reconnecting with fellow stewards of the land. This gathering offers a unique opportunity to rejuvenate both mind and spirit.

Since its establishment in 1986, AABR has been at the forefront of promoting excellence in ecological restoration throughout Australia. AABR Fest embodies this dedication by offering a diverse range of activities, from engaging presentations to immersive workshops. Attendees will have the chance to learn from the wisdom of the AABR Board and members, participate in workshops to sharpen your flora and fauna identification skills, and share and celebrate with music, laughter and performances.

But the learning doesn't stop there. Participants can also gain hands-on experience with bush foods, and local soils and geology. And what's a gathering without some captivating conversations? Gather around the campfire with the founders and friends of AABR for an evening of inspiring dialogue under the stars, trivia to test your knowledge and song session to power up the creativity.

Amidst all the activities, don't forget to take in the natural wonders surrounding AABR Fest. Kariong Scout Camp offers a sanctuary for nature-lovers. Wake up to the symphony of birdlife, meander through serene forest trails, and keep your eyes peeled for glimpses of wildlife and diverse flora and enjoy sunset beers at the waterfall.

Join us for AABR Fest2 - The Return of the Regenerators and be part of the ongoing journey towards ecological restoration. Let's come together to celebrate, learn, get creative and continue the vital work of regenerating our precious natural habitats. See you there!

Get your tickets <https://www.givar.com/campaigns/aabrfest---return-of-the-regenerators->

For more information as the program develops <https://www.aabr.org.au/event/aabr-fest-return-of-the-regenerators>



# Book

## ACT Weeds Manual

Vera Kurz - Friends of Tuggeranong Hill ParkCare Group

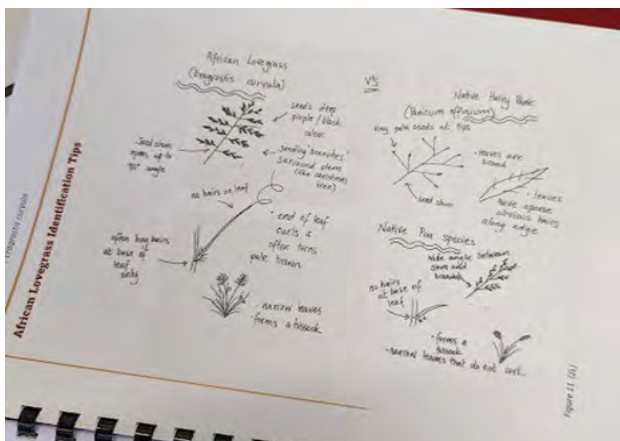
October 2023 saw the launch of the ACT Weeds Manual, a resource by and for environmental volunteers in the ACT.



The launch of ACTG Weeds Manual on Oct 31 2023 at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands ranger office.

The manual was around a year in the making, and is designed to be a hands on practical one-stop resource for identifying and treating weeds in the reserves and urban open spaces of Canberra. There is a strong community of environmental volunteers in the ACT, and we want to ensure that our work is evidence based, best practice as approved by the land manager and making the absolute most efficient use of our efforts. This is a manual which new and existing volunteers can turn to for the latest and most reliable information, to identify, prioritise and treat weeds in their patch.

A group of about 20 volunteers contributed to the manual, as did the Volunteer Programs team within the Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), as well as Southern ACT Catchment Group (SACTCG), who were both very supportive of the project. Weed ratings and priorities were also taken from the PCS Invasive Plants Control Plan 2020-25. This process did not just contribute to making the manual relevant and informative, I also found it very rewarding. It is lovely to work together on a project with such enthusiasm. I cannot thank this group enough for their efforts in creating this manual.



Drawing of African Lovegrass key identification features by Zohara Lucas, SACTCG.

Once we had a pretty good draft we went to the Biosecurity Team within ACT Government, Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), to representatives from Friends of Grasslands (FoG) and other experts for fact checking on all aspects.

### Online Access

From the start I was always clear that this should be a digital publication, so that it could be updated regularly to reflect changing priorities and remain accurate. SACTCG have hosted the manual on their website with the assistance of grants from Friends of Grasslands the ACT Environment Grants Program 2022-2023. Online access from:

- Park Care Hub - <https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/7baf50be-3b65-4dd3-bc53-04307685cfdb>
- Volunteer Portal for TCCS volunteers - <https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/39d8c74b-da74-4602-bef9-a97c42ae0e70/1>
- ACT Invasive Plants Control Plan – to access the latest plan, previous plans, and other useful info on reporting and identifying weeds go to <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants-and-animals/biosecurity/invasive-plants>

### PDF Format

It is in PDF format (see photo), with the intention that volunteers can easily download and print individual weed profiles as they wish. The preference is for users to access the latest version via the website rather than printing out the whole document, both to save paper and so that they are using the most up to date version. In terms of review, the plan is to undertake formal updates every two years, and to gather comments and feedback via an online form on the SACTCG website attached to the Weeds Manual.

Thanks to all the people who contributed to this project so generously, and to FoG for their support. I hope it will be a useful resource to assist the fabulous work which so many volunteers undertake right across ACT's precious natural estate and possibly in surrounding areas of NSW.



Left: Zohara Lucas (SACTCG) demonstrating the manual.

Photos with thanks from Maree Wright, Landcare ACT Communications.

# Why soil health matters in restoration, and how bush regenerators can better connect soil health to their restoration outcomes

**Lachlan Curran**

**PhD student, University of Queensland.**

Beneath our feet lie some of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet. It is estimated that over half of all species reside within the soil. The complex interactions between these species and the wider environment drive a range of ecosystem services. These services are influenced by, and are critical for, the functioning, stability and resilience of the aboveground macroscopic ecosystems we are used to engaging with. We have only begun to scratch the surface of these interactions, which likely vary in their direction and magnitude of effect.

Over the last few decades, existing technologies have been refined, and new technologies have emerged which allow us to probe deeply into these relationships. Whilst I find this interesting from an academic perspective, we can also apply these technologies to better inform our decision making in restoration. In December 2023, I had the privilege of presenting some of these methods to the AABR AGM. The key messages of this presentation include the potential applications of DNA metabarcoding for informing the ongoing work of bush regenerators.

## My Research

In 2022, I was given the opportunity to investigate the soil fungi community within Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve in Maleny (situated on Jinibara Country), in South East Queensland, as part of my Honours Thesis with the University of Queensland. I chose to focus on the fungal component of this ecosystem for several reasons. Firstly, soil fungi, alongside bacteria, are the dominant taxa within the soil ecosystem. Therefore, they strongly influence the rate of key ecosystem services that are of interest to bush regenerators, such as decomposition and nutrient cycling.

Of particular interest are mycorrhizal fungi, which many people have heard of and which form mutualistic associations with one or more plants, and are critical for ecosystem function. They provide their host plants with water, limiting nutrients and protection from pathogens and herbivores in return for the sugars and amino acids. Many plants require specific mycorrhizal partners to establish and reach reproductive maturity. Many animals, such as bandicoots and bilbies, also rely on mycorrhizae for their diets. Fungi are also the major decomposers within the ecosystem and fungal pathogens of plants and animals are important in maintaining their population dynamics.

## Using DNA for identification

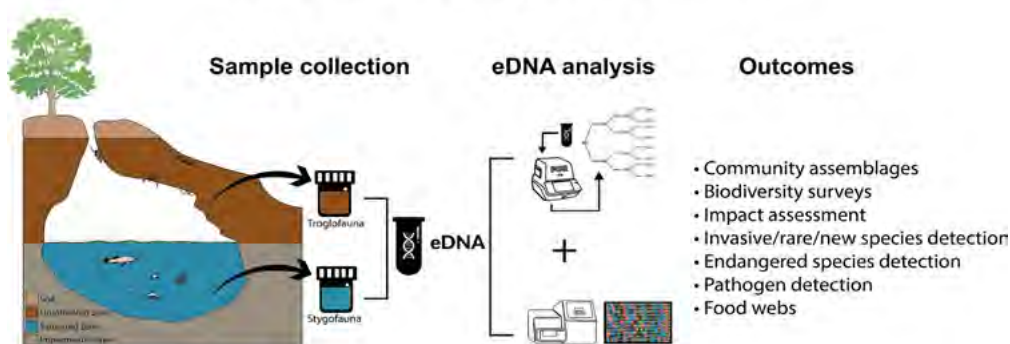
Therefore soil fungi are critical to the overall functioning of an ecosystem, yet they are also often overlooked in ecosystem management and restoration. This isn't to say restoration practitioners are ignorant of, or do not care about fungi! It is simply easier to record and observe plants and animals than fungi, which spend most of their lives invisible to us. One way to get around this problem is to use gene technologies, such as DNA metabarcoding (a method of specimen identification using short, standardised segments of DNA), or the analysis of particular sections of DNA from many organisms.

Within the genomes of all organisms lie regions of DNA that mutate at a far slower rate than others. Mutation is a random process that we can think of as randomly changing one letter in a book. Most of the time, this change doesn't make sense, which reduces the fitness of an organism. Therefore it is less likely to stick around in a population over time. For example, all cells contain structures called ribosomes that are used to construct proteins. As ribosomal DNA encodes very specific, very complex instructions, these mutations are less likely to be passed down. Consequently, ribosomal DNA is perfect for identifying species, as we can compare very similar stretches of DNA across whole sections of the tree of life. By

extracting these sections from a soil sample and amplifying them to detectable levels, we can then figure out which organisms might be in our ecosystem.

I say 'might', as this method doesn't just collect DNA from living organisms. We also capture DNA from dead matter, faeces, hair, and other traces of living organisms. However, as DNA tends to degrade quickly outside of a living cell, we can be confident that most of what we are detecting comes from living organism.

## So what exactly is eDNA?



Saccò, M., Guzik, M. T., van der Heyde, M., Nevill, P., Cooper, S. J. B., Austin, A. D., Coates, P. J., Allentoft, M. E., & White, N. E. (2022). eDNA in subterranean ecosystems: Applications, technical aspects, and future prospects. *The Science of the Total Environment*, 820, 153223–153223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.153223>

I used this method to determine the composition of the soil fungal community within Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve. At this site, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council has been restoring parcels of land around the remnant subtropical rainforest. This allowed me to sample across a gradient of land use, from subtropical remnant to secondary mature woody pioneers species to pasture.

Alongside my DNA samples, I also measured multiple environmental properties that we know influence the composition of this community. This included soil and litter nutrients; properties of the above ground plant community; and geographic distance between samples; and distance between samples and the edge of the remnant. I also assigned the known functional guild of each fungal taxon as either free living saprobe (fungus living on decaying organisms), plant pathogen, endomycorrhizal and ectomycorrhizal fungi (the latter do not penetrate as deeply into the plant as endomycorrhizal fungi). These methods provided me with a wealth of environmental data at relatively low cost and effort.

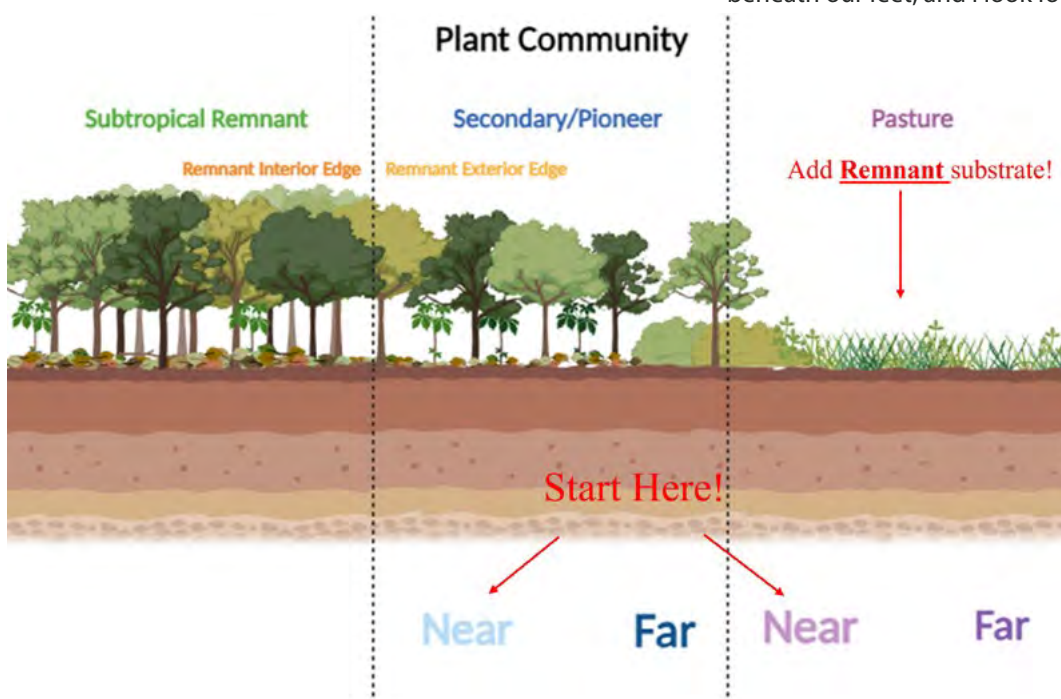
## Results of research

My investigation yielded two key results:

First, the compositional variation of the fungal community within the soils was extremely low in pasture soils relative to soils dominated by woody vegetation. At this scale (10s to 100s of metres), the composition of the soil fungal community is strongly influenced by the chemical and structural variation of the soil, which in turn is driven by the diversity and type of plant species within the site. This diversity was greater in soils dominated by woody vegetation relative to the pastures. In essence, there were more things on the menu to eat, and more places to live in the woody environments which attracted a greater diversity of species.

Second, as the distance from the remnant edge increased, total fungal species richness decreased.

Together these two results tell us that we can expect fewer species, in less fewer combinations, in herbaceous environments far from the remnant vegetation.



## How might these results be used to inform restoration in the site?

Currently we do not understand the ecology of most fungi species we detect in our samples. Of those we do understand, it is very difficult to manipulate their populations towards a desired outcome.

Instead, we can fall back to some core ecological principals. As the taxonomic diversity within an ecosystem increases, so too will its functional diversity. As this functional diversity increases, so too will the functional redundancy, or the number of species that perform very similar functions.

We consider a healthy ecosystem to possess both high functional diversity and redundancy. Therefore, sites close to a remnant ecosystem, with a more diverse plant community should be prioritised for restoration.

We can also increase the diversity of the fungal community further by supplementing the site with complex substrates like those that can be found in the remnant. In doing so, we can select for species that are functionally, if not taxonomically, similar to that of the remnant. By surveying the soil fungi community, we can better determine which sites we should prioritise for restoration.

DNA metabarcoding may also be used to monitor our long-term restoration efforts. In theory, the functional and taxonomic composition of the soil fungi community should become more similar to that of the remnant over time. If we fail to see this change, alternative strategies may be required. For example, this may help us to determine if a site may require more direct intervention, such as through active plantings or abiotic soil amendments.

Soil ecosystems are breathtaking in their diversity and complexity, and it is my privilege to explore this world everyday in my work. Whilst I have had to summarise a great deal of what I have learned, I believe this work demonstrates the importance of the soil fungal community in ecosystem function and restoration. I also believe that this same sort of data can be acquired by any bush regenerator with the right support. There is so much left to learn about the earth beneath our feet, and I look forward to every discovery.

Diagram shows when planning restoration, prioritise sites close to a remnant ecosystem, as these have a more diverse plant community.

Sites which are degraded may not have such biodiversity. In these areas, fungal biodiversity can be increased by supplementing with complex substrates such as those which are found in the remnant.

We can better determine which sites we should prioritise for restoration by surveying the soil fungi community,

Sourcing substrate involves taking samples from nearby remnants from a diverse range of litter types.

Watch the video of Lachlan's presentation at the AABR AGM <https://youtu.be/naCD-mWr6XU>.

# Art telling restoration stories - a brief conversation with Tein McDonald

It is not unusual for ecological restoration practitioners to be involved in the arts - or for artists to be involved in ecological restoration. After all, both fields are fundamentally creative ones. AABR News is keen to publish short interviews with people that fall into either category over the coming months and years. In this issue Louise Brodie (LB) talks to our interviewee Tein McDonald (TM) who recently held an exhibition titled *Layers of Landscape* at Cooma's Raglan Gallery.

**LB:** Tein – I understand that the theme related to various aspects of landscape, but could you describe a couple of the works and how you set about getting the idea for the exhibition; was it past works that came together, or did you plan it from scratch?

**TM:** Well – a bit of both. The exhibition contained five paintings that I started some decades ago when I found myself working closely with Bandjalang elders in the Coraki-Evans Head area on the north coast of NSW. They were like a private diary back in those days, recording ways the Bandjalang custodians survived a chain of disasters and abuses yet continue to care for their landscapes. But a few years ago I gained the blessing of the current elders to finish them and show them to visitors to a gallery as a personal contribution towards truth-telling before they were returned to the homes of the elders where they belong.

So they were the older works - but the exhibition also included another 20 paintings and photographs that were more recent and focus on other aspects of landscape.

**LB:** And did you include any about bush regeneration as a theme?

**TM:** Well, the show included the Blue Signatures statement that the last AABR News published a short snippet on (see News 157). That work referenced the actions of many people in bush regeneration and emphasised my view that I consider the actual work on the ground to be the real art work... not the photo or the painting that represents it in a gallery. This was the message of one of the Bandjalang paintings too – which referred to on-ground bush regeneration carried out collaboratively between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners.



Alchemy 1. From an ant's perspective the leaf litter the shade of a Ribbon Gum is a landscape in which to forage. The title and legend refer to the magic of decomposition performed by the interaction of plants, organisms, bark, leaf litter, soil and water.



Decline and recovery at *Allendale* Boorowa NSW.

The upper panel depicts the declining condition of *Allendale* Boorowa NSW, under conventional farming practices.

The lower panel represents the gradual recovery of all these elements over 2 decades due to more regenerative farm management practice.

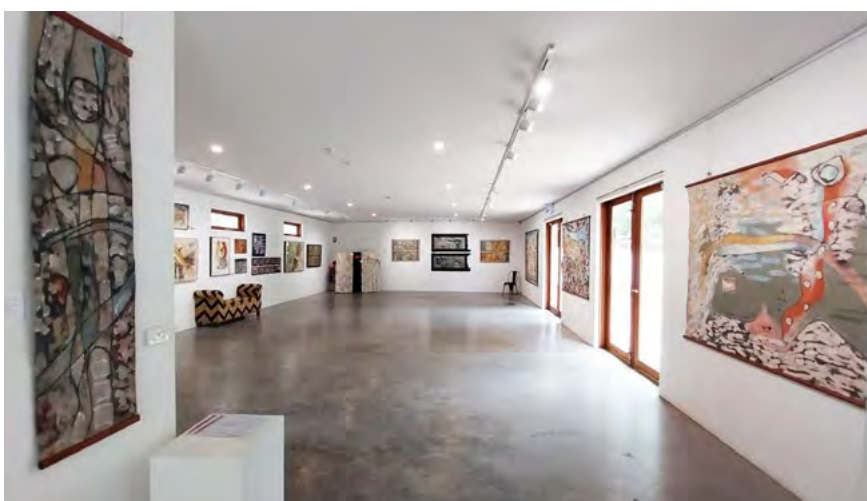
But the exhibition also included a series of five paintings that I refer to a 'land repair' series. Four of these were comprised of two panels – the upper panel showing the process of degradation over time and the lower panel showing the process of recovery over time. They were fun to do and fun to explain to people because they are about real restoration sites in NSW - not ones that I have personally worked on but ones that I have visited and inspire me.

There was a fourth series of paintings and photographs that did not have a particular message other than celebrating the beauty of patterns in nature – whether the micro-landscapes that can be found in tree barks or leaf litter or larger scale landscapes. I feel it is important for painting to communicate beauty through colour and texture and pattern to touch the soul a little. That's why they have music in churches I guess.... you can't preach all the time. Sometimes you have to let art talk.

**LB:** Did you feel that people who came to the exhibition got an understanding of bush regeneration or an appreciation of bushland?

**TM:** The response was very encouraging. Of course those who already had some understanding and appreciation of bushland got more out of it - but I'm sure others learnt at least something from the exhibition. I was amazed when one couple from France stayed for two hours reading the explanatory boards and looking at the paintings. About halfway through the exhibition period I advertised a 'walk around the gallery with the artist' that was pretty well attended for a small country gallery. I can't say whether it had an effect but it opened up some conversations and it gave me a good deal of satisfaction to be able to give people a bit more insight into the paintings and the themes they covered.

*Tein's art website can be viewed at <https://teinmcdonald.com.au/>*



Tein McDonald's 'Layers of Landscape' exhibition at the Raglan Gallery Cooma (Dec 2023-Jan 2024) touched on multiple ways we interact with landscapes - ranging from truth-telling about post-contact impacts upon Bandjalang landscapes to celebration of contemporary landscape repair projects.

# The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration - How are we tracking?

Ray Thomas

This is the first of two articles in which Ray uses his experience to look at ways we can make the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration result in positive achievements.

With another year of committed effort behind us, and a new year already well under way, I imagine many of us will have done some reflecting on the year that was, and the year to come.

How did we fare on the outcomes we were aiming for – both for nature, and also for the people involved?

I'm sure there are many good stories to tell already, and I think they'd be very helpful for readers to share with each other. A regular newsletter page highlighting successful results from friends could be very encouraging and inspiring. Please send them in!

But beyond a single year's work on our own patch, it's also a very good time to think about the 'bigger picture'. How are we going with the United Nations' *Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*?

The title says it all. It's not merely tallies of areas treated or number of trees in the ground, but how are we going with restoring ecological processes - so nature can heal itself?

With 3 years of runs on the board, it's a strategic point to see what aspects we're doing well at, and which areas might need extra attention. Then we can direct more effort in those directions.

- Can we see significant signs of change in the health of a landscape?
- Can we see the ecological processes strengthening?
- Are our inputs making a sustained and cumulative difference, with long-term effects?
- Can we identify successes that we can build on?
- Have we spotted aspects of our practice that need improvement?

These bigger picture advances are things we can be very proud of!!

So, it's worth taking the time to name them, celebrate and share them with our conservation community.

## Sociological Outcomes

And entwined with the ecological focus, there's a sociological issue that's crucial for our progress.

- How can we hugely ramp up the outputs?
- How can we shift the size of our restoration work to landscape scale?

A major part of this must be by engaging, enthusing and empowering people from the wider community – people who'd like to be involved, but don't know what to do or how to help.

I'm guessing AABR members are already concerned with these last questions.

I've spent 22 years working on precisely these things whilst running the Regent Honeyeater Project in Benalla, VIC. And now, as a 'retired' volunteer, I am still trying to make a difference 6 years later. I think I may have some helpful insights to share.

## The future

The next 7 years can give enough time to see even bigger changes if we use our energies in the most effective ways possible. I'm guessing we'll need to be strategic and targeted rather than ad-hoc with our work:

- taking the most informed directions possible
- choosing the most effective actions
- the most critical locations
- the most strategic sequence of works
- and the timings when our actions will have the most effect.

I'm sure readers will have thoughts on getting the best results from our efforts over this period. I have lots to say on such specifics, but again it may be interesting to open discussion about helpful approaches; positives to build on, and negatives to avoid.

Best wishes for your efforts this year.

Ray Thomas was the inspiring leader behind the highly popular Regent Honeyeater Project in the Lurg Hills, near Benalla, Victoria for 22 years and won the Australian Geographic Society Conservationist of the Year Award for 2009. Since his retirement, Ray continues to work as a volunteer, striving to make a difference - and so has many helpful insights to share.



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON  
**ECOSYSTEM  
RESTORATION**  
2021-2030



Photo: Ray Thomas

# Rainforest Connections 2024

## Conservation | Restoration | Innovation

### Rainforest Connections 2024 Conference Ballina, NSW 4th -7th June 2024

NSW Government in partnership with Saving our Species are proud to bring you Rainforest Connections 2024.

Rainforest Connections 2024 is the first conference in over two decades that is dedicated to the restoration, rehabilitation, and management of Australia's unique rainforest habitats. This event will connect more than 200 delegates from a wide range of backgrounds including scientists, program managers, on-ground practitioners, community members and specialists implementing projects in the field.

Rainforest Connections 2024 will provide a vital platform to build relationships, form collaborations and most importantly lead to constructive, innovative and effective multi-disciplinary environmental outcomes in our unique rainforest environments.

The diverse range of presentations will feature case studies of on-ground action, species recovery programs, and cutting-edge environmental research as well as specific tools, techniques, challenges and strategies for managing rainforest habitats. The important connection between nature and culture will be highlighted and include presentations supporting this connection.

For more information visit: <https://rainforestconnections.com.au/>

Abstracts close 31st March

#### The Landscape and Fire Engagement Series

#### *Workshop 4: How does our landscape respond after fire?*

**Friday 15 March, 8:30 AM to 1.30 PM at MidCoast Council's Kore Kore Creek Site.**

Mid Coast 2 Tops Landcare (mid coast NSW) are partnering with MidCoast Council, the Rural Fire Service and University of Western Sydney to trial this new program to assist rural communities to reduce bushfire risk on their property while protecting biodiversity.

The Landscape and Fire Engagement Series is a program tailored to the Stroud and Bungwahl communities around fire preparedness and management education including how the environment needs and responds to fire.

Future topics for upcoming events include: burn training and wildfire preparedness for your home; different types of burns and general fire management planning.

These workshops are appropriate for rural landholders within Stroud and Bungwahl, and surrounding areas, landholders with a minimum of 2 hectares, properties with native/remnant vegetation, landholders looking to work with their neighbours and conservation-minded landholders.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project further, contact Olivia Eglin at [olivia@midcoast2topslandcare.org](mailto:olivia@midcoast2topslandcare.org) or 0437 883 995.

Here is the link to sign up and find out about further workshops: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/workshop-4-how-does-our-landscape-respond-after-fire-tickets-462669114777>.

#### Research explores health and wellbeing benefits of landholders in private land conservation

A new study led by the Queensland University of Technology, supported by the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust and partially funded by the Australian Wildlife Society and the Society for Conservation Biology, aims to learn more about the health and wellbeing benefits of private land conservation, with landholders from across NSW, participating in the study.

Find out more at [www.bct.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bct.nsw.gov.au).

Landholders interested in participating in the research are invited register on the BCT website or to contact Erica at [erica.nolasco@hdr.qut.edu.au](mailto:erica.nolasco@hdr.qut.edu.au) or 0493 816 167 to share the impact of managing a conservation area on their health and wellbeing.

#### Interested in joining an AABR Mapping Forum?

AABR Vic is planning a forum or series of forums on the theme of mapping as a tool in biodiversity management. We would like to hear from anyone who has a good news story to share on the use of mapping software on a project or contract. In particular we are interested to hear where maps have been used successfully as a communication tool between volunteers or contractors and the land manager. If you would like to contribute please contact Rob Scott on [robscott@naturelinks.com.au](mailto:robscott@naturelinks.com.au).

# AABR Achievements 2023

This reflects the accomplishments of the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR) in 2023; key achievements, member updates, and exciting plans for the year 2024 are highlighted.

## AABR BOARD

The AABR Board does not have requirements for representatives from each State and Territory. However, it is really pleasing that AABR has Board members from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales.

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Suzanne Pritchard, our Executive Officer continues to keep our organisation running. Suzanne does many things which includes media promotions, invoicing and assisting organisation of events.

## MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AND DIVERSITY

AABR has seen steady growth in its membership, with a current total of 1,116 members as of November 2023. Our members represent a diverse range of categories. AABR concentrated on better contact with Agencies and Councils. Numbers for 2022 are in brackets.

Accredited: 256 (246)	Pioneers: 37 (37)
Individuals: 445 (484)	Businesses: 46 (41)
Students: 271 (263)	Agencies: 23 (19)
Non-profit organizations: 18 (15)	Complimentary: 18 (17)

Membership is largely NSW (mostly Sydney north to the Queensland border), Victoria, and SE Queensland. Other states have smaller numbers.

## ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

The Accreditation programme continues to move forward, with growing interest in the recognition that accreditation offers, to both professional bush regenerators and volunteers. Thirteen members were accredited, with AABR Victoria seeing a number of members now being accredited.

## SPONSORSHIPS AND DONATION

Sponsorship from business supporters continues to enable AABR to produce exceptional resources for the bush regeneration sector such as AABRFest and the National Forum.

## AABRFest 2023. MID NORTH COAST OF NSW

This year AABR held the inaugural AABR Fest at Topi Topi on the Mid North Coast of NSW. A couple of hundred regenerators from as far afield as Queensland and Victoria attended 3 days of celebration, learning and sometimes, really bad live music. The event was a mixture of formal, semi formal and informal activities and went off a treat. Most of the attendees weren't members of AABR and there were many early career bush regenerators as well. The event stirred up a lot of interest and discussion around the future of bush regeneration, and the pressures facing both the industry and volunteers, and the role for AABR. The event was made possible through generous sponsorship and the hard work of a number of members and AABR Board members, agencies and environment groups.

See article in Newsletter 157 pages 4 - 7.

Plans are underway for AABRFest 2024

## EVENTS

The walks and talks subcommittee and the Victorian branch organised a range of activities in the field across three states. Often these were co-hosted with other keen organisations.

**Workshop:** Grass ID for Bush Regenerators, at Kariong NSW

### Walks and Talks

- Parsley Bay, Sydney – Council caring for the bush.
- Looking after Lane Cove National Park, Sydney NSW
- Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Management, Northern Sydney
- Bushcare visit at Chowder Head Reserve, Northern Sydney
- Spring Flower Walk in Sheldon Forest, Sydney.
- Cumberland Plain Woodland at Ropes Creek: the understorey, Western Sydney
- Paddock to Rainforest – Tamborine Mountain, Qld
- Ngarri–djarrang grassland (Reservoir, Vic)

## Online Presentations/webinars

- *Kicking goals in wetland restoration* Webinar by Damien Cook held by AABR Vic
- Guest Speaker, Lachlan Curren on *Fungi and restoration* at AABR Board Annual General Meeting

## ATTENDANCE AT SER 2023 CONFERENCE

AABR was well represented at the SER conference in Darwin this year. AABR funded the development of promotional and information products and generated informative video at the conference which is now available through Regen TV. See Newsletter 157, Page 3, and <https://www.youtube.com/@regenTV>.

Tein McDonald, presented a paper on behalf of AABR, titled '*Sharing insights about harnessing natural regeneration in restoration – SER's Natural Regeneration Network commences its journey towards a common language*', which was part of a symposium at the virtual component of the conference. Other AABR Members who presented were Scott Meier, Paul Gibson-Roy, and Jen Ford

## COLLABORATION WITH LANDCARE

We have been continuing to develop our relationship with the Landcare movement around Australia. There is significant overlap of interests between AABR and Landcare.

## ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST GRANT

AABR was fortunate to obtain a significant grant from the NSW Environmental Trust, to develop a learning management system or online platform which will host information regarding best practice restoration. It is early days in the project, but we hope to create a product which has internal tools to help people make decisions and identify what they need to know and do and can be used widely. There is already have a range of collaborators on the project including the Australian Network for Plant Conservation, NSW TAFE, Greening Australia, and Local Government NSW.

## SUBMISSIONS

One of the important roles that AABR fulfills is to engage in government consultation processes regarding the management of Australian ecosystems. The AABR board and members volunteer their time to read quite often significant amounts of information regarding new government legislation, programmes, developments and policies, and then developing a response from the Association based on our objectives, policies and position statements.

### Submissions for 2023:

- AABR submission to the Australian Government Senate Inquiry into the Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps- 26/4/23.
- AABR Submission feedback on comments on – Working Group's Draft National Feral Deer Action Plan 20/3/23.
- Nature Repair Market Exposure Draft Legislation (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water).
  - AABR submission 3/3/23.
  - Restoration Decade Alliance Submission 3/3/23.

<https://www.aabr.org.au/about-aabr/policies/>

## AABR's INTERNAL FUNDING PROCESS

This year we continued our internal funding process. This was set up last year to create a robust and transparent decision-making process around how AABR uses its funds - predominantly from membership fees - for projects.

Any member is able to approach the Board with ideas for projects. This helps AABR progress in a strategic intent, especially in the areas of education, awareness raising and promoting best practice. Funding is limited but in 2023 two projects were approved; the social media '*what do Bush Regenerators do*' campaign, and facilitating AABR's presence at the Society for Ecological Restoration conference in Darwin with a presence online through regenTV.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

In 2023, AABR began the process of developing its first strategic plan. Two workshops were held, and an initial list of priorities was created and sent back to the Board. This process is still in train and until finished the Board will continue to make decisions based on the objectives of the association and reacting to opportunities that may come up. Once the strategic plan is drafted it will be put out to all members for comment and I would encourage all members to review and give feedback.

## AABR VICTORIA

Achievements- see separate report.

### AABR CHAIRS MEETING ON NOVEMBER 29, 2023

The meeting for the chairs of working groups and committees, held on November 29, 2023, brought together key stakeholders to discuss important matters. The meeting covered various topics, including plans for 2024, acknowledgment of country, and actionable items:

- Amendment of bylaws to include annual chairs of working groups meetings.
- An increased focus on engaging effectively with the indigenous community.
- An IT review to be conducted before determining the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, with Nation Builder being considered.

### PLANNING FOR AABRFEST 2 AND A TAFE SYMPOSIUM

A bunch of enthusiastic people at AABRFest associated with Ryde TAFE approached AABR about holding a symposium in a partnership between AABR and TAFE NSW; and also planning for a second AABRFest in 2024.

### PLANNING FOR AABR NATIONAL FORUM IN VICTORIA

The upcoming AABR National Forum in March 2024 will be held in Victoria hosted by the AABR Victoria Branch and also thank the City of Yarra Council for their very generous sponsorship of this event.

### SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

**AABR's Industry Working Group**, led by Scott Meier, has been active in the past year. The group's activities include:

- Email communication with board members regarding industry perspectives on various issues.
- Zoom meetings to discuss industry requirements for TAFE.
- Organising AABRFest, a successful event held in Topi Topi, NSW, which included food, music, restoration workshops, and industry discussions.
- Collaborating with council members to address restoration sectors.
- Providing an industry perspective in various contexts and sharing AABR's messages.

### Chemicals in the Management of Biodiversity

Patrick Deasey leads the group focused on Chemicals in the Management of Biodiversity, which has 23 members. Discussions have included innovative approaches to chemical usage, treatment strategies for challenges like Nutgrass, and the development of information sheets and safety videos.

### Marketing and Communications

The Marketing and Communications team, led by Suzanne Pritchard, has held 10 meetings with 9 members. Discussions have covered campaign development, membership engagement, communication and outreach, collaboration and partnerships, data and measurement, and branding and visual identity.

### PLANS FOR 2024

AABR has exciting plans and initiatives on the horizon. Some key areas of focus include:

- Client partnerships that have proven successful.
- Utilising standards as an auditing tool to differentiate between practice and process.
- Developing a Learning Management System to facilitate the retrieval of information from various target audiences at different stages of their learning journey.
- Exploring opportunities to secure external grants.
- Leveraging grant opportunities to seek additional funding from investors.
- Reviewing and improving the Accreditation system in early 2024.

# AABR Victoria Achievements 2023

This covers AABR Victoria achievements in 2023 and summarises the achievements and key activities encompassing a wide range of initiatives, events, and developments undertaken by the organisation and discussed at the AGM 2023.

### COMMITTEE ROLES AND MEMBERSHIP:

2024 Committee nominations and acceptances were decided on at the November 2023 AGM:

- Alex Moodie (Chair)
- Rob Scott (Deputy Chair)
- Kylie Robertson (Accreditation)
- Craig McGrath (Annual Forum/AABR Fest)
- Joab Wilson (Training/Accreditation)
- Sharon Mason (Events)
- Gidja-Lee Walker (1st nations liaison/bush worker collective)
- Matt Hall (ECA representative/Associate Member)
- Max Campbell (Associate Member)
- Lincoln Kern - member

A strong emphasis was placed on committee member roles and responsibilities. The branch aims to attract active committee members and review the nomination process.

### EVENTS

The AABR Victoria branch organized a series of successful events throughout the year. Notable highlights include:

- The Whittlesea Students expo event, which received positive feedback and featured QR codes and graphics.
- The inaugural walk and talk at Ngarri-djarrang grassland co-hosted by Merri Creek Management Committee and Darebin City Council.

**PLANNING FOR THE AABR NATIONAL FORUM:** This AABR National forum, *The R's of Restoration: Restoring biodiversity through resilience, regeneration, reintroduction, and reconnecting to country*, is being hosted by the AABR Victoria branch in March 2024. Organisation of the forum has included bringing together professionals and enthusiasts in the field of bush regeneration and securing sponsorship for the forum

**WEBINAR AND COLLABORATION:** The branch co-hosted a webinar titled *Wetland Revival Trust Protecting and restoring Wirra-lo Wetlands* in collaboration with ECA (Ecological Consultants Australia).

**ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING:** The branch actively engaged in the accreditation process. A pilot is being undertaken to utilise 'Notion' online system to manage the process.  
(Assessors=6 Active Applications=5  
Total number of Accredited practitioners=14)

**MEMBERSHIP:** The membership continues to grow. There are 167 members on the member register and 388 Supporters (e-news list) Membership comprises: 112 individuals, 35 students  
9 Agency/Local government 5 not for profits  
6 Businesses-1 small, 3 medium, 2 large)

### CONCLUSION

The AABR Victoria branch has had a productive year filled with successful events, and initiatives. The commitment to accreditation, training, and collaboration demonstrates the dedication of the branch to advancing the field of bush regeneration. Looking ahead, the branch aims to continue its efforts to promote conservation, education, and best practices in bush regeneration within Victoria.

# What's happening

25 - 28 August 2024

## Australasian Weeds Conference

**Breaking the Cycle  
Towards Sustainable Weed Management**

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in  
Queensland.

Weeds continue to impact biodiversity, agriculture, and public spaces, posing challenges to productivity and land use.

More information <https://icebergevents.eventsair.com/awc24/>

27 to 29 August 2024

## 3rd Australian Biosecurity Symposium

**Sea World Resort Gold Coast, Queensland.**

Call for abstracts, registration and sponsorship opportunities now available.

Further information <https://www.biosym.com.au/>

Saturday 14th April 2024

### SOIL TYPES IN KU-RING-GAI CHASE NATIONAL PARK (NSW)

AND THEIR INFLUENCE UPON VEGETATION & FAUNA COMMUNITIES



Saturday 14th April  
8am-4pm



Meet at Elvina trailhead carpark



FREE

AABR  
Walk & Talk

THE WALK & TALK  
PRESENTER IS  
JAYDEN WALSH -  
ECOLOGIST AND  
BUSH  
REGENERATOR

Tickets <https://www.givar.com/campaigns/walk-talk---soil-types-in-kcnp>

Website <https://www.aabr.org.au/event/ku-ring-gai-chase-np-soil-types-and-their-influence-upon-vegetation-fauna-communities/>



## Australian Association of Bush Regenerators

Australian Association  
of Bush Regenerators  
*working with natural processes*

### The National Board President

Peter Dixon [president@aabr.org.au](mailto:president@aabr.org.au)

### Secretary

Sally Alldis, [secretary@aabr.org.au](mailto:secretary@aabr.org.au)

### Treasurer

Matthew Pearson  
[treasurer@aabr.org.au](mailto:treasurer@aabr.org.au)

### Board members

Tein McDonald, Scott Meier, Agata Mitchell, Rob Scott, Mark Cachia, Jane Gye, Joab Wilson and Andrew Scott.

### Administration and Public Officer

Suzanne Pritchard [admin@aabr.org.au](mailto:admin@aabr.org.au)

### Membership Officer

Louise Brodie [membership@aabr.org.au](mailto:membership@aabr.org.au)

### Website advertising

Mitra Gusheh [advertise@aabr.org.au](mailto:advertise@aabr.org.au)

### Victorian Chair

Alex Milicic, [vicbranch@aabr.org.au](mailto:vicbranch@aabr.org.au)

### The Australian Association of Bush Regenerators Inc (AABR)

was incorporated in NSW in 1986, and has several hundred members from all over Australia. AABR is pronounced 'arbor'.

Our aim is to promote the study and practice of ecological restoration, and encourage effective management of natural areas.

**All interested people and organisations are welcome to join.** AABR members include bush regeneration professionals, volunteers, natural area managers, landowners, policy makers, contractors, consultants, nursery people, local, state and commonwealth government officers—and lots of people who just love the bush and want to see it conserved.

**AABR also offers accreditation** for experienced practitioners.

**AABR News** is usually published in January, April, July, and November.

**AABR C/O Total Environment  
Centre  
P.O. Box K61 Haymarket NSW 1240  
0407 002 921  
[www.aabr.org.au](http://www.aabr.org.au)  
[enquiries@aabr.org.au](mailto:enquiries@aabr.org.au)  
ABN: 89 059 120 802 ARBN: 059 120 802**

### Membership fees

Individuals \$35 (unwaged \$20)

Organisations (*does not confer membership to individuals in the organisation*)

- business (< 5 staff) \$120
- business (5-20 staff) \$300
- business (> 20 staff) \$480

Government/Agency \$480

Not for profit \$30

### Benefits of Membership:

- discount admission to all AABR events
- four newsletters per year
- increased job opportunities
- discount subscription to the journal Ecological Management & Restoration
- opportunities to network with others involved in natural area restoration
- helping AABR to be a strong and effective force to promote natural area restoration, and support the industry.

### Newsletter contributions and comments are welcome

Contact Louise Brodie [newsletter@aabr.org.au](mailto:newsletter@aabr.org.au) 0407 068 688

*Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of AABR*