

Media Release



Tuesday, 13 October, 2009

Pinkerton sows seeds for all seasons

Seeds — the source of all new life — are wonderful things and knowing when they are ready to collect and what conditions they need to germinate is a great knowledge to have — and to share.

Although gardening is still one of Victorians' most beloved pursuits, building knowledge about Australian plant species, particularly those indigenous to the original landscapes, is vital in current efforts to combat drought and climate change in urban and rural landscapes.

As part of its stewardship role in significant biodiversity projects around its region, Western Water has been involved for many years with Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group and other local Landcare and biodiversity groups operating around its 690Ha working farm and recycled water plant, Surbiton Park, at Melton South.

Western Water Managing Director John Wilkinson said Western Water has a long-term stewardship role in building better waterways and urban water environments, by supporting community efforts in many practical ways, as well as with funding support.

"Western Water sets great store by our work at the local level to build and strengthen the health of waterways and catchments in our region," Mr Wilkinson said.

"This is one of the understated ways we work to build a better water future.

"Healthy waterways are fundamental to healthy communities, which is why boosting biodiversity and supporting the networks of people working towards a more sustainable world are integral to National Water Week's theme of 'securing our water future'."

He said Western Water, as a substantial landowner in its region, has a long history of working with Landcare and community environment groups on projects that clean up and rebuild waterways and their precious catchments.

"The results of our combined efforts over the past 15 years or so are a much greater appreciation and a more defined role for good waterways and catchment management in both urban and rural landscapes," Mr Wilkinson said.

Surbiton Park abuts the Werribee River and Gorge and its three-kilometre river frontage is home to many rare flora and fauna, including the highly significant remnant grassy woodlands of Pinkerton Forest. Nearby is the equally significant Bush's Paddock, a remnant plains grassland reserve managed by Melton Shire Council.

Now, an unused paddock once used to store sludge from the treatment plant is about to become the next link in a puzzle that is reconnecting many special and significant areas of the Werribee Plains from Melton through to Toolern Vale under the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment's \$10 million *Vision for Werribee Plains* grants program.

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About Western Water

Western Water is one of Victoria's 13 regional urban water corporations. We provide water, recycled water and sewerage services to over 53,000 properties and 134,810 people in an area of 3,000 square kilometres. Our region extends from Lancefield in the north to Melton and Rockbank in the south and from Myrning in the west to Bulla in the east. We incorporate parts of Hume City Council and Melton, Moorabool and Macedon Ranges Shire Councils.

Media contacts

Helen Grimaux | Media Advisor | 0419 356 361 | helen.grimaux@westernwater.com.au

Brigid Wenn | Manager Communications | 03 9218 5521 | 0419 314 700 | brigid.wenn@westernwater.com.au

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This old sludge paddock is located between Pinkerton Forest and Bush's Paddock and its revegetation provides an ideal opportunity to boost biodiversity values in the wider district, linking two fragmented areas of significant remnant vegetation and building a better catchment along the Werribee River's volcanic plains.

The Pinkerton Forest habitat corridor is one of five initiatives funded in Round 3 of the Department of Sustainability and Environment's *Vision for Werribee Plains* grants program.

Melton MP Don Nardella, who hosts monthly meetings of the local umbrella Melton Environment Group at his electorate office, took a field trip this week with Pinkerton Forest restoration co-ordinator Frances Overmars and Australian seed collection expert, educator and author Murray Ralph to learn more about the fine art of collecting eucalyptus seed from high in the forest canopy.

Author of *Growing Australian Native Plants from Seeds* and *Seed Collection of Australian Native Plants*, among others, Murray Ralph has been teaching fellow Australians about the extraordinary qualities and diversity of their native flora for more than 20 years and now runs Bushland Horticulture service. He has been involved in the Pinkerton Forest restoration project since writing its second environmental management plan in 1992.

"Spreading the word is as important as sowing the seeds for change," Mr Ralph said.

Mr Nardella urged people to join a local environment group and join in community workshops and planting days in their area.

"There is still a lot to be learnt about Australian plants and their role in preparing Australian communities for climate change is paramount," Mr Nardella said.

"Knowing how to collect and germinate the seeds of our original landscapes is a very important knowledge to build in every community."

Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group is co-ordinating the local effort to replant Western Water's 12Ha old sludge paddock using tree seedlings and native grasses selected from the local area.

Community planting events in Melton area:

For information about groups and events in the Melton area, contact Melton Environment Group at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/meltoneg> or <http://pinkertonforest.com>

Community Native Seed Collection Workshops

Thursday, October 15, at Bacchus Marsh and Wednesday, November 17, at Melton
Contact: Tim Bloomfield, Westernport CMA, Grow West co-ordinator, on 9218 5615 or email tim.bloomfield@ppwcma.vic.gov.au

Grasslands Community Day with VNPA on Saturday, October 17.

Waterwatch Family Festival 2009

Saturday, October 24, 10am until 2pm at Lollypop Creek, Wyndham Vale. Info at www.melbournewater.com.au

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