




upper goulburn
landcare network
linking communities



Strategic Plan



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Vision

Connecting our rural and urban communities through education and collaboration leading to positive environmental and regenerative action outcomes

Role and Function

- To engage, educate and empower all sectors of our community and support the range of Landcare and environmental interest groups to achieve their desired outcomes.
- To have a strong focus in many areas of natural resource management and climate action including, but not limited to: biodiversity, fire recovery, pest plant and animal control, environmental education in schools, land management education, fauna and flora monitoring, regenerative agriculture and revegetation.
- To provide natural resource management advice and services within the Network through paid Landcare coordinators, facilitators, project officers and volunteers.

Landscape

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network covers the Murrindindi Shire with one group in Mansfield Shire – an area of over 3879 square kilometres. It is a picturesque and diverse landscape, from the mountain ranges of Kinglake and Marysville to the floodplains of the Goulburn River. Rolling to steep hills and fertile valleys form much of the agricultural landscape with the Yea, Murrindindi, Acheron, Steavenson and Goulburn Rivers being the most significant rivers in this catchment. It is fertile country on mostly sedimentary, clay soils, with about 48% of the area being crown land with many State and National Parks.

We strive to maintain a clean and green image for our area.

Demographics

Murrindindi Shire is situated on the traditional land of the Taungurung people. It lies on the peri-urban fringe – situated 60 – 90 minutes drive from Melbourne. The majority of the land in the Shire is classified as agricultural and agribusiness. Beef production, forestry, fishing and horticulture form key industries, as does tourism.

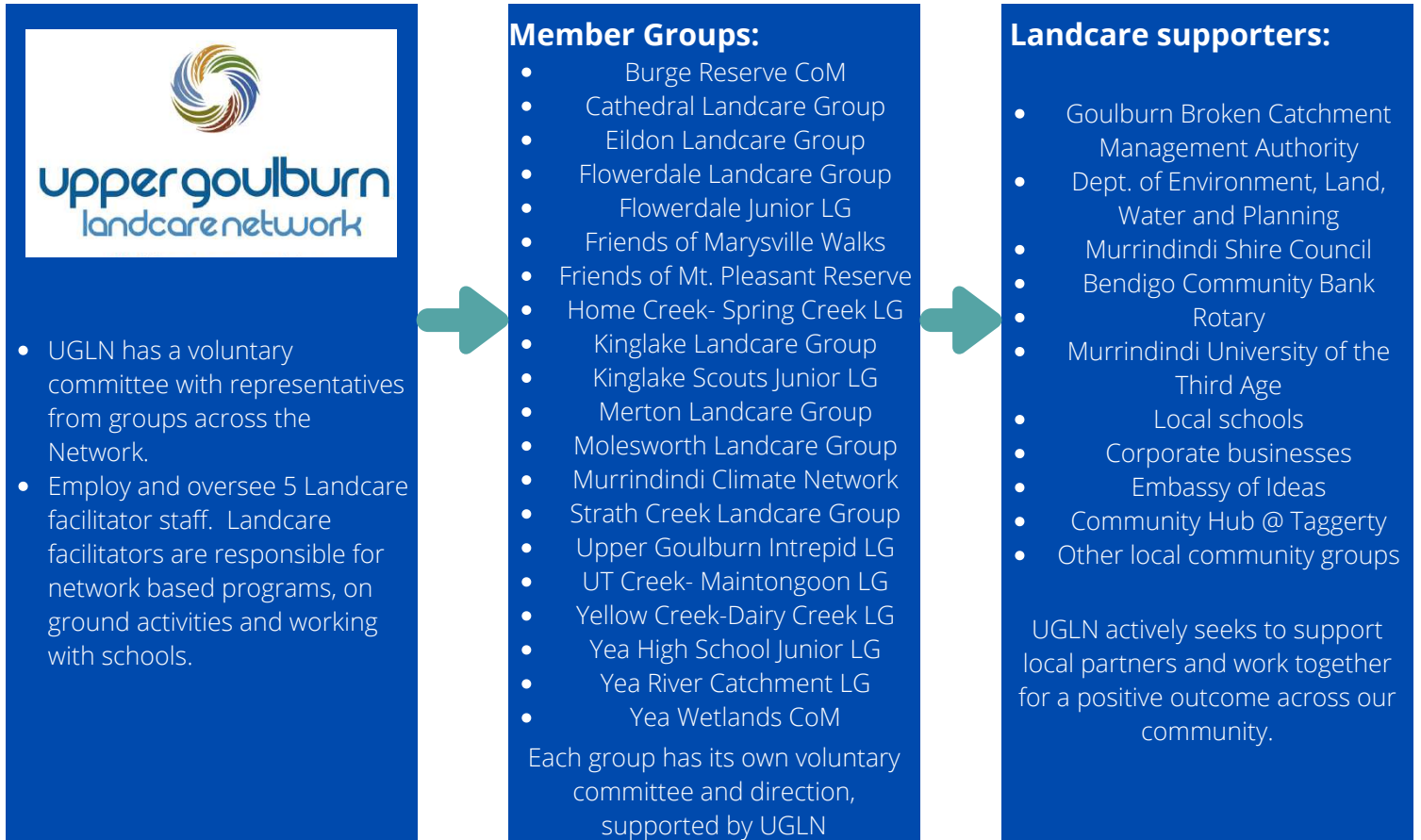
Nearly 14,000 people live in the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network area. They are either:

- urban based
- on small acreage
- a growing percentage of new and part time landholders on acreage up to 40 hectares
- larger, permanent agricultural landholdings

A large percentage of new landholders are “tree-changers” who want to develop mini or medium agriculture or horticulture hobby businesses but lack the fundamental knowledge around responsible planning and management.

To meet the needs of the Landcare community, Upper Goulburn Landcare Network has developed a program to meet the on ground and educational needs of this broad demographic.

Network Structure

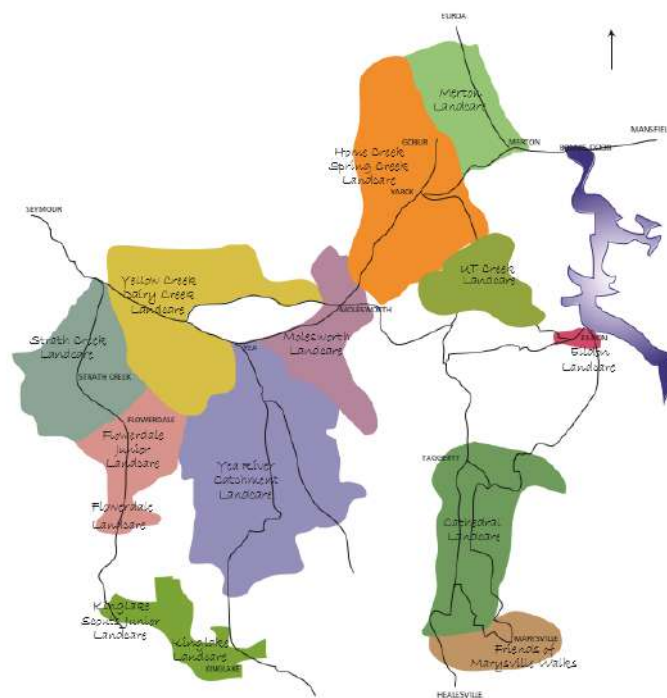


Supported Groups

There are 12 Landcare groups, 3 Junior Landcare groups and 5 'Friends of' and Natural Resource Management groups within the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network, encompassing the Murrindindi Shire and one group from the Mansfield Shire.

Each group has their own environmental interests and a voluntary Committee of Management. These committees, supported by UGLN facilitators, develop a yearly action plan based on the current member engagement.

We also have 4 Blackberry Action Groups (BAGs) established within the Network. Merton-Cathkin, Strath Creek, Whittlesea & Surrounds and TBAG (encompassing Cathedral, Taggerty and Buxton).



Strategic Directions



Regenerative Agriculture

- **Demonstration sites**
- **Holistic Farming field days**
- **Soil health workshops**
- **Property Planning and Land Management education workshops**

Regenerative agriculture underpins much of the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network members' interest. Landholders grapple with grazing management on steep hill country, erosion control issues, soil health, balancing biodiversity and water quality with productivity outcomes. UGLN aims to provide established landholders with demonstration sites, workshops and field days involving examples of landholders practising holistic farm management, improving soil health and biological farming principles to inspire and support their farm program.

For new and small landholders, while they face similar property challenges, their scale of operation is quite different, often with less focus on productivity. As such, there is great potential to be managing small properties for a positive biodiversity outcome, without the challenge of managing stock health and production targets. Often small landholders are new to the district, they may be part time and may not have a farming background, therefore UGLN recognises that small landholders need access to sound basic land management advice and need to be linked to reputable local contacts. There is a potential to build a network for new landholders, and to share knowledge from more established landholders.

Biodiversity Program

- **Landscape linkages: shelterbelts, waterways, rail trails and wildlife corridors**
- **Native flora and fauna education and habitat restoration**
- **Paddock trees: health surveys, mistletoe, nest boxes**
- **Pest plant and animal education and management**
- **Roadsides, rail trail and crown land management: partnering with Council, Victracks, Trust for Nature and DELWP**

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network region is renowned for its scenic value. From the mountains of the Great Dividing Range to the clean flowing rivers, folk are drawn to the area for its beauty. Landholders value the landscape and many feel compelled to protect and enhance their property for biodiversity value as well as for stock shade, shelter and protection. UGLN is committed to providing funded programs to assist landholders to implement land protection works on their property. Where once the State government provided staff and funding for this work, Landcare have largely taken on this role.

In addition to practical, on ground projects for landholders, UGLN provide educational walks and talks to assist the community in developing a greater understanding of the flora and fauna of this region. Many crown land reserves in the area have limited management – regardless of tenure. Some local Landcare groups embrace these nature reserves and provide hours of dedicated weed management and care to maintain these areas. Where funding programs align, Landcare groups can work in partnership with Waterways staff to have the best on ground outcomes and create landscape links for healthy waterways.

UGLN applies for annual funding to deliver pest plant and animal education, including information sessions, workshops and training courses on a wide variety of pest species. UGLN has also been instrumental in setting up the ongoing King Parrot Creek Fox Control Project.

Urban opportunities

- **Local food co-ops and bulk buying**
- **Gardens for Wildlife**
- **Sustainability and permaculture workshops**

Landcare is often regarded as a purely rural based program, however, many urban based residents are interested in Landcare's ethics and activities. UGLN and affiliated Landcare groups provide opportunities for town based residents to engage with interesting and relevant programs. One urban program being implemented is the Gardens for Wildlife program which encourages gardeners to think about their gardens as microcosms of habitat for birds, insects and frogs. Participants are encouraged with a letterbox sign, a package of plants and a program of informative talks and workshops to encourage and support wildlife in their gardens.

There is also developing interest in food security and growing ethical produce – either in an urban settings or on small properties. There are opportunities to engage and educate urban and small landholders in growing fruit and vegetables and small livestock. In growing your own produce, there comes responsibility in managing pests like fruit fly and weed control.

UGLN also supports groups to provide education and workshops on sustainability, regenerative farming and permaculture practices, including composting, wicking beds and reducing waste.

Taungurung Traditional Owners

- **Taungurung Language program**
- **Bush tucker education**
- **Cultural burning of grassy woodlands**

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network have been actively pursuing working with and supporting Taungurung Traditional Owners. Taungurung cultural custodians have developed a language program across some local schools and work in conjunction with the Kids Teaching Kids program. There are opportunities to support the sharing of cultural heritage through language, signage and planting of significant food and medicinal plants.

UGLN supports the continuation of Taungurung cultural practices through burning opportunities on grassy woodland reserves in the area in conjunction with Traditional Owners.

Addressing Climate Change

- **Sustainable living workshops**
- **Microgrids**
- **Carbon Offset planting**
- **Supporting small local business to reduce their carbon footprint**

Murrindindi Climate Network, a member group of UGLN, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to support programs and actions that facilitate adaptation and enhance resilience to climate change at a local level in the shire. Through strong networks and education, Murrindindi Climate Network promotes responsible life style choices, business practices and technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate the local impacts of climate change.

Microgrids

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network will support small local groups interested in creating localised power storage and generation within the community.

Carbon Offset Planting

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network will actively seek funding opportunities to create large scale plantings on private land to reduce carbon emissions.

Supporting Small Local Business

Several local businesses are seeking opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint – whether through:

- reducing organic waste
- buying local, ethically produced goods
- carbon offsetting planting or
- installing solar power

UGLN are in a strategic position to support small businesses with grant applications and networking with like-minded groups. Where possible, Upper Goulburn Landcare Network will encourage businesses to transition to reduce their carbon emissions and use these examples to encourage others.

Engaging Youth

- **Kids Teaching Kids**
- **Junior Landcare**
- **Alexandra Composting Program**
- **Intrepid Landcare**
- **Individual Schools**

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network has strongly embraced supporting local youth connecting to environment through a range of programs. UGLN runs the Murrindindi Kids Teaching Kids (KTK) program which enables environmental leadership and encourages engagement with local environmental issues. KTK has been adopted by the primary schools in the catchment.

Schools are supported across the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network to develop environmental projects – both with funding and with facilitator support. These projects can be within school grounds, through Junior Landcare or within their community. The local secondary schools support other UGLN programs through nest box building and the compost programs.

The Alexandra Composting Program supports VCAL students to collect green waste from local businesses and compost the product. Students develop written skills, negotiating skills and leadership skills to build the project and work with local businesses.

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network strongly believes that by educating school age children in responsible awareness of our environment, we are able to change the assumed standards of care and behaviour as they enter adulthood. Upper Goulburn Intrepid Landcare offers young adults a group to transition into to continue the environmentally focused mindset with on ground action and outdoor activities.

Social Connectivity

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network is committed to supporting affiliated groups to be socially inclusive and connected. This includes encouraging projects that link across the Network such as the rail trail, or facilitating groups to join for social events like a cricket match.

In addition, we look to provide support for new groups and partner agencies. We strongly believe that in supporting other agencies and like-minded groups, our programs will be stronger, more vibrant and appealing for a broader range of the community.

Funding opportunities

Upper Goulburn Landcare Network is funded with facilitator funding support for a full time staff equivalent. On ground and educational programs are funded generally through short term funding programs from the State or Federal government. Bendigo Bank and Murrindindi Shire provide ongoing support for specific programs. Landcare coordinators can support individual groups through writing grant applications on their behalf. State and Federal funding is becoming more limited and more competitive to receive. To achieve our strategic plan, we need to consider our funding sources and look for opportunities to diversify our funding base.

In addition, while facilitators can support each of these key areas, they cannot drive these programs without strong support, practical assistance and commitment from affiliated groups.