

Kara Kara Conservation  
Management Network Inc.

# 2019

## Year in Review






## The Kara Kara Conservation Management Network Inc.

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**Publication date:** 18 October 2019



# President's Report

As President of the Kara Kara CMN, it gives me great pleasure to present to you our *Year in Review* for 2019. The Network produces this document annually as a means of reflecting on our achievements, see how they are tracking against our conservation objectives and get an understanding of what we can do better.

This year, the release of our *Year in Review* also coincides with the launch of the Network's *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*. Some months in the planning, researching and drafting, our new Plan is a 'conservation roadmap' that will guide the activities of the Kara Kara CMN for the next five years and beyond, and I would like to thank our Committee and Landcare Facilitator for their efforts in bringing it to fruition. This *Year in Review* tracks the Network's activities in 2019 against our new *Strategic Plan*, a summary of which has been provided to attendees of our AGM. Others wishing to read or download a copy of our new *Strategic Plan* will find it on our website at **[www.karakaracmn.org.au](http://www.karakaracmn.org.au)**.



## On-ground works

As in 2018, the main focus of our on-ground works this year was the completion of another year of activities, the second of three, under our Biodiversity On-Ground Action – Community & Volunteer Action Grant.

Funded by the Victorian State Government, the aim of this grant is two-fold. Firstly, we engage with private landholders on revegetation projects to increase the connectivity between patches of remnant woodland in our region and help facilitate species movement through the landscape. Secondly, we strive to improve the structural integrity of remnant woodland through the construction and installation of nest-boxes targeting selected threatened and declining species.

In 2019, we planted native tube-stock on six private properties and installed nest-boxes on an additional 10, along the way forming new and strengthening existing relationships with local landholders and community volunteers. You can read more about these projects elsewhere in this *Review*.

## Community engagement and education

When I became President five years ago, I realised the importance of community engagement in helping the Network achieve its conservation objectives; at a local and regional level certainly, but for some programs, also at a State level. Not only that, it was clear that we needed to establish and maintain a consistent dialogue with a broad audience, from individuals of all ages and community groups, to like-minded conservation organisations and government agencies. I know that 'community engagement' is something of a buzzword these days, but we have found from first-hand experience that its importance cannot be overstated! Our efforts in this space continue to yield results, with public awareness of the Network and participation in our programs continuing to grow.

During the year, we also expanded our environmental education programs targeting secondary students, both in terms of the modules on offer and number of schools participating. We developed new education modules and welcomed a second regional college to the program. Feedback from students and teachers alike has been overwhelmingly positive. It also gives a boost to our Facilitator and Network volunteers when, at the end of each session, the kids 'get it'!

In another positive development, the Network had some success in expanding its volunteer base. The increase wasn't large but nonetheless represents positive progress in the context of the steadily

declining membership and participation rates being experienced by most rural-based and volunteer-run community organisations.

### ***The challenges of a changing climate***

In last year's *Review*, I mentioned the increasing challenges to the Network's activities arising from our drying climate, not the least of which has been our region's increasingly sporadic and intermittent rainfall patterns. The extremely hot summer that followed the dry spring of 2018 caused us to fear for the survival of seedlings planted during last year's revegetation program. Pleasingly, however, we found that while seedling losses did occur, they were much lower than expected. This suggests that our change of strategy in bringing forward our annual plantings from spring to autumn is yielding positive results in giving young plants more time to establish their roots before the heat sets in.



Another initiative aimed at increasing the survival rate of our plantings has been our recent purchase of a mobile water cart. Funded by the Wottenhall Environment Trust, this dedicated unit will be used to provide additional support to seedlings over the warm summer months.

Thankfully, the winter of 2019 saw north-central Victoria receive some good rainfall. Though still well down on the long-term average, this much-needed rain boosted crop growth for our local farmers and, to a limited extent, recharged the dry sub-soil and delivered a long overdue drink to struggling paddock and canopy trees, and other native woodland flora. That said, we are mindful that parts of northern Victoria, and central and western New South Wales and Queensland have not been so fortunate, and our thoughts are with those people doing it tough!

### ***Facilitator funding review***

Since 2012, the Kara Kara CMN has been fortunate to be among 78 organisations across Victoria to receive funding from the State Government under the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program to support the employment of our part-time Landcare Facilitator. This role is pivotal to the success of our operations. It underpins program delivery and enables our Committee to direct their limited time and resources towards strategic planning, on-ground works and building Network capacity.

The Government is currently reviewing this Program and we are hopeful that it will continue. While we await the outcome, the Government has announced that it will extend funding for the VLFP Program until 30 June 2020.

### ***A word of thanks***

As another year draws to a close, I would like to thank the Kara Kara CMN Committee, our Landcare Facilitator and volunteers for all of their hard work. Thank you also to the landholders, schools and community groups who participated in our programs or supported them through the provision of services, and to the North Central CMA and Bush Heritage Australia for their ongoing support. In the face of so many threats to our environment, I believe that what we do really does make a difference, and importantly, we enjoy ourselves doing it!

My best wishes to you all for a safe and happy festive season and New Year,

Chris Campbell  
President

## 2019 Scoreboard

The table below lists the activities undertaken by the Kara Kara CMN since our 2018 Annual General Meeting and links these activities to the strategies outlined in our new *Strategic Plan (2019-2023)*.

Activity type	Corresponding Strategy*
<b>On-ground works</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity On-ground Action (BOA)– Community &amp; Volunteer Action Grant activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installed 43 nest-boxes on private properties, targeting threatened and declining species; and</li> <li>Planted over 3,000 native tube-stock seedlings across six private properties.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced planning for delivery of Year 3 activities for BOA grant (above).</li> </ul>	1
<b>Building partnerships</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established new partnerships with St Arnaud Community House, St Arnaud Norman Simpson Memorial Pipe Band and Landmate.</li> </ul>	3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded the Network’s volunteer base.</li> </ul>	3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained and expanded our partnerships with three regional secondary colleges in the construction of nest-boxes for threatened species.</li> </ul>	1,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established a new partnership with the City of Bendigo in relation to their newly-established Silver Banksia Seed Production Area at Crosbie.</li> </ul>	1,2,3,4,5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained and expanded relationships with local landholders, regional schools (primary and secondary) and local community organisations.</li> </ul>	2,3,4,6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in NCCMA Regional Round Table in St Arnaud.</li> </ul>	2,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in Dja Dja Wurrung Heathy Dry Forest workshop at Stuart Mill.</li> </ul>	1,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in the NCCMA-hosted Northern Rivers Conference at Echuca-Moama.</li> </ul>	3,4,6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in Silver Banksia Forum in Dunkeld hosted by Friends of Forgotten Woodlands.</li> </ul>	1,3,4,5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presented at a Field Day hosted by Bush Heritage Australia at Rostron.</li> </ul>	1,2,3,4,6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in a community strategic planning session at Navarre Primary School.</li> </ul>	2,3,4
<b>Community engagement and education</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged a broad volunteer base to assist with on-ground works, from individuals and community groups to regional primary and secondary schools.</li> </ul>	1,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hosted four days of environmental education-related activities for students from Donald High School and St Arnaud Secondary College during each School’s ‘Environment Week’.</li> </ul>	1,2,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered biodiversity-related classroom discussions to students at three regional secondary colleges.</li> </ul>	1,2,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsored the photographic competition at the 2018 and 2019 St Arnaud Agricultural Shows.</li> </ul>	2,3,4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distributed regular eNews and Facebook updates.</li> </ul>	2,3,6

Activity type	Corresponding Strategy*
<b>Advocacy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in Forest Fire Management Victoria's Strategic Bushfire Management Planning public consultation process.</li> </ul>	1,2,3,4
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established and mapped monitoring points at all new revegetation work sites.</li> </ul>	1,5,6
<b>Research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted quarterly woodland bird surveys.</li> </ul>	1,5
<b>Growing Network capacity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned, researched and drafted the Network's new <i>Strategic Plan (2019-2023)</i>.</li> <li>Secured funding from the Wettenhall Environment Trust for the purchase of a dedicated water cart.</li> <li>Participated in NCCMA and DELWP-initiated Landcare Facilitator Review sessions in Bendigo.</li> </ul>	6 1,6 4,6

\* **Kara Kara CMN conservation strategies** (as stated in the Kara Kara CMN's *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*):

- 1: Conserve, protect and enhance natural habitats and species;
- 2: Be an advocate for biodiversity;
- 3: Engage with the community;
- 4: Building strong and enduring partnerships;
- 5: Contribute to scientific knowledge; and
- 6: Secure the Network's future.

## Kara Kara CMN management and administration 2018/19

### Committee:

President: Chris Campbell

Vice-President: Helen Yuille

Treasurer: Russell Steel

Secretary: John Boadle

General Committee members: Brenda Proctor, Andrew Borg and Jeroen Van Veen  
(Bush Heritage Australia)

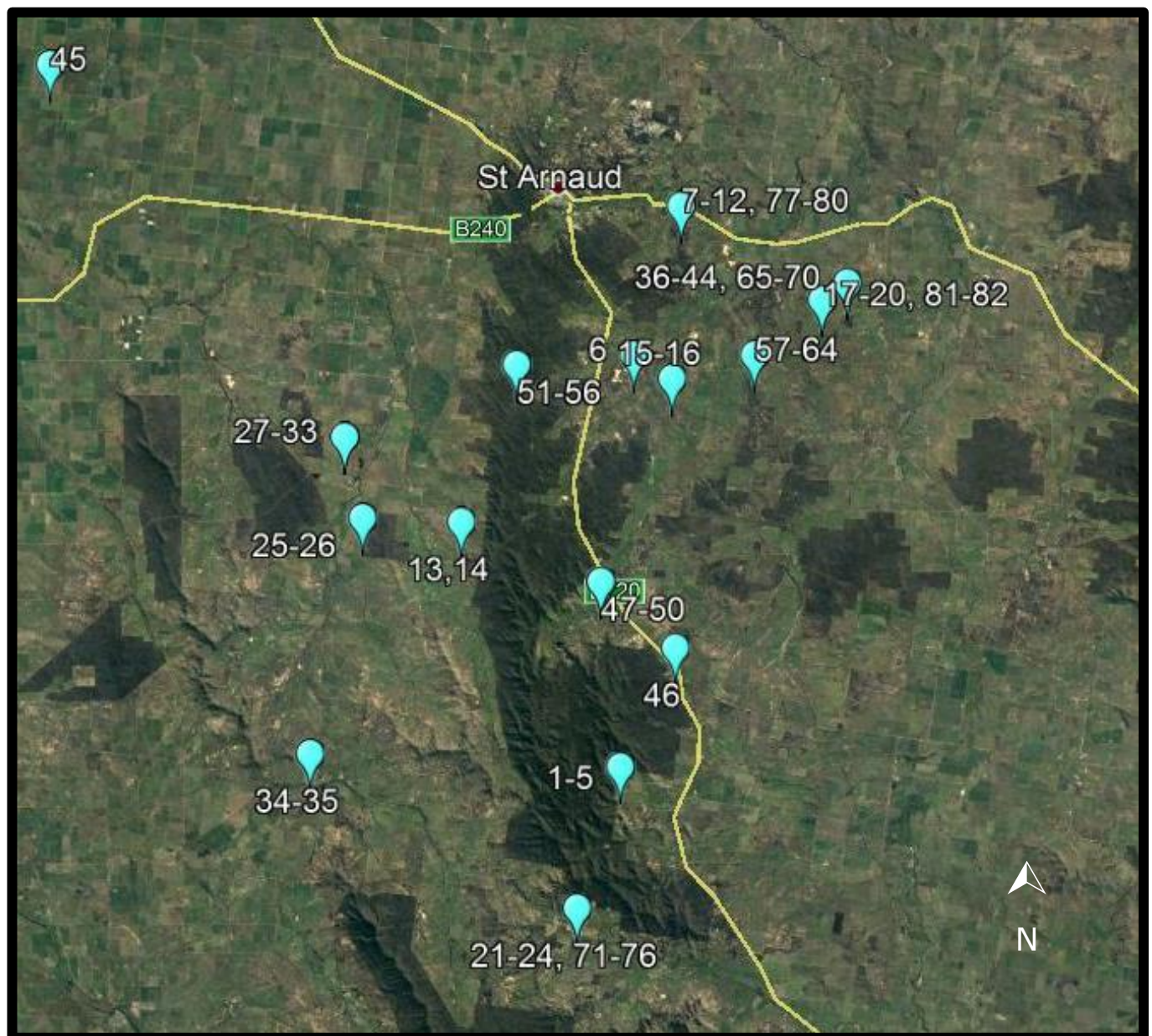
**Landcare Facilitator:** Deb Saxon-Campbell



### *On-ground works*

Preparations for our 2019 program of on-ground works began early in the year with deep ripping and spraying of designated work areas by landholders and, in March, the installation of ~2.0 kilometres of stock exclusion fencing on two private properties west of St Arnaud. By July, our community-based volunteers had planted over 3,000 native tube-stock across 9.5 hectares on six private properties at Kooreh, Rostron, Tottington and Paradise.

With revegetation works completed for the year, our focus returned to nest-box installations. An additional forty-four boxes were sited on private properties during the year, mostly within woodland habitat, bringing to 82 the total number installed across the north-central region (Figure 1). The bulk of boxes are for threatened Brush-tailed Phascogales; however, a limited number are for Kookaburras and Southern Boobooks – two bird species known to be in decline. Our aim is to install 200 boxes by the end of 2020.



**Figure 1:** The location of Kara Kara CMN nest-boxes installed to date across the north-central region.

## *Building partnerships*

### **Our local and regional partnerships**

In 2019, the Network maintained and expanded its relationships with local landholders, regional schools and local community groups. New community partners during the year included the St Arnaud Community House and St Arnaud Norman Simpson Memorial Pipe Band, who assisted with revegetation works west of the St Arnaud Range.

Our relationship with regional schools continues to grow on several fronts. Students from the Pyrenees Cluster of Primary Schools and regional secondary colleges at Charlton, Donald and St Arnaud help with tree planting, while woodworking students assist with the construction of threatened species' nest-boxes.

By virtue of our State Government BOA grant, we were also eligible for free access to a range of environmental services provided by Landmate, a rehabilitation program run by Corrections Victoria. Prison crews based at the Hopkins Correctional Facility in Ararat provided assistance with the erection of fencing and finished tree planting projects where community volunteer groups could not.

### **Bush Heritage Australia**

At a regional level, the Kara Kara CMN is fortunate to have a close and long-term working relationship with Bush Heritage Australia (BHA). Having identified the Wedderburn and Kara Kara regions as a biodiversity hot-spot, BHA has secured several Reserves in the region and actively supports projects undertaken by both the Wedderburn and Kara Kara CMNs that improve habitat for biodiversity. BHA's Regional Manager also serves on the volunteer committees of both CMNs.

From time to time, BHA hosts regional events to showcase its Reserves and projects, and our President and Facilitator were delighted to be invited to attend and talk about some of the Network's projects at one of these events in mid-June. Held at Rostron on the western edge of the St Arnaud Range and Kara Kara National Park, the venue also provided a perfect vantage point to view the progress and extent of revegetation projects completed by BHA, the Kara Kara CMN and Buloke & Northern Grampians Landcare Network to create bio-linkages across the landscape.



### **Silver Banksia Project**

Network representatives travelled to Dunkeld in May to participate in a Forum hosted by the Friends of Forgotten Woodlands (FFW) that is part of a co-operative State-wide effort to save the iconic Silver Banksia. This Forum helped to increase our understanding of this enigmatic and beautiful species while giving us the opportunity to view the newly-planted seedlings in FFW's impressive Seed Production Area just outside Dunkeld.

Closer to home, we also established a working relationship with the City of Greater Bendigo's (CGB) Natural Reserves Management Team. The CGB has recently established a Silver Banksia Seed Production Area at Crosbie east of Bendigo and we provided the Team with Banksia seed sourced from a local remnant population for propagation and planting at this new facility. We sincerely thank the local landholders for allowing us access to this precious remnant.



During the year, the Kara Kara CMN also strengthened its relationship with the traditional owners of our region, the Dja Dja Wurrung, participating in their Heathy Dry Forest workshop at Stuart Mill and in joint planning for a Network event to be held in 2020.

### **Further afield**

We regard our strong and enduring relationship with the North Central CMA, and the Regional Landcare Facilitator in particular, as pivotal to the success of the Network's various programs. As well as co-ordinating Landcare in our region, the CMA provides invaluable support to Facilitators employed under the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, keeping us informed of grant funding opportunities, arranging training and networking events, and generally helping us to negotiate government bureaucracy.

One such event, and a highlight of 2019, was the *Northern Rivers Round-Up*, a DELWP-funded conference for Landcare Facilitators at Echuca-Moama jointly hosted by the North Central, Goulburn Broken and North East CMAs. The Facilitator role, while fulfilling on many levels, can also be isolating. So the opportunity for our Landcare Facilitator to meet and network with her peers across northern Victoria was too good to miss! Facilitators who attended shared their successes and failures, and returned home full of project ideas and renewed enthusiasm.

### *Community engagement and education*

Public awareness of the Kara Kara CMN continues to grow by virtue of our community engagement and education activities and organically through word of mouth. This is difficult to quantify; however, our steadily increasing profile is demonstrated by our ability to attract new project partners and volunteers, while growing our mailing list and followers on social media.

### **Schools' environment program**

Climate change is increasingly making its presence felt, which is why we see environmental education as an essential and increasingly urgent part of our community engagement activities.



The Network has continued to develop its range of environmental education modules for secondary students. This year we added two more modules to the suite – 'Woodland Ecology' and 'Climate Change'. The Woodland Ecology module helps reconnect students to the natural world by giving them an understanding of the complex relationships and often fascinating interactions that exist between the flora and fauna in our native woodlands. In contrast, the Climate Change module presents the science of our warming climate in a simple way and gives practical examples of some of the impacts we are seeing in our region.

These modules are usually delivered outdoors in a woodland setting and are a good fit with the science and environment curricula for Year 9 secondary students, particularly as part of each schools' annual 'Environment Week' activities.

This year, St Arnaud Secondary College joined long-term participant Donald High School in the program. Feedback from both schools has been overwhelmingly positive, with students from both schools citing the program as a highlight of their week.

## **Strengthening our volunteer base**

Another positive development during 2019 was a small increase in the Network's volunteer base. A mix of individuals and community groups, this increase has corresponded with the promotion of the Kara Kara CMN's programs in local and regional print media, and on social media.

Much has been written about the positive effects of volunteering on health and personal well-being and we are conscious of making the volunteer experience a pleasant and memorable one for people who give freely of their time to help on our programs. This includes giving our volunteers opportunities to see and do things they wouldn't normally experience, whether planting trees, helping with vegetation surveys, or constructing, installing or monitoring nest-boxes. We also try to ensure that they understand the objectives of the project they are working on and how their efforts contribute to that project's outcome.



The Network's classroom-based biodiversity talks and work site project briefings help to inform our volunteers, maintain their enthusiasm and keep them coming back. Ensuring that our volunteers receive a hearty and sustaining lunch after a hard day's work might also have a bit to do with it!

## **Sponsorship**

Agricultural Shows are an institution in Australia, particularly in country areas and the Kara Kara CMN is a proud sponsor of the photographic competition at the St Arnaud Agricultural Show. Now in its third year, our modest sponsorship aims to showcase the region's biodiversity, funding prizes in junior and senior categories for the best photographs of local flora and fauna. The only condition we place on entries is that photographs be taken within 60 kilometres of St Arnaud.

## **Network communications**

The Kara Kara CMN has a range of online communications to keep our members, our growing mailing list and the general public updated with news, achievements and the progress of our various projects.

The Network's website at [www.karakaracmn.org.au](http://www.karakaracmn.org.au) and our *eNews* updates outline our projects and achievements while our Facebook page @KaraKaraCMN, which has a growing list of followers, enables us to distribute posts and share environment- and conservation-related news and updates in real time.

## *Public advocacy*

The Kara Kara CMN continues to advocate for positive improvements to public policy relating to the protection of the environment and biodiversity, both at a Federal and State level. Our advocacy can be formal, taking the form of submissions to Government Inquiries, or informal through participation in workshops and other consultative events hosted by government and semi-government agencies. We are careful to remain apolitical in our advocacy, believing that much more can be achieved by finding common ground on an issue and negotiating a win-win outcome than through confrontational activism.

During the year, several investigations initiated by the Federal and State Governments in 2018 to which the Network had made submissions were also progressed or concluded. Here's an update...

### **Strategic Bushfire Management Planning**

In March, Network representatives participated in public consultation and engagement activities hosted by Forest Fire Management Victoria's (FFMV) Loddon-Mallee Strategic Bushfire Management Team. We attended a Strategic Bushfire Management session in Bendigo and completed an online survey, both of which sought feedback from the public on various fuel management methods and how these can best be utilised within the landscape.

Our primary motivation in participating in these activities was to ensure that the location of floral and faunal assets within our region – for example, populations of rare and threatened native orchids and grass-trees, among others – were known to FFMV and had been included in their regional mapping. We also wanted to ensure that steps to protect these populations had been factored into their Strategic Bushfire Management Planning.

### **Regional Roundtable**

Each year, the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) hosts a Roundtable at several locations within the region to canvas public opinion on a range of topics and identify emerging issues of environmental and community concern. In March, the Kara Kara CMN participated in a Roundtable at St Arnaud where, along with other community groups and individuals, we provided feedback to the NCCMA on issues across four central themes – Community; Wetlands, waterways and floodplains; Biodiversity; and Land and soils.

The character of these community discussions ranges from calm to impassioned and every emotion in between, yet they are important in that they bring together disparate sections of the community and provide a forum for discussing issues of mutual concern.

### **Australia's faunal extinction crisis**



In 2018, the Federal Government commissioned an Inquiry by the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee into the extinction crisis currently impacting Australia's native fauna. The Inquiry's Terms of Reference were broad and wide-ranging, including such meaty issues as the reasons for and wider ecological impacts of faunal extinctions, the Australian Government's international and domestic obligations for conserving its native fauna, as well as the adequacy of Federal environment legislation, funding

streams, monitoring practices and the management and extent of the National Reserve System, to name a few. All huge topics in themselves! The Kara Kara CMN's submission was able to address only some of these issues. We couldn't hope to comment on all of them given our limited resources and the relatively short timeframe allocated for public consultation.

The Senate Committee was initially given until December 2018 to report on its findings; however, this date has been put back several times, with the report now due in November 2019.



## VEAC's Central West Investigation

In last year's *Review*, we reported that the Kara Kara CMN had made a submission to the Victorian Environment Assessment Council's (VEAC) Central West Investigation which had been commissioned by the State Government to assess the current land uses, and biodiversity, cultural, social and economic values of public land in the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range Forests.

The Network was particularly interested in VEAC's recommendation to create National and Regional Parks in the northern section of the Pyrenees Range. Our reasoning was that these proposed new Parks would help facilitate the creation of ecologically-important bio-links between the Pyrenees Range and the Kara Kara National Park in the St Arnaud Range to the north east.

Following a period of public consultation, VEAC completed its investigation and released its Final Report in June 2019. In this Report, the areas initially proposed by VEAC for National and Regional Parks were significantly reduced. The key difference between these two Park classifications is the list of permissible activities. We are now awaiting the State Government's response which is due by February 2020.

## Images

### Page

- i Children from the Pyrenees Cluster of primary schools were willing helpers at one of the Network's planting days at Rostron in June 2019.
- 2 Volunteer students and teachers from Donald High School brave the drizzle during a planting day at Kooreh.
- 6 A high vantage point at the BHA's field day event in June 2019 provided a good view of the revegetation works and landscape linkages to the west of the St Arnaud Range.
- 7 The Kara Kara CMN's Landcare Facilitator leads Donald High School Year 9 students in recreating a woodland food web.
- 8 A hearty lunch is always a winner at the Network's planting days!
- 9 The Brown Treecreeper is one of a suite of declining woodland bird species.
- 11 One of the Network's 2019 plantings on private property at Kooreh.

Images by C Campbell, D Saxon-Campbell and H Yuille.

## *Research, monitoring and evaluation*

The Network continues to monitor selected past projects and work sites on an ongoing basis. Monitoring is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it enables us to gauge the success of our projects, and see what has worked and what hasn't. Secondly, when a project hasn't been a success, monitoring gives us the opportunity to understand why, and if necessary, adjust our internal procedures and processes to improve our chances of success on like projects in the future.

During the year, we also continued our quarterly bird surveys across a range of woodland habitats in the north-central region, sharing our findings with institutional and public databases to inform scientific research and conservation planning.

## *Growing Network capacity*

The Kara Kara CMN's Committee is ever alert to opportunities to grow Network capacity and secure the organisation's long-term viability. In many ways, it is just as important to the Network's future as our on-ground projects and community engagement activities.

A focus for 2019 for the Network and our Landcare Facilitator in particular was the development of our new *Strategic Plan (2019-2023)*. The Kara Kara CMN's operating environment has changed dramatically in the relatively short time since our last Plan was drafted. The political arena has changed, and sourcing funding for conservation-related projects has become even more difficult. The majority of people remain largely disconnected from the natural world, yet the climate emergency continues to escalate. So, in drafting our new Plan, we went back to basics. The new *Strategic Plan (2019-2023)* is available from our website at [www.karakaracmn.org.au/events--resources](http://www.karakaracmn.org.au/events--resources).

In another initiative arising from the need to provide additional support to our native tube-stock plantings in a warming climate, the Network was successful in securing a grant from the Wettenhall Environment Trust to fund the purchase of a dedicated water cart. We have just taken delivery of this unit and will begin using it over the summer months.

The Kara Kara CMN employs a part-time Landcare Facilitator, a position that is funded by the State Government through its Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. In March of this year and with the end of a four-year funding cycle looming on 30 June, the State Government initiated a wide-ranging review of the Program through the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Part of normal government processes, this Review entailed completion of a detailed report on the Facilitator's activities for the three years to 30 June 2018, participation in one of several DELWP-initiated consultation sessions across Victoria and the completion of an online survey. While completing the various elements associated with this Review was time-consuming for our volunteer Committee and Facilitator, the benefits ensuing to the Network of having a funded position such as this are innumerable.

