



MEDIA RELEASE

The Tarcowie Landcare Group is busy preparing for its major planting weekend on the June long weekend, and is inviting any interested community members to join them in their work to revegetate the beautiful mid-north.

Around 250km north of Adelaide, Tarcowie is nestled between the Pekina Range and the Narien Range and is one of the most beautiful areas in the state's mid-north.

Officially founded in 2005, the Tarcowie Landcare Group has actually been planting in the area for 18 years, with recent years prominently showing the fruits of their initial labours, most visibly for anyone driving on the Orroroo – Laura road.

Group Chairperson Chris Grabczewski says the thriving vegetation planted by the group alongside this road is a strong visual indication of the group's success to date. "When you initially plant a seedling, it's only six inches high, and that will be almost invisible when you first drive past. But now, when you look at our early plantings some 15-16 years later, we regularly hear people saying to us 'gee, I'm impressed', with a number of them wanting us to work on their property."

The group has undertaken plantings every year since their initial inception, and group member Kieran Brewer says that this is directly linked to the group's primary objectives. "It's about revegetation, and to achieve this, we tailor-make a set of plants for a specific site, because we're trying to recreate the pre-European vegetation communities that existed on that site specifically. The reason we do that is because that's what's going to give us the best success rate, the greatest long term viability, and a sustainable planting. What we're hoping to achieve is to establish a planting that then drops seed and regenerates spontaneously on that location. That's only going to happen with the right material in the right place."

With students from the Orroroo Area School participating in a planting day on Friday the 7th of June, the Tarcowie Landcare Group continue their planting activities across the weekend on the Saturday and Sunday (the 8th and 9th of June).

Grabczewski continues "We've been involving local schools in the plantings which we find to be really important, because they're the future land owners - some of them are going to live in the area in the long term. So, by involving them they get a connection to the planting, and an introduction to the concept. They get a day away from school, and a day that's educational where they come to understand what we are planting, and why we are planting. We've produced a beautiful brochure about the group that goes into a showbag with other bits and pieces, so the planting function doesn't start and finish at the site. When they get on the bus they've got some mementoes, our brochure and on occasions a plant to take home, the idea being that we get the kids to communicate with the parents when they get home, so that we get our message out to a wider audience."

Brewer adds "I think that there's a perception that what we're doing in re-greening the landscape is contradictory to good farming, whereas I feel it's synonymous with good farming. For example, we've been putting in shelter belts that stop wind erosion and help to retain moisture in the soil, and which protect stock in inclement weather and also

stop any locusts in their tracks. There have been other advantages for farming from the biodiversity outcomes of our activities – there are more sleepy lizards that eat more hoppers during a hopper plague, for example, and more birds of prey have been attracted to the habitat we’ve planted which has helped to control mice. There’s so many things, but a lot of them are hard to measure and take a long time to establish themselves. However, some of them are really starting to show themselves.”

“We saw bustards here last year, which we’ve never seen in this area before. We’ve noticed an increase in parrot numbers too. The trees and plantings also have the effect of lowering the water table, which in turn improves ground salinity levels.”

Grabczewski says that all interested people are welcome to attend on the Saturday and Sunday of the long weekend. “We’re like any group doing anything, we’re always looking for new and younger members. We’d like our group to be sustainable and go on for many more years to come because the job of repairing the landscape is a massive one.”

“While the main planting activity starts on the Friday with the school planting, the work for the weekend starts well before then, so if anyone wants to come along early, they are most welcome. The current membership is mostly Adelaide based, some of whom have links to the local area. Anyone is welcome to join us, and we’re especially keen to encourage families to join us”.

Whilst not essential, the group would appreciate interested people contacting them ahead of the June long weekend via their Facebook page, particularly to assist with catering. “The Friday school activity is catered with a BBQ, and we usually hold another (BYO) BBQ on the Saturday night to celebrate the work done to date. Then on the Sunday, we are blessed with (group member) June Jenkins’ home made pasties and pies!”

Whilst there are no commercial accommodation options in the Tarcowie township, the group is very happy to help people in this regard. “There’s always room for caravans and tents, and we can provide access for electricity for example. There are multiple opportunities for camping.” Alternatively, nearby towns of Booleroo Centre, Orroroo, Laura and Jamestown provide accommodation options as well.

The group also undertake other activity weekends throughout the year, including site preparation and maintenance, weed control, fencing, making guards and sourcing stakes, and removing pest growth to stop competition which then allows plantings to get more moisture and grow better.

Media Contacts: Chris Grabczewski (Chair, 0402725815), June Jenkins (86586119, june.jenkins@westnet.com.au).

Please contact the group via their Facebook page.

Before and After:



Left – 2004 plantings taking place on Bob Arthur’s property



Left – fifteen years on, despite the drought conditions, the plantings have established with strength and vitality.