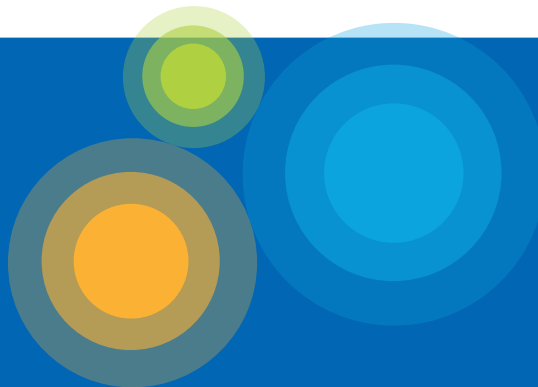


Improving the Health of Jacksons Creek



Melbourne Water is supporting a couple whose proposed residential development on the outskirts of Gisborne could become an international benchmark for biodiversity-sensitive urban design.

At the heart of Chrissy and Trent McCamley's proposal is a 2km stretch of Jackson Creek and the spectacular Gisborne Gorge that hugs the southern boundary of their 525 acre property, Glen Junor. The creek and 250 acres of adjoining land will become a reserve for nature with native habitat restored and threatened species reintroduced to the site. Reconnecting people with the restored waterways and nature reserve will form a vital part of the new community.

First, however, Chrissy and Trent need to reverse the damage caused by several decades of un-controlled grazing, in particular, poor water quality, weeds and the loss of native animal species and habitat.

"When we bought Glen Junor in 2015, the cattle were drinking straight from the creek which was causing a lot of problems," recalls Trent. "It was a worst case scenario - there were ponds of algae, and it was so steep that the animals would eventually die down there."

The couple planned to fence off the creek and its two tributaries immediately, and tackle the weeds and broad scale revegetation in stages. They were willing to fund the projects themselves but had the good luck to hear about the Stream Frontage Management Program (SFMP) through a local community group, Friends of Jackson Creek. They met with assessor Dean Platt soon after settlement and have been working with Melbourne Water ever since.



The SFMP has contributed funding for fencing to keep the couple's stock out of the waterways, and part of the cost of installing troughs in the paddocks. It has contributed to weed control, and funded the acquisition of more than 6,000 native plants which Chrissy and Trent have planted themselves. In addition, Melbourne Water has carried out extensive willow and gorse removal through its capital works program.

Trent says that Melbourne Water's expertise has been as valuable as its financial assistance. "We were enthusiastic and knew what we wanted to accomplish, but we needed to collaborate with experts who had experience in these large projects. Dean had a talent for directing our energy efficiently and introduced us to a host of community groups and people from within Melbourne Water that really created some momentum and made sure we don't make too many mistakes along the way!"

While they still have a long way to go, the results are already showing that Chrissy and Trent are on the right track. "Water quality has improved out of sight since we got the cattle out of the creek," Trent reports. "There was a lot of pooling and that was causing algal problems but the water is flowing so much better now."

Did you know?



If it weren't for Jackson Creek, we would not be able to see the hexagonal basalt columns that the Organ Pipes National Park is named after. The flow of water down the creek has gradually exposed these fascinating geological features that were created by the cracking and cooling of molten lava more than a million years ago.

There has been a huge increase in bird life thanks to the revegetation work, and they have done a lot of work recently identifying which animal species will be best suited for reintroduction to the site as the native habitat matures. There has also been a pleasing reduction in the number of feral deer on the property. "As soon as the gorse was cleared out, the deer disappeared. It just goes to prove that weeds provide good habitat for the wrong type of wild life."

The couple have another revegetation project planned for this year, and are looking forward to carrying out more projects with Melbourne Water with the goal of fully restoring this stretch of Jackson Creek.

"We're winning with Melbourne Water," says Trent. "It's been a really positive experience. Once we've restored the waterways, we will establish a trail along the creek to link up with the existing trail networks (upstream) established by the Friends of Jackson Creek. Our goal is to connect people to these waterways so that they will become much loved assets for the town of Gisborne which will ensure their long-term future".

Eligibility

Your eligibility for funding, and the specific amount of funding you are entitled to, will be determined after a site visit by an assessor.

We will pay up to 50% of the cost, including labour and materials, of a broad range of activities designed to improve the quality of the water leaving rural properties.

Funded activities include:

- fencing off and managing streams, drainage lines and other water-sensitive areas,
- sediment and nutrient retention systems,
- managing native vegetation and grass filter systems in riparian areas and drainage lines,
- establishing shade and shelter for livestock,
- stock laneway construction, improvement and drainage,
- effluent management,
- erosion stabilisation and protection.

Funded activities include:

- educational needs (such as developing whole farm plans, chemical use certification and soil testing),
- workshops to landholder groups e.g. managing horses on small properties, nutrient management,
- technical advice.

Interested in funding or further information about your waterway?

Contact us on 131 722 or by email at River.health@melbournewater.com.au

For more information about Melbourne Water's programs, visit www.melbournewater.com.au