

# Central Victorian Biolinks

## Phase 3 - Framework for action



**This document outlines a plan for the future development of Central Victorian Biolinks as an enabler of change; empowering the community to repair regional landscapes and save flagship species through collaboration, knowledge and innovation.**

# THE CONTEXT

**This document outlines a plan for the future development of Central Victorian Biolinks as an enabler of change; empowering the community to repair regional landscapes and save flagship species through collaboration, knowledge and innovation.**

Victoria has a unique, diverse and beautiful environment. And while Victorians have greatly benefited from this natural bounty, much change and degradation has been inflicted by over 200 years of European land use. More than 80 species in Victoria have become extinct, more than 1000 are threatened and another 1000 are near

threatened. Similarly 35% of the Bioregional Ecological Vegetation Classes in Victoria are classed as Endangered and 24% are Vulnerable.

What has become apparent is that we now need to practice conservation not only in National Parks but across the whole of the

landscape. Conservation must be tenure-blind. We need to buffer and reconnect our major conservation areas. We need to ensure that the 30% of Victorian threatened species that are totally reliant on private lands are secured.

The community has responded to this need, and significant momentum to increase the contribution of private land to conservation exists through landcare and conservation management networks as well as through organisations such as Bush Heritage and Trust for Nature. However, to achieve the environmental outcomes at the scale needed, existing community momentum for action requires support, coordination and amplification.

Just when this support is most needed, recent decades have seen a vacuum of environmental capacity and expertise created by the retreat of government from biodiversity conservation. Both commonwealth and state agencies have progressively withdrawn

from developing policy, have shed capacity and expertise, and reduced expenditure; and to date the private and not-for-profit sectors have been unwilling or unable to fill the void. As a result, communities interested in conservation have been inadequately supported; at best reducing the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts; at worst, resulting in counterproductive or perverse outcomes. Overlain on this, climate change and demands for increased food production, are introducing new complexities to the problem. New management paradigms will be essential to deal with the challenges they bring.

Central Victorian Biolinks was instigated in 2010 by community conservation groups in Victoria in response to these issues. The key rationale behind the initiative is that;

- *current environmental efforts aren't working*
- *new approaches are needed*
- *efforts need to be more strategic*



**Friends of Black Hill, Upper Campaspe Landcare Network installing nestboxes.**

Photo: Sandy Scheltema



**Hanging Rock a stepping stone in the Macedon to Cobaw Ranges Biolink being established by Newham Landcare, Upper Campaspe Landcare Network.** Photo David Bonsall.

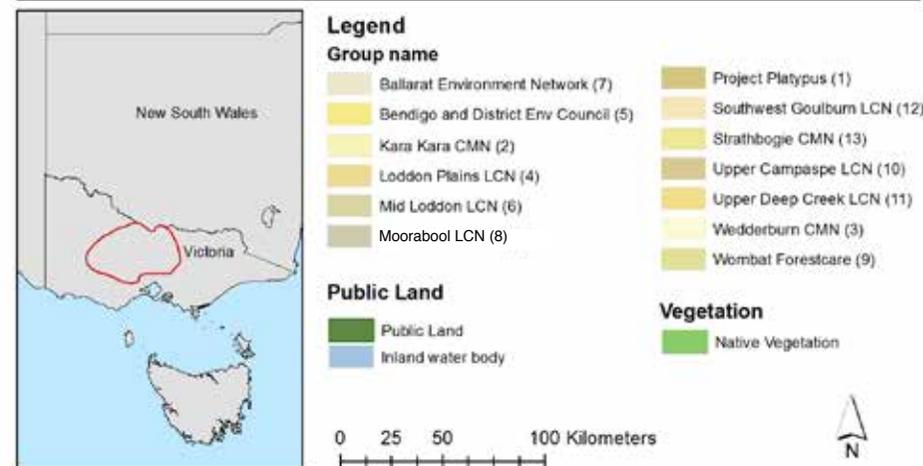
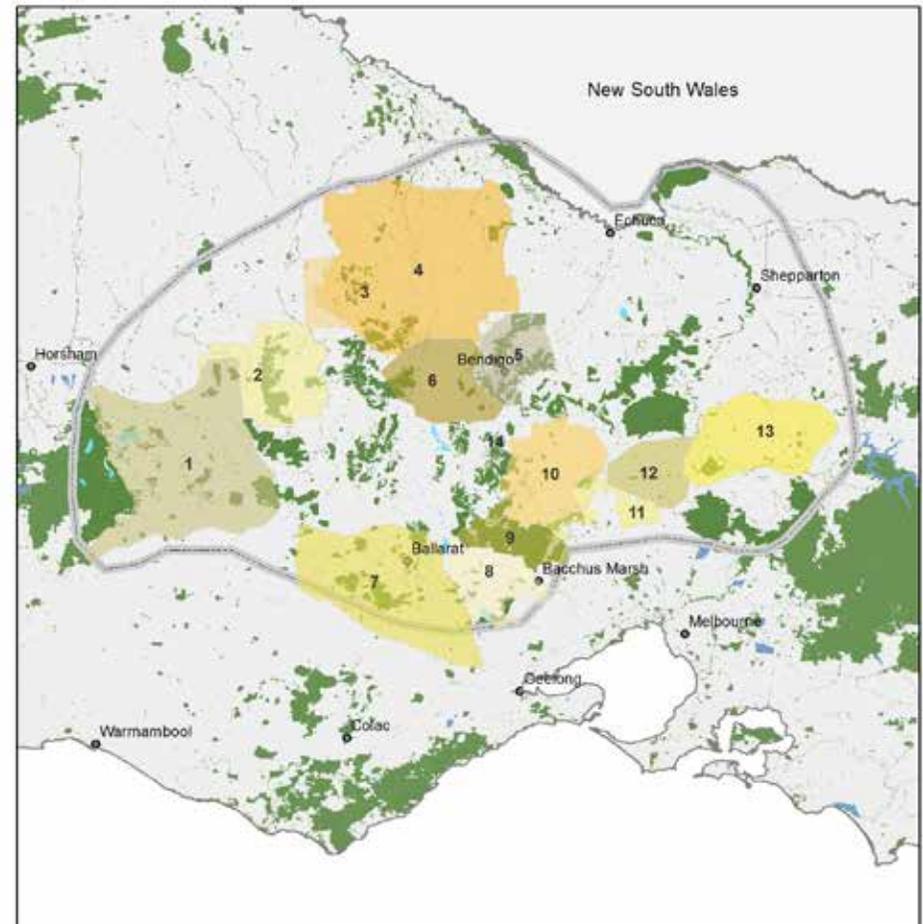
and targeted

- new partnerships need to be forged between regional communities and the corporate, government, philanthropic and not-for-profit sectors.

Central Victorian Biolinks has developed a strong foundation of partnerships based on understanding where membership groups

are currently at and the support they need. Central Victorian Biolinks has identified itself as a capacity-building organisation; helping the community develop the ability to confront the environmental challenges ahead. This document summarises what we will do to achieve this, our priorities for the next five years and the programs and projects we will develop to achieve them.

**To achieve the environmental outcomes at the scale needed, existing community momentum for action requires support, coordination and amplification.**



The Central Victorian Biolink region and where Networks participating in the Alliance work.

# OUR FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Our 5 year Action Plan will be delivered through four clearly defined Programs based upon seven key priorities.

This table shows how our broader environmental goals relate to our capacity building focus, our operational principles and our proposed approach to realise them.

<p><b>BROADER GOAL</b></p> <p><b>OUR FOCUS</b></p> <p><b>OUR PRINCIPLES</b></p> <p><b>20 YEAR OUTCOMES</b></p> <p><b>5 YEAR OUTCOMES</b></p> <p><b>OUR PROGRAMS</b></p>	<p>To improve the connectivity, condition and resilience of landscapes and halt the further decline of species</p>							
	<p>To increase the capacity of landcare and other environmental community groups and networks to use evidence based decision making to address key conservation management issues in their area</p>							
	<p><b>BOTTOM UP</b> Needs and values of regional communities</p>	<p><b>INFORM</b> Generate, transfer and share knowledge</p>	<p><b>COLLABORATE</b> Broaden impacts at scale</p>	<p><b>INNOVATE</b> Drive new ideas and approaches</p>				
	<p>Regional communities are custodians of and are actively and effectively managing the natural assets in their regional environment; more participation and doing it better</p>							
	<p>More effective conservation practices adopted</p>	<p>More effective prioritisation of areas and key issues</p>	<p>More effective transfer of knowledge, skills and practice</p>	<p>Groups have increased and on-going funding</p>	<p>Groups have increased adaptive capacity</p>	<p>Groups are active participants in the alliance</p>	<p>Increase in participation</p>	
<p><b>1. ALLIANCE BUILDING</b></p>		<p><b>2. CAPACITY OF GROUPS</b></p>		<p><b>3. SCIENCE, MAPPING AND KNOWLEDGE</b></p>		<p><b>4. COMMUNICATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND INFLUENCE</b></p>		



# 1. ALLIANCE BUILDING

- 1.1 Field Guide to groups and projects
- 1.2 Website and online tools
- 1.3 Annual forum
- 1.4 Annual tour
- 1.5 Collaborative planning

BUDGET: YEAR 1 - \$130,000; YEARS 2 - 5 \$300,000

***Our Alliance Building program will connect member groups, share knowledge, align goals and generate greater action to achieve impacts at scale.***

We will build a dynamic, active and adaptive network of community conservation practitioners whose capacity and resilience is strengthened through participation.

We will ensure groups can easily access information on other projects and key people and skills bases through developing an online Field Guide of all associated groups.

We will develop a website to support

interaction between groups and access to information. It will include a library of information and tools, plus meeting forums, blogs, events calendars, and other relevant media. All technical information developed through other Central Victorian Biolink activities will be made available on-line.

We will stimulate cross-group collaboration by holding an annual tour showcasing the various groups' areas, encouraging networking, and sharing ideas and experiences and hold an annual forum that is tightly curated to address key issues shared by member groups.

Central Victorian Biolinks will facilitate collaborative planning processes between ecologically and geographically aligned groups (Landscape Projects), which target shared flagship species or communities. Critically, this process will use existing plans, associated information and local knowledge and assist participating groups in monitoring and evaluating effectiveness, and in reviewing and setting new goals and strategies under an adaptive management framework.



**Participants at Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance Meeting October 2014;**  
From left, Paul Foreman, Gary Howling, Judy Crocker, Leigh Blackmore, Karen Alexander, Peter Mitchell, Sophie Bickford, Mel Husada, Gayle Osborn, John Boadle, Michael Moore

## STAKEHOLDERS

### Alliance members and associates

- Mid Loddon Landcare Network
- Upper Campaspe Landcare Network
- Moorabool Landcare Network
- Strathbogie Conservation Management Network
- Project Platypus
- Wedderburn Conservation Management Network
- South West Goulburn Landcare Network
- Friends of Wombat Forest
- Ballarat Environment Network
- Bendigo and Districts Environment Council

- Upper Goulburn Landcare Network
- Jackson's Creek EcoNetwork
- Federation of Environment and Horticulture Macedon Ranges
- Loddon Plains Landcare Network
- Kara Kara CMN,
- Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network

### Collaboration partners – Landscape Pilot specific – will include;

- Indigenous groups
- Catchment Management Authorities
- Parks Victoria
- Trust for Nature
- Bush Heritage



**Species of the Central Victorian region.**

## 2. CAPACITY OF GROUPS

- 2.1 Think tank
- 2.2 Customised training and mentoring program

BUDGET: YEAR 1 - \$150,000; YEARS 2 - 5 \$600,000

*Our Groups' Capacity Program will enable community conservation practitioners to be more effective in identifying, designing, implementing and measuring conservation activities.*

This program has been designed to bring in the latest knowledge, methods and tools to the challenge.

### STAKEHOLDERS

- Alliance members and associates
- Universities and research bodies,
- Government and NGO sectors,
- Health sector
- Agricultural industries
- Marketing and communications
- Information technology
- Education sector
- Business sectors
- Finance sector
- General community



Eastern Yellow Robin

At present there is a lack of consistent ongoing institutional support and capacity building for community NRM networks such as Landcare groups and networks, despite their role as key deliverers of conservation. This is at a time when new knowledge and approaches have never been more needed. For example, climate change is necessitating conservation practitioners approach species and genetic provenance selection very differently and prioritise areas that will support biodiversity now and into the future.

While many of the groups are highly experienced, they are being asked to perform complex roles to solve difficult problems. Central Victorian Biolink member groups have identified the need for formal project management skills. They recognise they need support in project conception (strategy and objectives) right through to



**Campaspe River and Land Management Group (Upper Campaspe Landcare Network)**  
**"Trees for Mum" Community Planting Day.** Photo; Sandy Scheltema

implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Groups are struggling to get this sort of vital expertise from traditional sources such as agencies and under grant programs.

We will establish a broad-scoping Innovation Think Tank dedicated to broadly sourcing, conceiving and extending new ideas across the region, tools and concepts useful to

**Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water Lisa Neville visits the Macedon to Cobaw Ranges biolink with the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network.**

Photo; Sandy Scheltema

community engagement, capacity building and repairing the environment. We will look inwards at the innovative approaches already being adopted in central Victoria and work towards greater profiling and extension of those ideas and methods through the Central Victorian Biolink Alliance. We'll also look outwards to translate the best insights and innovations from other sectors.

We will develop a Customised Training and Mentoring Program to extend innovation, provide vital ecological expertise and address group knowledge and information needs. The Mentoring Program will allow the exchange of information and expertise between the groups, while the Training Program would match the ecological components of collaborative planning processes and aim to fill information gaps by bringing in outside experts. The training programs will be linked to on-going consultation and source leading academics, experts and communicators to deliver. The Customised Training and Mentoring Program is a key supporting program to the Collaborative Planning approach within each Landscape Project area.



***This program has been designed to bring in the latest knowledge, methods and tools to the challenge.***

# 3. SCIENCE, MAPPING AND KNOWLEDGE

## 3.1 Central Victorian Conservation Opportunities and Constraints Information Base

## 3.2 Landscape-targeted information bases

BUDGET: YEAR 1 - \$112,000; YEARS 2 - 5 \$72,000

*Our Science, Mapping and Knowledge Program will enhance the ability for conservation priorities to be set at multiple relevant spatial scales in the whole of region as well as within priority areas.*

It will allow conservation groups to set scientifically-based strategic objectives about where in the landscape their works will

### STAKEHOLDERS

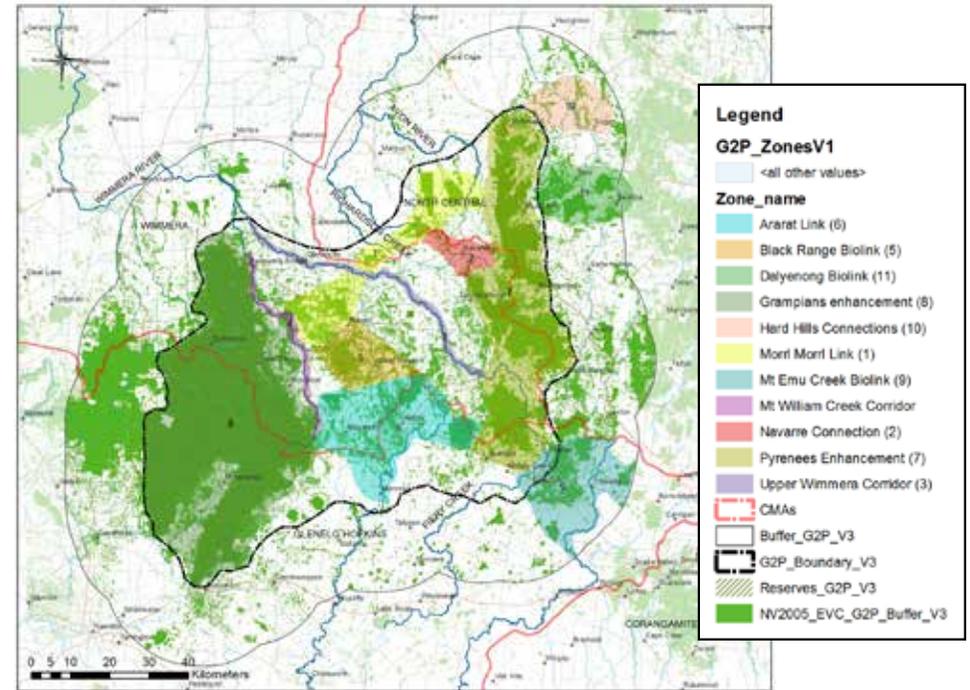
- Alliance members and associates
- Melbourne University
- Federation University
- Charles Sturt University
- Government departments eg ARI
- CSIRO
- CMAs
- Trust for Nature

give the greatest ecological outcomes and build lasting resilience at the least cost.

Much of the information that is needed, or the methods to generate it, already exist but need to be made more accessible or applied to particular areas. To support strategic decision making, we will, in partnership, use existing modelling and mapping tools, develop a Whole-of-CVB Opportunities and Constraints Information Base. Regional themes will include connectivity analyses, focal species requirements, climate change scenarios and adaptation pathways as well social and economic land use patterns and trends.

To support finer scale planning, targeted decision support information will be developed for groups, also with research collaborators. A priority is to develop finer-scale decision support tools for the Grampians to Pyrenees Landscape Project through undertaking focal species connectivity and habitat modelling, taking into account future projected climate change scenarios.

Additionally, the program will provide the infrastructure for closer and more effective interaction between knowledge providers and knowledge users which will result in more user-driven research directed to conservation of the biodiversity of Central Victoria.



**Grampians to Pyrenees Connectivity Plan: Priority Zones determined through a collaborative planning process between Project Platypus, Trust for Nature, Parks Victoria, Wimmera CMA and Glenelg Hopkins CMA facilitated by Central Victorian Biolinks.**



**Left to right: Sophie Bickford, Central Victorian Biolinks, Joern van Veen Bush Heritage, John Boadle Karra Karra CMN, Phil Dyson North Central CMA, Judy Crocker Mid Loddon Landcare Network discussing project synergies across the Goldfields region**

# 4. COMMUNICATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND INFLUENCE

- 4.1 Business Plan
- 4.2 Marketing and Communications Plan
- 4.3 Partnerships
- 4.4 Investment Advocacy Program
- 4.5 Cross-sectoral board

BUDGET: YEAR 1 - \$80,000; YEARS 2 - 5 \$200,000

*This program will ensure that Central Victorian Biolinks establishes itself as an effective organisation that achieves its goals in growing the capacity of its member groups.*

Over the past five years, Central Victorian Biolinks has played a strong role in strategy development, stakeholder analysis, community collaboration and partnerships, and

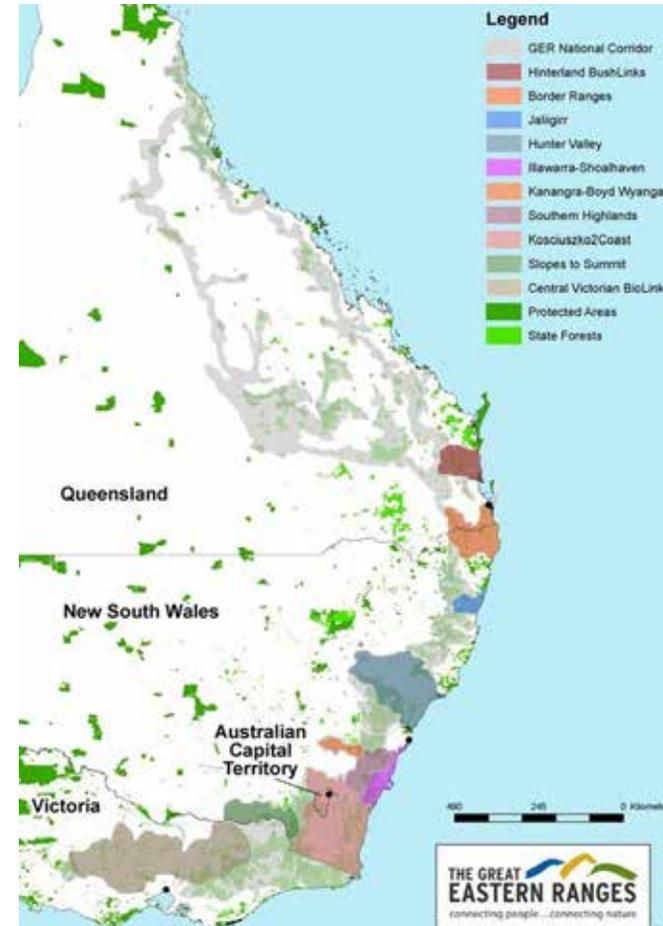
## STAKEHOLDERS

- Great Eastern Ranges Connectivity Conservation Initiative
- Regional Groups including Dja Dja Warrung and Yorta Yorta
- Bush Heritage
- Trust for Nature
- Government
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Victoria National Parks Association
- The Wilderness Society
- Parks Victoria

technical support for groups and networks. In order to maximise the opportunity for CVB to continue to play a leading role in capacity building, a comprehensive Business Plan for the organisation will be developed and implemented over the next five years. This Business Plan will include areas such as an analysis of the conservation industry and associated markets, competitive edge and uniqueness, business opportunities, a marketing strategy, an operational plan, management and personnel needs and a financial plan.

Encouraging broader community understanding of the issues and involvement in whole-landscape conservation will be key to the initiatives success and sustainability. We will develop a communications and marketing plan to direct this important area and particularly consider the use of flagship species for this purpose. Species suggestions have included: Plains-wanderer, Platypus, Bush Stone Curlew, Malleefowl, Koala, (Hooded) Robin, Tree Goanna, Tuan, Quail, Quoll, Gliders, Moths and Butterflies.

Central Victorian Biolinks will play a role as partnership builder and broker between organisations operating at larger scales and local community conservation groups. Our partnership with the Great Eastern Ranges connectivity conservation initiative will ensure local actions in Central Victoria also contribute to continental-scale ecological



Regional partnerships of the Great Eastern Ranges connectivity conservation initiative.

processes. Knowledge providers, such as universities, can more readily apply and extend their research when working through

all member groups, as well as including perspectives from progressive and innovative people from other sectors.

a knowledge-sharing network rather than with individual community organisations.

As the actions to meet environmental outcomes get more sophisticated through the implementation of CVB programs, the investment in funding these actions must match. We will develop an Investment Advocacy Program to argue for improvements to existing grant programs and to implement new programs including devolved grants (for example through a future CVB) that are more cost efficient, targeted to local demographics and landscapes, and environmentally effective.

We will ensure that our governance processes engender participatory decision making involving

# LANDSCAPE PROJECTS

Melbourne Ark  
Central Goldfields  
Grampians to Pyrenees

*Central Victorian Biolinks member groups have identified value in working collaboratively across landscapes with similar ecological, social and economic characteristics and challenges. We will maintain this existing momentum for collaboration and use them to direct, apply and test our Programs.*

The three proposed Landscape Projects are outlined here.

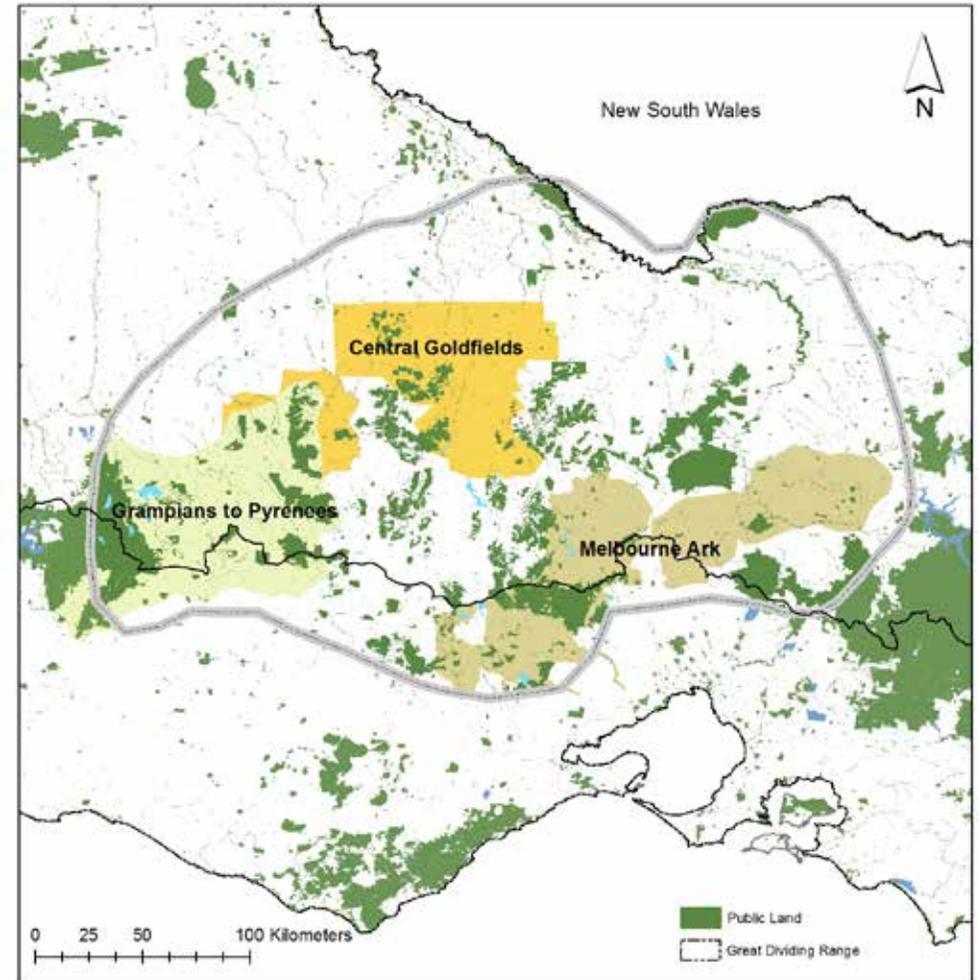
**Melbourne Ark** is an initiative of the groups around the northern, greater Melbourne region stretching from Brisbane Ranges to the west, through to the Upper Goulburn River catchment in the east. Groups in this region met at a previous CVB workshop and identified issues, ecological assets and demographics similar across their region. The notion of sharing ideas, skills and expertise throughout this area was born. Melbourne Ark straddles three Catchment Management Authority Boundaries and, as such, groups here have not had the opportunity to work closely together in a formal sense.

There is an opportunity here for a real flagship, high profile project that could draw



Forest at Hanging Rock, part of the Melbourne Ark landscape. Photo David Bonsall.

in the relatively high population of people living in this area. With little collaboration existing here, the emphasis of this Landscape Project from a CVB point of view would be to start facilitating the exchange of ideas, experience and expertise. Technical information, for example, mapping would not be confined to CMA boundaries, and instead would be carried out across the



Landscape project areas in the Central Victorian Biolinks region

whole Melbourne Ark area to capture the strengths and opportunities from this broader viewpoint based on biogeography, and not administration requirements.

**Central Goldfields** project region differs from Melbourne Ark in two key areas: firstly, groups here have an established relationship with each other, and secondly, it is confined

to one CMA the North Central CMA. Because of these attributes, landscape planning and prioritisation tools have been carried out, collaborative projects have been developed and agency funding has been available. The CVB stakeholder analysis has shown however, that these groups want assistance with their adaptive capacity to set goals, regularly review them and adapt their



**Box-ironbark forest of the Central Goldfields region.** Photo David Neilson

mechanisms as needed.

The emphasis with Central Goldfields would be to increase the knowledge of the groups with regards to current technical information available, help develop this into common goals and then link these to their planning and review processes.

Central Goldfields area is also a target area for not only the NCCMA, but also other agencies, such as Trust for Nature and Bush Heritage Australia. Having a Landscape Project here would give CVB the opportunity to partner with these existing organisations in a large-scale on-ground restoration project.

**The Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink** has been established for a number of years. Project Platypus have been strong supporters of CVB since its inception and have recently undertaken a Conservation

Action Planning process with other key stakeholders in the region and, with the assistance of CVB over the last 6 months, to use latest scientific information as the basis for identifying priority areas in their landscape. The G2P Landscape Project helps ensure that this planning process moves to the implementation, review and adapt stages. Project Platypus recognises the opportunity to be involved in a large-scale landscape project, whilst also setting specific goals and objectives for actions undertaken. Project Platypus is an established not-for-profit natural resource management group in western Victoria, with current federal government funding to carry the CAP process through to the next stages. Identifying the G2P project as one of the key Landscape Projects for CVB will ensure that the partnership with CVB continues and CVB continues to play a guiding role on planning, implementation, reviewing and adapting.

## OUR FIVE YEAR PRIORITIES

5 year outcome	5 year objective	Measuring success
Better conservation practices	1. Increase choice of conservation practices to achieve desired ecological outcomes	Range of conservation practices used
Better prioritisation of areas and key issues	2. Clearly identify key priority area locations and issues for interventions	Priority area locations and issues
Better transfer of knowledge, skills and practices	3. Collate key resources and directly link to decision making in 3 areas	Resources used to inform decision making
Increase in funding	4. Increase groups average yearly funding	Average yearly funding for the last 5 years (since 09-10)
Increase in participation	5. Increase the range and number of people in groups	Numbers and types of landholders involved
Build adaptive capacity	6. Implement an adaptive process of goal setting and review in 3 areas	Adaptive capacity of groups involved
CVB Professional status	7. Funding is from diverse sources and secure	

## OUR ORGANISATION

The Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance was instigated in 2010 by community conservation groups in Central Victoria. In August 2015 the organisation became an independently incorporated body with new operating Rules and expanded Board of Management.

**The Alliance is currently a partnership of 14 member landcare networks, conservation management networks and umbrella environment groups concerned with implementing community-based conservation. Member networks are represented by up to 5 delegates with one delegate voting at meetings.**

**The organisation is guided by an elected and skills-based Board whose role it is to manage the organisation and implement our plan. Sub-committees will be established as needed to drive particular program areas and activities.**

### Members

Mid Loddon Landcare Network  
Upper Campaspe Landcare Network  
Moorabool Landcare Network  
Strathbogie Conservation Management Network  
Project Platypus  
Wedderburn Conservation Management Network  
South West Goulburn Landcare Network  
Friends of Wombat Forest  
Ballarat Environment Network  
Bendigo and Districts Environment Council  
Upper Goulburn Landcare Network  
Jackson's Creek EcoNetwork

Federation of Environment and Horticulture Macedon Ranges  
Loddon Plains Landcare Network

### Other groups participating

Kara Kara Conservation Management Network  
Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network  
Whroo Goldfields Conservation Management Network  
Longwood Plains Conservation Management Network  
Connecting Country

### Board

Paul Foreman, Chair  
Judy Croker, Vice Chair  
Karen Alexander, Treasurer  
Dr Peter Mitchell, Secretary  
Michael Moore  
Dr Simon Cook  
Ann Macgregor  
Anthony Dufty  
Leigh Blackmore  
Amanda Gauci  
Anthony Gallacher  
Dr Sophie Bickford

### Ambassadors

Doug Humann

### Staff

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### Contributing consultants:

Kate Stothers  
Paul Foreman, Blue Devil Consulting

### Financial Model

Central Victorian Biolinks has been supported by a mixture of philanthropic, private donor and government funding, as well as substantial in-kind commitments from participating organisations. It is anticipated that this mix will continue through the implementation of our fund raising plan.

In the 2014-15 Calendar Year Central Victorian Biolinks received \$90,000 cash funding from philanthropic and government sources and received over \$40,000 worth of in kind contribution from participating organisations.

### Acknowledgments

This plan was made possible by Community grant from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. This grant and additional 3 years of financial support has been pivotal to this project as a whole. We also thank the Melliodora Foundation, Victorian National Parks Association, The Wilderness Society for their contributions and support.

### CONTACT DETAILS

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[www.centralvicbiolinks.org.au](http://www.centralvicbiolinks.org.au)



Above; Community planting day on the Little Coliban River run by Tylden Landcare, Upper Campaspe Landcare Network. Photo; Sandy Scheltema



Below; The Piper Biolink from Mt Piper being established by South West Goulburn Landcare Network. Photo; Peter Mitchell