



NATURAL
RESOURCES
CONSERVATION
TRUST

Impact Report 2025



Contents



Message from the Chair 3

NRCL - The Founding Donor 4

Measuring our Impact 5

Our five Granting Goals 7

Moving into 2026 and ...Towards 2030 19



Message from the Chair

Jon Hutchins



During 2025, the Natural Resources Conservation Trust (“Trust”) achieved a number of significant milestones, including the provision of over \$1.3 million in project grant funding in its first three years of grantmaking. This significant milestone of grants awarded supports 17 funded projects, with a combined estimated value of around \$5.9 million, once partner contributions are included. In addition to grantmaking, the Trust has provided over \$100,000 in a range of sponsorships, designed to engage and support youth in research activities and in support of future environmental leaders and their aspirations.

The Trust’s sole corpus funder, the Natural Resources Conservation League (NRCL) acknowledges that the Trust provides the role of grant maker on behalf of NRCL, in accordance with the Trust’s own Purpose which aligns strongly with that of NRCL. NRCL has provided a substantive corpus donation of \$13.5 million since 2021, which is held in a range of investments from which the net returns (after Trust administration costs) are used for grantmaking and sponsorships.

On behalf of the voluntary Trust Board, this 2025 Impact Report has been prepared to demonstrate to NRCL, and all stakeholders, the impact that Trust grantmaking and sponsorships are having over the last three years from which grantmaking first commenced.

The information contained therein is an aggregation, and extracts, of the annual impact reports provided by each grant recipient during this time that demonstrates the use of net investment returns from NRCL corpus funding.

I hope you enjoy reading about our collective impact as a new environmental philanthropic charity – albeit with a long-associated history of making a difference to the environment in Victoria since 1944.

Jon Hutchins
NRCT Chair

Natural Resources Conservation League - The Founding Donor

In June 2024, the Trust Board attended the free public Exhibition, supported by NRCL, that was held at Heritage Hill Museum and Historic Gardens in the City of Dandenong titled 'Trees – A Canopy Extraordinaire'. The Exhibition celebrated 80 years since the Save The Forests campaign that led to the subsequent creation of NRCL and the first community forest tree planting event at Greaves Reserve, Dandenong in 1944. The Exhibition was also promoted by the National Trust and encouraged interested members of the public to visit the Exhibition that included:

- A range of panels and displays from NRCL's Archives of information and memorabilia on the original Save The Forests campaign, including the first recorded public tree planting revegetation initiative at Dandenong and information on the creation of NRCL and its founders;
- Exhibition presentations and artefacts on the cultural significance of trees in the landscape and free shrubs and trees for attendees; and
- Presentations on "NRCL today", including NRCL's establishment of the Natural Resources Conservation Trust to provide philanthropic grant funding to community environmental projects to be utilised in accordance with the Trust deed that also aligns with NRCL's principal Objectives.

Today's NRCL is building further on this historical legacy in accordance with its objectives, being the protection, sustainable use and enhancement of the natural environment. NRCL's current principal activities are to promote innovative and strategic responses to contemporary environmental issues by:

- Building the capacity of community networks to undertake innovative projects;
- Working collaboratively with partners to promote landscape restoration;
- Seeking to realise sustainable development at the League's Cranbourne property; and
- By brokering connections to add value to our investments and build a strong, community based, Natural Resource Management sector.

By referring all grant funding applications to the Trust, NRCL can focus on the Cranbourne property becoming a sustainability benchmark, whilst also financing and facilitating the Trust's entry into environmental philanthropy.

Measuring our Impact

The Trust's objectives relate to the implementation of its inaugural 2022-2025 Strategic Plan and demonstrating to NRCL, as the sole corpus funder, that the Trust is a responsible investor of corpus donations and an impactful grant maker in accordance with its Purpose.

By December 2025, the Trust has invested in nature based solutions, including carbon drawdown, that protect and enhance the natural environment. It is a catalyst for change through leveraging research and educational opportunities, partnerships with like-minded organisations and the funding of community based projects.

The Trust's 5 Granting Goals guide its grantmaking efforts, and all grant recipients must provide an "Indicators of Change" report each year to assist the Trust to measure impact. The Trust measures impact by:

- Maintaining close relationships with the organisations we fund;
- Tracking qualitative and quantitative measures; and
- Sharing results.

The Trust has provided grant funding to 17 projects since grantmaking began in 2022.

In addition, the Trust has sponsored four scholarships and three conferences to date, along with provision of two research grants, the results of which will be reported in the 2026 Impact Report.



Planting at the BushBank/Birdlife Australia project site, located at Broadford.

Measuring our Impact

STF1944 Ltd. atf Natural Resources Conservation Trust Grants Approved Schedule

Grant	Year	Total Grant Value	Recipient	Project Title	Expected Project Total Value*	Expected Completion
1	2022	\$300,000	Landcare Victoria Inc.	New Futures for Victorian Landcare	\$1,890,928	Complete
2	2023	\$197,000	Seeding Victoria Inc.	Greening the environment, one seed at a time	\$446,600	2028
3	2023	\$20,000	Otways Agroforestry Network	Expand the Peer Group Mentor Program	\$20,000	Complete
4	2023	\$30,000	Otways Agroforestry Network	Conduct a Master Tree Growers Course	\$30,000	Complete
5	2023	\$20,000	Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network	Meet your Bushland	\$57,500	Complete
6	2023	\$34,000	Bunanyung Landscape Alliance	Biodiversity Restoration	\$735,000	Complete
7	2023	\$10,000	Otways Agroforestry Network	Conduct mentor training programs	\$10,000	Complete
8	2024	\$165,000	Euroa Arboretum	Growing climate adapted seed - Stage 1 Avenel & Stage 2	\$1,270,000	2029
9	2024	\$31,870	Southwest Environment Alliance	Climate Change Challenges for South West Victoria forum and activities	\$49,870	Complete
10	2024	\$50,000	Wildlife Unlimited Alliance	Helping hands for the Sheoak	\$100,000	2026
11	2024	\$155,700	Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network	Enabling Biodiverse, Productive, Sustainable Landscapes with the Westernport Biosphere Foundation	\$529,300	2026
12	2024	\$14,300	Birdlife Australia	Broadford Restoration project with BushBank, Cassinia Environmental and landowner	\$58,680	2026
13	2025	\$99,000	Co-Exist	Empowering Youth for Conservation Leadership	\$99,000	2026
14	2025	\$49,200	Wildlife Unlimited Alliance	Mallee Looper caterpillar	\$108,400	2027
15	2025	\$62,295	Southwest Environment Alliance	Greening Glenelg - planning for a new regional seedbank	\$62,295	2026
16	2025	\$23,750	DJAARA/wood4good	Cultural Forestry initiative	\$120,000	2026
17	2025	\$58,458	Cassinia Environmental/landholders	BushBank private land stream grants x 2	\$275,178	2029
TOTAL		\$1,320,573			\$5,862,751	

*The expected project total value is the sum of the investment made, includes funding partner co-contributions, either in cash or kind.

Our Purpose

To focus on the advancement, protection, sustainable use and enhancement of the natural environment.

Our Values

Respect



We invite and listen to the views of others

Honesty



We are upfront, always

Passion



We embrace challenges with courage, energy and confidence

Impact



We make positive change happen in measurable ways

Collaboration



We achieve more with the help of others

Accountability



We do what we say

GOAL 1

Build capacity for private landowners/managers to implement carbon drawdown & enhance natural resources

We progress this goal by funding:

- Revegetation projects
- seed collection
- Tree plantings
- Covenanting high biodiversity areas

Projects funded in this area include:

- Meet your bushland (Mornington Peninsula);
- Greening the environment one seed at a time (Euroa Arboretum);
- Helping hands for the Sheoak (East Gippsland);
- Enabling Biodiverse, Productive, Sustainable Landscapes (Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network & Westernport Biosphere Foundation); and
- Broadford private land restoration project (BushBank, Cassinia Environmental, BirdLife and landowner).

Initial impacts of these projects include:



64,727 trees and shrubs planted



389 kg of native seed collected, an increase of 30%

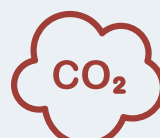
131 ha of land revegetated, including 13 ha of seed orchards established



25 ha of weed control undertaken



11 km of riparian vegetation restored



98 tonnes CO₂e sequestered

Partner Case Study - *Enabling Biodiverse, Productive, Sustainable Landscapes*

The Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network established the Linking the Mornington Peninsula Landscape (LMPL) project 10 years ago. The project is establishing a network of major biolinks between substantial natural areas such as national and state parks. Within these major links lies a network of smaller links to local bush patches.

A decade of biolink construction started slowly and has accelerated markedly in recent years. The 2024-25 financial year saw 61,000 plants in the ground using 34,000 hours of volunteer time.

Through grant funding, NRCT has supported the development of the LMPL plan.

“We gratefully acknowledge the substantial contributions that NRCT has made to the LMPL project. The continuing, stable source of funds has provided a solid foundation that has enabled LMPL to obtain other support and thus grow into what is now a major community effort - one that is making a serious impact on reducing environmental degradation and improving biodiversity across the Mornington Peninsula and soon into neighbouring regions. We look forward to a continuing successful partnership” - Dr Greg Holland, President Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network.



LMPL biolink planting



LMPL shelterbelt under construction

GOAL 2

Provide small and large widespread grants that support capacity building in communities to achieve positive change in the protection of natural resources

We progress this goal by funding:

- Landcare projects
- Peer to peer learning or networking
- Skills projects such as Master Tree Growers courses

Seventeen grants have been awarded over our first three years of grantmaking, totalling \$1,320,573. In addition, 72 partner organisations have collaborated on these projects, to leverage on the Trust's investment, to deliver on projects with a collective total value of almost \$5.9 million. All of these projects support capacity building in communities around Victoria.

258 site visits have been undertaken on properties seeking to protect or enhance their natural resources, with 1,749 new volunteers, including citizen scientists, providing support in capacity building and 21 new members commenced with for purpose groups supported by Trust grants.

Importantly, 7 ha of land has been permanently protected via Trust for Nature covenants, and 101 kg of rubbish was collected and removed from local environments.



Partner Case Study - *New Futures for Victorian Landcare*

The Landcare Victoria “New Futures” project, in collaboration with the Ian Potter Foundation, is the Trust’s largest grant funded project to date. The recently completed project sought to engage with landcare groups and networks across Victoria and encourage them to collaborate together to prepare landscape scale action plans geared towards seeking green finance or other significant government, philanthropic or third party investments into their chosen landscapes. Four pilot landscapes were chosen for the initial program and all have prepared their inaugural Landscape Action Plans.

The project objectives were to:

- Increase the capacity of Landcare networks across Victoria to develop investment ready action plans;
- Shift the emphasis of Landcare from a focus on management problems to the delivery of financed landscape scale solutions;
- Broker new partnerships for Landcare to ensure access to relevant expertise and new sources of funding; and
- Build and strengthen community capacity and help to modernise and adapt the Landcare sector, while retaining the key community-driven strengths that have sustained its past successes.

The focus for all four pilot landscapes now shifts to attracting investments into those landscapes from 2026. The four pilot networks are Granite to Goulburn (G2G) led by Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative, Windharp Horizons (Buloke & Northern Grampians Landcare Network), Craters to Coast (Heytesbury District Landcare Network) and New Futures Kiewa-Wodonga (Wodonga Urban Landcare Network & Kiewa Catchment Landcare Group).

In addition to the four pilot Landscape Action Plans, the project partners also produced a Landscape Action Plan Handbook, which is being made freely available to organisations wanting to develop and produce landscape scale action plans. The project, Landscape Action Plans and Handbook have gained significant attention across Victoria and nationally which the Trust believes can facilitate replication in any Australian landscape.

For access to the Handbook visit www.landcarevictoria.org.au/resources.

“It has been such a pleasure to work with landcarers, our project partners and stakeholders over the last three years, delivering the New Futures for Victorian Landcare Project. The project leaves a lasting legacy and new way of working for the broader landcare sector in Victoria”
Anthony Gallacher, Landcare Victoria General Manager.



New Futures for Victorian Landcare pilot landscape, New Futures Kiewa-Wodonga (Wodonga Urban Landcare Network & Kiewa Catchment Landcare Group). Photos: Mary-Anne Scully.



GOAL 3

Identify and fund at least one bold and innovative project that can't be funded elsewhere

We progress this goal by funding:

- High risk, high return projects
- Research projects
- New innovation ideas

Seven smaller research and development activities have commenced as a result of Trust grant funding.

Partner Case Study - *Mallee Looper caterpillar*

A funded research project currently underway seeks to strengthen understanding of the Mallee Looper caterpillar and find ways to mitigate and protect against the significant widespread defoliation of Mallee Eucalypts caused by the caterpillar, in the Murray Sunset and Hattah Kulkyne National Parks. First noticed in 2023, defoliation events occurred across thousands of hectares in South Australia and are now moving into northern Victoria. This new, innovative research project was unable to attract alternative funding given the caterpillar is a native species.

Although trees can recover from single defoliation events by producing epicormic growth, consecutive years of defoliation has caused tree death. Tree death appears greater when trees are stressed, such as during droughts. The causal agent was identified as the Mallee Looper caterpillar, belonging to a Geometrid moth in the *Arhodia* species complex. This is a native species and is not previously known as an outbreak pest. However, there is much we don't know yet about the life cycle and ecology of the species, including predators, parasitoids and what triggers eruption and collapse of caterpillar outbreaks.



Mallee Looper caterpillar.
Photo: Mark Hura

“The biggest news on the Mallee Looper front is that the rains at the start of March (up to half annual rainfall in some areas) have caused a massive, out of season emergence of Mallee Looper moths. We have never observed the moths to emerge this late (normally November/December) so it has thrown many of our assumptions up in the air, and indicates the species is far more opportunistic than we thought” Fiona Murdoch, Wildlife Unlimited Mallee Area Manager.



Damage done to Gluepot Birdlife Reserve by Mallee Looper caterpillars.



Mallee Looper Moth.

Partner Case Study - Cultural Forestry initiative

In 2025, the Trust awarded a grant to DJAARA (The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) to pursue preliminary business modelling and preparation of promotional materials to promote a blended finance model approach to investment in diverse culturally informed plantations.

While this project is being delivered by wood4good on behalf of DJAARA, it is subject to DJAARA's internal governance and business development processes as articulated in Wuktjarrang – Trading Our Way, DJAARA's economic development strategy. This process minimises risk and ensures that the project has oversight and involvement of DJAARA staff representatives and members.



“A critical value of the project is to embed DJAARA member agency from the project’s conception. A critical stage in the project plan is a co-design process with DJAARA Members. While monocultures of culturally unfamiliar species are expected to deliver the best possible financial return, and pure environmental planting the least financial benefit, we need to ensure that the landscape established within the project aims is culturally recognisable, relevant and fulfils concepts of healing Country as envisioned by Traditional Owners”
Seb Klein, wood4good Business Associate.

GOAL 4



Provide large, localised grants that demonstrate the co-existence of commercial agriculture and enhancement of natural resources

We progress this goal by funding:

- Agroforestry
- Pest plant and animal control
- Enhancing high biodiversity areas

Partner Case Study - *BushBank private land stream grants*

In regard to enhancing high biodiversity areas, the Trust has agreed to co-fund a further two private land stream BushBank projects, along with the landowners, Trust for Nature, Cassinia Environmental and One Tree Planted. The sites consist of 59 ha of restoration revegetation works, but due to its topography (hand planting is required on steep slopes and rocky terrain) and ultimate size, they were deemed unacceptable to carbon investors. However, the sites are of significant interest as they provided improved biolinks and include for example a site adjacent to the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve which provides critical habitat for a genetically distinct, small outlier population of Mallee Fowl and many threatened woodland bird species. These sites will be covenanted for permanent protection once all 43,660 plants are established. Restorative revegetation will begin in 2026.

“Minimum standards for restoration are set for BushBank sites to realise the greatest possible environmental outcomes for the investment being provided by the state and funding partners. The objective for each restoration project site is to restore the woody component based on the Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) benchmark structure and diversity – increasing the extent and condition of native vegetation. To achieve this, each site will determine survival targets (density and diversity) for at least canopy trees, understory trees, large and medium shrubs aligned with the EVC. Online databases and tools will be used to inform species selection”

Krista Patterson-Majoor, Cassinia Environmental BushBank Program Manager.

GOAL 5

Promote outcomes achieved and learnings derived to secure uptake by the broader community

We progress this goal by providing:

- Shared learning
- Educational experiences
- Youth engagement activities

Since its commencement of grantmaking three years ago, the Trust, and the collective efforts of project partners has delivered:

- 7 webinars
- 79 workshops
- 547 workshop delegates
- 73 stakeholder meetings
- 304 original media posts
- 10,016 shared media posts
- 11 newsletters (excluding ours)
- 2,120 newsletters distributed
- 193 participants completed training courses
- 226 surveys completed
- 2,780 people directly engaged in person
- 6 guides published
- 46 schools/unis engaged
- 1,231 students participated

The Trust has also sponsored the following:

- One Nuffield two-year scholarship to Tom Polkinghorne
- Three Women's Environmental Leadership Australia National Leadership Program scholarships to Hari, Remy & Alyssa
- The 2025 and 2026 Victorian Biodiversity Conference (VicBioCon) enabling ~800 attendees
- Two VicBioCon Research Grants



Alyssa Britnell

"I am grateful to be a recipient of the Natural Resources Conservation Trust scholarship to participate in the 2025 Women's Environmental Leadership Australia (WELA) National Leadership Program, where I have been able to develop a strong network of likeminded women and gender-diverse people who have been able to support, inspire and challenge me, both personally and professionally, to make impactful change in the environmental industry" Alyssa Britnell, recipient of the 2025 Trust funded WELA scholarship.

Partner Case Study - *Empowering Youth for Conservation Leadership*

During 2025, the Trust awarded grant funding to Co-Exist to enable the expansion of their “Empowering Youth for Conservation Leadership” program into Victoria and the southern States. The program recognises that Australia is facing an urgent biodiversity crisis, with habitat loss, urban expansion and climate change threatening native species and ecosystems, whilst young adults, particularly those in urban areas, are increasingly disconnected from nature, contributing to declining environmental stewardship and their reduced mental and physical well-being.

The Co-Exist program bridges this gap by creating structured opportunities for people under 30 to engage in hands-on conservation. Unlike traditional conservation programs, Co-Exist focuses on peer-led action, real-world leadership opportunities and an inclusive model of engagement that ensures long-term community investment in environmental stewardship.

By embedding young adults directly in conservation activities, this helps foster personal agency, environmental responsibility and strong community connections. Additionally, this initiative is crucial for building a new generation of conservation stewards who will continue the legacy of Friends groups, landcare initiatives and other grassroots conservation efforts.

Many long-standing environmental groups face challenges in attracting and retaining new volunteers, creating an urgent need for a succession plan that encourages young adults to take on leadership roles. Co-Exist provides structured pathways for young volunteers to gain hands-on experience, develop conservation leadership skills and establish lifelong commitments to environmental protection.

“Co-Exist doesn't just exist to engage young people in conservation, we exist to connect young people back to nature, to then protect the places they love. We exist to improve the wellbeing of young people and the planet” Kurt Jones, Co-Exist CEO.

The program's aims over its first 12 months are to:

- Engage up to 1,500 young volunteers in conservation work, equipping them with leadership skills and hands-on environmental experience;
- Contribute up to 3,000 volunteer hours to environmental conservation activities;
- Plant a minimum of 1,500 native plants, enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and restoring degraded habitats;
- Integrate Citizen Science as participants will conduct flora and fauna assessments, record biodiversity data and contribute findings to local conservation databases, creating long-term impact through data-driven conservation efforts;
- Expand local environmental cleanup and rubbish removal efforts;
- Increase environmental literacy for young adults through structured workshops, mentorship, and leadership development sessions; and
- Strengthen community resilience, creating spaces where young people build meaningful connections through shared environmental action.



Co-Exist's Marketing Volunteer Lauren Railey, South and West Community Manager Jess Ditchfield, CEO Kurt Jones and Operations Manager Charlie Bennett.

Moving into 2026 and ...Towards 2030

As the Trust continues to build on its momentum following the first three years of grantmaking, it is anticipated that the impact of funded projects will continue to both increase in indirect and direct tangible benefits. The Trust Board recently adopted a new Strategic Plan ...Towards 2030 with a new Ambition that “By 2030 we have enabled landscape scale improvements on private land for biodiversity and sustainable production”. The Trust’s Purpose remains which is “To focus on the advancement, protection, sustainable use and enhancement of the natural environment”.

In order to increase its impact, the Trust is seeking to strategically use part of its investment portfolio to move into Impact Investing, in addition to continuing with its successful grantmaking and scholarship programs. The new Strategic plan...Towards 2030 is expected to increase positive impact on natural conservation through increased granting and partnerships in this next 5-year planning horizon and reflect the high expectations of NRCL as its founding corpus donor.

Of course we could not have achieved any of these impacts alone and the Trust also seeks to acknowledge all project partners.





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For any enquiries, please contact:

Les McLean, Executive Officer

info@nrcl.org.au

