

Grow West Implementation Plan

Acknowledgements

This Grow West Implementation Plan has been developed by the Grow West Implementation Committee in conjunction with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. The committee and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority acknowledge the continuing support of Grow West by Melbourne Water, Moorabool Shire Council and Southern Rural Water.

Also acknowledged are the organisations, local groups and landholders that strongly support Grow West including the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee, Victorian National Parks Association, Parks Victoria, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Pentland Hills Landcare Group, Rowsley Valley Landcare Group and Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group.



This implementation plan is available on line at www.growwest.com.au

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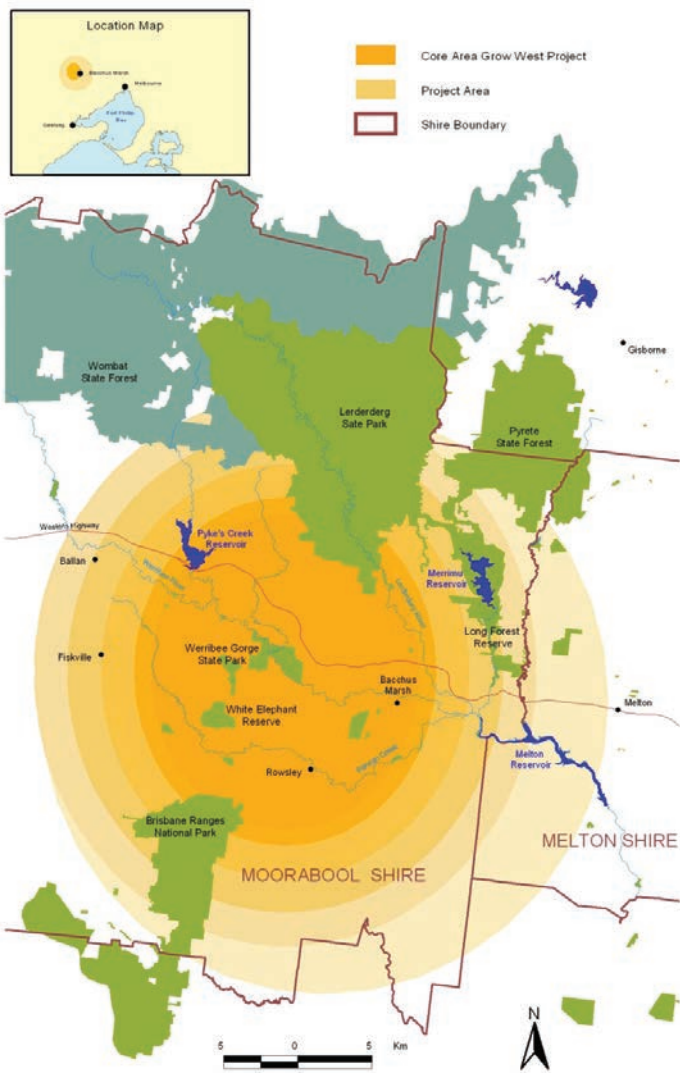
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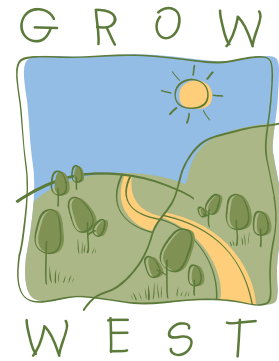
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The PPWCMA thanks the following photographers: Chris Lindorff and Grow West staff, Helena Lindorff.

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Foreword

An ambitious program of landscape restoration in the west of Melbourne, working with local communities for a sustainable future.

Grow West's vision is to rejuvenate 10,000 hectares of the upper Werribee Catchment, west of Melbourne by connecting large areas of public reserves; Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge State Park and up through to Lerderderg State Park, through a mosaic of restoration works on private property.

Grow West is truly a collaborative project where local communities work together with all levels of government, businesses and organisations to achieve the best outcome for the region in the most effective and sustainable way.

Grow West is continually seeking new partners and investors to continue the momentum of this ambitious project that has made and continues to make a positive change to the landscape.

Today, the Grow West Implementation Committee remains in place and oversees the ongoing work and future directions of Grow West, including keeping this Implementation Plan up to date.

The committee consists of community members and representatives from organisations that invest in and support Grow West including the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Moorabool Shire Council, Melbourne Water, Southern Rural Water, Department of Primary Industries and local Landcare groups.

This Grow West Implementation Plan sets the directions for continuing the success of Grow West. The long term view is to:

- Achieve thousands of hectares of revegetation, forming biolinks between the Brisbane Ranges National Park, Lerderderg and the Werribee Gorge State Parks,
- Greatly reduce the spread of noxious weeds, improving landholder skills,
- Protect profitable farming land, reducing erosion and improving local amenity.

This will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits for the local community and Victoria.

If you are a local landholder or a potential investor, we would love you to come aboard Grow West and be part of this exciting project to create a better, greener future for Melbourne's western landscapes.

John Cutler
Chair, Grow West Implementation Committee

Grow West - transforming the landscape

Grow West is one of Australia's most ambitious programs of landscape rejuvenation.

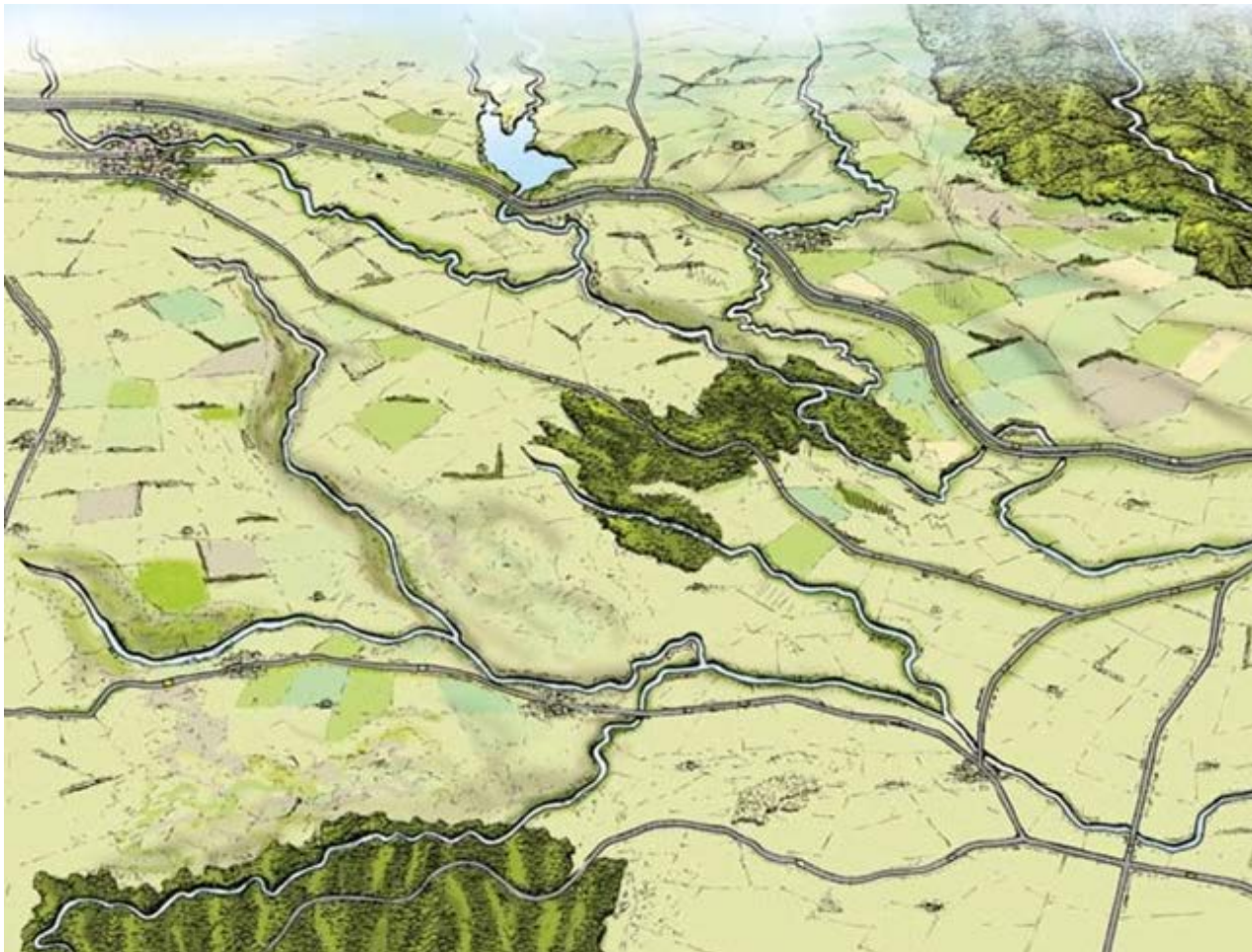
Grow West is on its way to revegetating thousands of hectares of degraded land in the Bacchus Marsh to Ballan area and beyond, and creating vegetated biolinks between the Brisbane Ranges National Park, Lerderderg State Park and Werribee Gorge State Park.

Each year since its launch, Grow West has moved closer to this target. Between 2003-11, approximately 955 hectares of indigenous revegetation and farm forestry have been established despite an extended run of dry seasons.

Grow West is improving the health and production of farmland, creating habitat links between the parks, stopping erosion and reducing the amount of sediment being washed into waterways and reservoirs.

Now, Grow West will continue the momentum and commitment, aiming to establish 100 hectares of new vegetation per year.

Transforming the landscape from this...



While the targets of Grow West extend across a large landscape, its success is achieved by working with landholders to design and deliver revegetation projects that suit the requirements of individual properties. Grow West secures funds and employs skilled personnel to make major works feasible, affordable and expertly delivered.

Grow West helps commercial farming and creates social and environmental benefits for the public whilst boosting green credibility for Government and corporate investors.

Grow West will see Melbourne's western landscapes transformed into beautiful, productive and sustainable areas – a living space for native plants and animals alongside thriving local communities with a great future.

To this...



The major benefits of Grow West

Improving habitat and wildlife corridors

The aim of Grow West is to create a network of vegetation links across the landscape to connect the Brisbane Ranges National Park, the Lerderderg State Park and the Werribee Gorge State Park.

The Brisbane Ranges National Park alone contains over 20% of the State's total plant species. While the Werribee Gorge State Park provides nesting sites for many birds including wedge-tailed eagles, peregrine falcons and the powerful owl.

However, due to the widespread clearing of vegetation for agriculture many decades ago, much of the remaining vegetation became isolated, which has resulted in many of the remaining patches, and the individual plant and animal species they support, becoming rare, threatened or endangered.

Grow West is strategically connecting a series of biolinks; joining major parks with other patches of native vegetation on private property, increasing the area of habitat available for native plants and animals and giving a life-saving boost to their populations, range and resilience.

Controlling Victoria's worst weed

Serrated Tussock is Victoria's most costly weed and, unfortunately, it is entrenched and widespread in the Grow West area.

Serrated Tussock thrives on steep, rocky, low-fertility soils in various parts of this area. It out-competes productive grasses and makes vast areas of land unprofitable for grazing.

It also produces millions of live seeds each year which can be blown across the landscape and infest clean paddocks and rivers.

The revegetation being undertaken by Grow West is fighting Serrated Tussock in two ways. Firstly, as the trees grow, they compete with Serrated Tussock plants for water, sunlight and nutrients, leading to a reduction in the amount of seed produced by the plants. Secondly, the revegetation creates physical barriers that stop the Serrated Tussock seeds blowing long distances and infesting new areas.



Serrated Tussock is notorious for producing large quantities of aerial dispersed seed.



Improving landscape amenity and recreation opportunities

As people travel along the highway or train line from Melbourne to Ballarat, through the Werribee River Catchment, they see numerous degraded areas of land; brown, bare hillsides with a few dead trees and soils eroding into local streams. Yet they also see some remnants of the original scenery; pristine, forested areas and stunning rocky gorges, as well as newly-revegetated areas coming back to their former glory.

Given the relatively low agricultural productivity of the steep gorge country, many now question whether it should have ever been cleared of its original vegetation. Grow West and landowners are therefore working together to return some of this local landscape, particularly the least productive part, to its natural state. This is improving the amenity of the local area as the unsightly patches of land are replaced with trees and regenerating vegetation.

Some parts are still highly degraded, but in the years ahead as the work of Grow West progresses, the area will be renowned for its forested river gorges and hillsides, providing a scenic landscape that is a pleasure to visit and travel through. It will be a location for bushwalkers and nature lovers, and a haven for families to picnic within. Active and passive recreation opportunities will be enhanced for locals and visitors alike.



Boosting the local economy

Grow West is strengthening the local economy in a number of ways:

- Protecting productive land and increasing local agricultural production by reducing the spread of Serrated Tussock;
- Attracting hundreds of thousands of dollars per year from Government and the private sector into the local area;
- Undertaking large scale on-ground works and generating employment for local contracting firms;
- Undertaking farm forestry projects that are leveraging private investment and delivering long-term economic rewards to landholders through the production of a range of wood products; and
- Increasing the amenity of the area to boost local visitor numbers, multiply eco-tourism opportunities and enhance property values.



Stopping erosion to improve the soil, rivers and water supply

Alongside revegetation works for biodiversity and amenity purposes, Grow West is also revegetating to stop soil erosion and reduce the amount of sediment entering local rivers, eventually making its way into the water storage dams.

One of Grow West's partner organisations, Melbourne Water, is also actively engaging with landholders to implement works in and beside rivers and creeks to stabilise and improve these waterways

In a time of climate change and uncertain rainfall, the community cannot afford to have sediment clogging up the dams. By undertaking these stabilisation works along waterways, Grow West is keeping the soil where it is of most value to the environment and farmers, and stopping it from reaching the Melton Reservoir which has already lost approximately 38% of its capacity due to sediment build up.

Grow West aims to minimise erosion and sedimentation along local waterways through revegetation incentives. Grow West works with key partners including Melbourne Water to achieve these goals.

Achievements since 2003

Grow West staff have worked with hundreds of committed landowners, community representatives, project partners and investors to directly administer over 1,000a of revegetation and farm forestry projects since 2004. In 2012 Grow West had the honour of the Hon. Ryan Smith Minister for Environment and Climate Change plant the project's one millionth tree at its annual Grow West Community Planting Day.

In addition, a large amount of revegetation has been carried out within the Grow West area by our partners Moorabool Shire Council, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Melbourne Water, Southern Rural Water, local landcare groups and many individual landholders.

To compliment the on-ground achievements, Grow West has commissioned a number of publications and reference materials to assist landholders with land management issues – Moorabool Shire Revegetation Guide, Grow West Bird Study, Moorabool Shire Land Capability Study, Biodiversity Action Planning and Indigenous Plants of the Upper Werribee Catchment.

Grow West holds an annual Community Planting Day in partnership with Victorian National Parks Association, Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee, Bacchus Marsh Lions Club, Victorian Mobile Landcare Group and many other local organisations. More than 200 volunteers plant 6,000 indigenous plants on the day.

Grow West was proud to receive the Mayors Award in the Moorabool Shire's 'Australia Day Community Event of the Year' for the Grow West Community Planting Day (2010). Since 2005, each year Grow West offers the 'Grow West Landscape Acquisitive Prize' at the Rotary Club of Bacchus Marsh Art Sales and Exhibition, which is held on the Queen's Birthday weekend in June. The award is given to the best interpretation of the Grow West landscape and its objectives.



Hon. Ryan Smith Minister for Environment and Climate Change (left) with John Cutler, Chair of Grow West Implementation Committee (right) - planting the one millionth tree.



Grow West wins Mayors Award in 2010. Helena Lindorff (centre) and Alan Morton (right) with Australia Day Ambassador Steve Moneghetti (left)

Opportunities for local landholders

Grow West is working to revegetate thousands of hectares of land. This requires the cooperation and active participation of numerous people and organisations, not the least of whom are hundreds of local landholders.

Although Grow West is about encouraging and promoting a mixture of new, appropriate and sustainable land uses, such as sustainably managed grazing, cropping activities and new commercial activities like farm forestry, our primary aim is revegetation projects for habitat restoration and soil conservation. This section outlines how Grow West is able to assist landholders interested in environmental revegetation for habitat and soil conservation.

To make it easier and more economically attractive for landholders to revegetate their land, Grow West can assist by engaging skilled professionals, offering a variety of financial incentives and providing education/training opportunities.

The main opportunities offered through Grow West, and the associated contracts and agreements, are outlined in the table below. The incentives increase where the public and environmental benefit is greatest. Grow West acknowledges that landholders are the decision makers for their land that Grow West simply provides landholders with options.



Outcomes sought by Grow West	Size of revegetation project	Guideline of incentive offered to landholders	Type of agreement entered into
Revegetation using native plant species contributing to links across the landscape. The new vegetation is to be protected forever by having the site and the works recorded on the title of the land.	For a project of any size	100% : 0% 100% of cost paid by Grow West	A Section 173 Agreement with a Council or a similarly-binding covenant
Revegetation using native plant species contributing to links across the landscape. The new vegetation is to be protected for at least 10 years.	5 hectares or greater	80% of cost paid by Grow West 20% of cost paid by landholder	A Grow West land management agreement
	2 – 5 hectares	60% of cost paid by Grow West 40% of cost paid by landholder	A Grow West land management agreement
	For an area of less than 2 hectares	Grow West provides plants and guards and landholder manages site preparation and planting	A Grow West land management agreement

“Grow West is a critical partner for us at Yaloak Estate and allows us to better manage erosion and pest plants such as Serrated Tussock.

Yaloak has been involved with a range of Grow West cost share incentive projects since 2004, which has allowed us to integrate revegetation with other farm activities and improve the sustainability of the farm overall.

We have now revegetated approximately 400 hectares and planted 700,000 seedlings with the support of Grow West and other partners.

I would recommend getting involved with Grow West to anyone interested in improving the viability of their land”.

- John Sheehan, Manager Yaloak Estate.



For interested landholders, there is a three-step process.

Step 1: Discussion of options

A Grow West staff member will visit the property for a free, no-obligation meeting to provide:

- On-site assessment and discussion of the potential location of projects;
- A preliminary assessment of the likely cost of the project;
- Discussion of potential species selection and revegetation methods; and
- An outline of the incentive options that exist and the associated agreements/contracts.

Step 2: Detailed planning, negotiation and agreement

Landholders wishing to proceed will receive assistance with detailed project planning and costing. A tailored agreement will then be negotiated to suit the particular situation.

Flexible arrangements are possible, for example:

- Grow West can implement all aspects of the project and simply invoice the landholder for any required financial contribution. This arrangement particularly suits landholders who do not have the time, skills or equipment to undertake works.
- Grow West can implement most aspects of the project, and landholders contribute labour or services (such as fencing, site preparation and chemicals). This suits landholders who wish to minimise their financial outlay.

Step 3: Implementation of on-ground works

When agreement is reached, timing for the project will be determined and the logistics planned including contractors, seeds/seedlings and site preparation. For projects greater than 2 hectares, Grow West can coordinate works to achieve a high quality outcome.

Grow West seeks an effective project that delivers the desired benefits to the landholder as well as the broader community and environmental benefits. Professionals are used to ensure high quality site preparation, species selection, planting technique and timing to ensure optimum results. Grow West uses locally-collected seed and locally-grown seedlings.



Links to complementary schemes

Grow West can also link landholders to other opportunities for revegetation and environmental works including:

- Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program that provides incentives for revegetation, fencing and other works along streams;
- Schemes offering payments to landholders for protecting, improving or establishing native vegetation on their land to offset carbon emissions elsewhere; and
- Schemes offering payments to landholders for protecting, improving or establishing native vegetation on their land to offset the clearance of native vegetation elsewhere.

Through planning and collaboration, a landholder may decide to participate in a range of these programs.

Partnerships with investors

Grow West welcomes discussion with potential partners from the government, corporate and philanthropic sectors.

Grow West has a substantial public profile, both locally and statewide, and is recognised as one of the largest land rehabilitation programs within Australia. It is close to Melbourne (just 50km to the west) enabling easy day trips for Melbourne-based partners wishing to visit the project and provides excellent value for money with a very high proportion of funds being translated to trees in the ground.

Grow West operates under a partnership model where consultation and collaboration with multiple stakeholders is the key to successful large scale landscape change projects. Under this model we also facilitate partnerships and empower local communities to run complimentary projects within the area.

By investing in Grow West, a partner can enjoy:

- **Tangible** on-ground results for their investment
Investors are able to visit their own 'patch' of native revegetation and monitor its growth. This provides demonstrable environmental benefits that protect and enhance biodiversity, provide habitat for native wildlife, reduce erosion, control weeds and pest animals, sequester carbon and enhance the local community;
 - **Profile** for their investment and environmental credentials. Investors can benefit from media coverage, brand and messaging testimonials, on-site signage and cross promotion on the Grow West web site and relevant marketing and communications material; and
 - A practical demonstration of corporate social responsibility and leadership within their industry and for the community.
- **Staff involvement.** Investors can involve staff or clients personally in planting days and other field-based activities that create strong corporate ownership and commitment, enhance teamwork, lift morale and give a real sense of achievement.



“Through Aviva’s involvement with Grow West we have not only supported a program that’s committed to restoring landscapes and increasing biodiversity, but we’ve had a fun day actually planting the trees to make it happen.”
Aaron Tunks, project participant, Aviva

“This was the first time Victoria Electricity teamed up with Grow West – and we’re glad we were a part of this local sustainability project.”

- Simon Draper, CEO, Victoria Electricity



Potential partnership packages

Highly competitive investment packages are available and can be tailored to meet the needs of individual partners.

Examples of benefits are outlined below:

A \$10,000 investment:

- 2 hectares of weed control and deep ripping (soil preparation);
- 2 hectares of revegetation;
- At least 2,000 plants established;
- 1 staff / corporate family day attended by a maximum of 40 participants; and
- Site signage (1 acknowledgement sign)

A \$50,000 investment:

- 12 hectares of weed control and deep ripping (soil preparation);
- 12 hectares of revegetation;
- At least 12,000 plants established;
- 1 staff / corporate family day attended by a maximum of 100 participants;
- 1 media item (article, interview, media release etc); and
- Site signage (2 acknowledgement signs).

A \$100,000 investment:

- 25 hectares of weed control and deep ripping (soil preparation);
- 25 hectares of revegetation over 2 years;
- At least 25,000 plants established;
- 2 staff / corporate family days attended by a maximum of 100 participants;
- 2 media items (articles, interviews, media releases etc); and
- Site signage (3 acknowledgement signs).



A \$1,000,000 investment:

- 270 hectares of weed control and deep ripping (soil preparation);
- 270 hectares of revegetation over 3-5 years;
- At least 270,000 plants established;
- 4 staff / corporate family days attended by a maximum of 100 participants;
- 8 media items (articles, interviews, media releases etc)
- Site signage (6 acknowledgement signs - includes naming rights); and
- Naming rights to the site planting.



Grow West Community Planting Day 2012 held at David Muir's Property, Myrmiong

Flexible arrangements

Grow West adopts a flexible approach to investment and is able to consider the individual needs of all prospective partners. Alternative ideas and arrangements are welcomed. For example, investors may wish to:

- Fund the creation of an entire vegetated corridor for a particular site, and have naming rights for the corridor;
- Invest in one-off or long term partnerships;
- Invest a little or a lot – Grow West can accommodate investment packages of any size;
- Sponsor a particular site, particular activity, or equipment and resources (seedlings, guards and stakes etc.); and
- Develop partnerships to establish a farm forestry plantation or a carbon offset plantation.

Links to complementary schemes

Grow West can also link investors to opportunities for complementary environmental works such as:

- Carbon offsets - Grow West can link investors to Accredited carbon planting schemes;
- Water quality and river health works;
- Wetland protection works;
- Threatened species; and
- Parks management.

Grow West targets

The long term success of Grow West relies on the following two elements being linked effectively:

- Landholders who are willing to undertake revegetation projects on their land; and
- Adequate funds available to pay for the revegetation projects.

A 'Land Bank' for revegetation

Grow West's aim is to revegetate between 100 - 200 hectares per year, a substantial and challenging task. To achieve this goal, there needs to be a significant amount of landholders willing and enthusiastic to revegetate their land. This target considers a range of factors including:

- Experience of the past 10 years with over 1,000 hectares of revegetation has been achieved;
- Availability of high quality indigenous seed and seedlings;
- Risk minimisation associated with seasonal conditions (ie. avoiding risking too much in any one season); and
- Availability of expert contractors to undertake the site preparation and revegetation.

As demand for Grow West projects exceeds the capability of current Grow West resources, it is important to maintain a database of land where the landholders have committed to revegetation in the future. This database is known as the Land Bank.

The Land Bank will include information on the variety of land types and incentive types agreed to by landholders. This gives flexibility to address varying investor needs, different seasonal conditions, funding availability, different scales of projects, fluctuations in seed and seedling supply.



The Land Bank records show:

- The size and location of land confirmed with landholders for revegetation;
- The incentive program that landholders have agreed to;
- The nature of the revegetation, (commercial farm forestry, remnant protection, revegetation); and
- Details of landholders that have expressed preliminary interest in Grow West.

Maps can be produced that outline the existing vegetation in the area and the planned future plantings, thereby illustrating the new landscape that is being created by Grow West. It highlights where major biolinks are forming and also enables landholders to work closely with their neighbours in planning local links across their properties.



Funding for revegetation

Revegetation on private land within the Grow West area is primarily funded in two ways:

1. Grow West staff source funds and promote programs that achieve the goal of creating biolinks between the Brisbane Ranges National Park, Lerderderg State Park, and Werribee Gorge State Park.
2. Programs administered by other organisations
Examples of these programs include farm forestry programs; native vegetation offset programs such as the Victorian Government's Bush Broker scheme, carbon trading schemes and Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program. These programs are complementary to our objectives and Grow West staff help to facilitate their uptake locally by linking them to landholders who are interested.

In both scenarios, the outcome is revegetation which contributes to the long term goal of Grow West. The target for Grow West is to directly achieve a minimum of 100 hectares of revegetation per year. This correlates to an average annual revenue target of at least \$400,000.

Grow West targets

Area	Targets
Revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average annual revenue of at least \$400,000
Revegetation & restoration works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 hectares identified within priority biolink areas and landowners engaged • Develop and maintain database to record landowner details that express interest in undertaking a Grow West project on their property • Develop and maintain relationship with landowners on the Land Bank database
Land Bank database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of at least 100 hectares per year, focused in priority biolink areas • Develop innovating ways of information sharing and collaboration between organisations undertaking revegetation projects within the Grow West area
Marketing and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain high local community profile of Grow west, with at least one annual major community planting day and six local press articles per year • Participate in local community events (e.g. Rotary Art Show, Pentland Hills Landholder Expo) • Maintain website - analyse the number of visits per month, live, on-line working demonstration of on-ground works and future plans of Grow West • Annual Report Card published and used in media release sent to stakeholders and landholders
The future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Brisbane Ranges National Park to Werribee Gorge and Lerderderg State Parks biolinks by 2015 • Expand Grow West into the middle and lower reaches of the Werribee Catchment • Develop strong links with neighbouring catchments to ensure biolinks over larger landscapes.

Governance and management

Grow West has evolved and grown through its initial years. Governance, management structures and processes have also evolved to suit these changes.

Today, Grow West has a dedicated committee to oversee governance and strategy, while Grow West staff lead and manage the daily operations.

Whilst Grow West is a project involving and supported by numerous organisations and groups, a lead role for administering the project is taken by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

Grow West Implementation Committee

The Grow West Implementation Committee is established by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

The committee is comprised of representatives from the local community and the organisations that contribute in-kind and financially to the program including Melbourne Water, Southern Rural Water, Moorabool Shire Council, PPWCMA Board Member, Department of Primary Industries, local landcare groups and landholders.

The committee operates under the policies and procedures of the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority with a formal Charter and delegations enabling it to plan and manage the governance and strategic directions of Grow West. A copy of this charter is available at www.growwest.com.au.

Grow West staff

Grow West has staff employed by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority on behalf of the project's numerous stakeholders. Currently the Grow West staff structure is comprised of:

- Staff that manage and coordinate all operations including marketing, financial administration and reporting; and
- Staff that provides professional “hands-on” expertise and liaises with landholders and contractors for site assessments, establishment of landholder contracts, and management of contracts with pest plant and animal contractors, fencing contractors and tree planting crews.



View of the Rowsley Valley from Cut Hill

Financial management

Grow West's financial transactions are managed by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. Accountability and transparency for financial management is achieved by:

- All Grow West revenue and expenditure is managed and reported on by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority;
- Financial reports being prepared on a monthly basis and presented to the Grow West Implementation Committee; and
- An annual audit of all Grow West finances being undertaken and results made public and provided to all organisations involved in Grow West.

The management and success of Grow West is being monitored and reported in an annual Grow West Report Card.

The main elements required to achieve the goal of thousands of hectares of revegetation are closely monitored, namely:

- The amount of land agreed for revegetation and recorded in the land bank;
- The amount of funding secured;
- The Report Card also shows a number of associated benefits resulting from Grow West including:
- The development of biolinks across the landscape;
- Changes in the population and diversity of some native animal species;
- The extent of various types of native vegetation;
- The extent of land rehabilitation addressing salinity, weeds, erosion;
- Changes in river health;
- Changes in community awareness of environmental issues; and
- New employment generated as a result of Grow West.

Data to measure the associated benefits comes from various sources. Links have been established with government departments, community groups, research organisations and universities to gather this information.



One year old seedling on James Whyte Island Reserve



**For more information go to the Grow West
website at: www.growwest.com.au**

To discuss your potential involvement in Grow
West contact the Grow West Coordinator via:

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