

# CASE STUDY

Northern Agricultural Catchments Council



## Living Landscape – An Extension Project Targeting Small Landholders in the Northern Agricultural Region of WA

Much of the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council's work has, historically, been with rural land managers and broadacre farmers. As climate and market conditions change, many broadacre farmers are subdividing and the number of lifestyle blockers is increasing. Add to this is an increase in mining with its associated industries and you get a burgeoning urban and peri-urban population. The trend was clear and so was the fact that NACC's sustainable land management program was not reaching this emerging sector.

With this realisation, the RLF assisted in development of a small landholders project for the peri-urban 'blockers'. Premised on the assumption (later confirmed through participant surveys) that the majority of small landholders in the region came from non-agricultural backgrounds, the RLF worked with agri-business and the WA Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA) to develop a comprehensive, user friendly and easily read *Small Landholders Guide* covering all facets of land management: sustainable management of soil, water, livestock, pastures, remnant bushland, revegetation, and streams and wetlands and provided a variety of case studies from successful local blockers. The *Small Landholders Guide* was backed up with *Coastal and Inland Native Garden Guides* (developed by NACC's Coastal team).

In 2012, the projects and their publications were launched by Josh Byrne, widely known as a presenter on the ABC's *Gardening Australia* program. The two launch events *Living Landscape* in Geraldton and Moora attracted 315 people - predominately people with small blocks of up to 100 hectares. One third of the participants completed a feedback survey and they told us that: they highly valued the format and structure of the workshops; that their knowledge on how to bring their block alive with good planning and local plants increased by 44 per cent; that their knowledge on waterwise gardening increased by 31 per cent; and many indicated interest in workshops/field days and a desire to network with people with similar landholdings.

Importantly, NACC's membership jumped by more than 150 people almost overnight, vastly increasing the number of people receiving broad NRM information through *NACC Notes* and other RLF promotions and publications.

In 2013, the RLF held a series of 'trojan horse' events designed ostensibly to appeal to people's primary hobby, but also providing wider understanding of all aspects of managing a block. The events, developed with input from small landholders themselves, were held in partnership with DAFWA, Perth Region NRM, Moore Catchment Council and the Forever Project and included one field day, two Healthy Farms Healthy Horses workshops and two Heavenly Hectares workshops.

Each event had a headline act such as Chris Ferreira, an award winning ABC local radio and TV presenter, and relevant industry experts. Structured feedback forms were circulated to all participants who told us that, on average, their knowledge and skills on how to employ best management techniques to control weeds and manage pastures, chemicals and animal manure grew by 41 per cent; their skills and knowledge on horse nutrition management grew by 38 per cent; and their skills and knowledge on disease management grew by 40 per cent.

Learning what their (small landholders) needs are, what works, and what didn't from these events is being used to develop targeted activities for the small landholder sector in 2014 and beyond.

These events are part of the RLF's community capacity building activities, administered by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture.

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**Photos - high resolution photos can be provided if needed.**



Caption: NACC's Living Landscape Event in Geraldton



NACC's Field Day for Small landholders in Greenough



NACC's Heavenly Hectares Workshop in Geraldton