



## **Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award and Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award – North East**

### **Sandy and Sue Campbell**

In 1966 when Sandy and Sue Campbell bought their property 'Cooloongatta' in the Byawatha Hills it was known locally as 'the rabbit farm.' The name wasn't an exaggeration. When a bush fire came through in 1967 the paddocks were so bare it stopped at the boundary fence!

The Campbell's quickly developed a whole farm plan and set out to increase the property's productivity and sustainability. Sue and Sandy recognised that their aims could only be achieved over time and that the plan would evolve and change as the property developed.

Over a ten-year period the original five paddocks were progressively sub-divided into twenty-nine paddocks as they were cleared of stumps, logs and rabbit warrens. A central laneway was developed, pasture improvement was underway and shade and shelterbelts were created.

A major rabbit eradication program was started in 1967 with 80-kilometres of trail laid. The length of trail laid has been progressively reducing each year, as has the follow-up fumigating, warren ripping, harbour destruction and spotlighting. The Campbell's have recently received 'rabbit free' status for the property.

The property has seen major revegetation works. Since 1966 over 200,000 eucalypts and understorey plants have been established. Before commercial nurseries were established in the area seed was collected from local species and propagated on the farm.

Around 13% of the property is now fenced off for revegetation. Dams on the property have been fenced out and revegetated and now support native fauna.

The Campbell's were founding members of the Springhurst Farm Tree Group that later became the Springhurst and Byawatha Landcare Group. Cooloongatta has been used extensively as an education tool with Sue and Sandy hosting visitors from overseas, other Landcare groups, government departments and universities. All who visit the farm are deeply affected by the story of its rehabilitation.



*Pictured L-R: John Carson, Editor Stock and Land Rural Press Ltd, Sandy, Victoria and Sue Campbell, winners of the Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award and Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award – North East, John Thwaites, Minister for Environment and John Landy, Governor of Victoria.*