



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



National Landcare Individual Award

John Laing

In 1996 John Laing from Toolamba was concerned about leaking irrigation channels. He recognised that the problem couldn't be fixed until people started to talk to each other so he helped establish the Dhurringile and District Landcare Group. To say that John has been a mainstay of that group ever since would be an understatement. To establish the group's successful Watertable Watch program he visited each of the district's landholders individually and managed to get 97% of them involved. He worked as the treasurer of the group for many years and is now the president, sometimes riding his bicycle 20 kilometres to attend meetings.

John is passionate about Landcare and the local environment. He is someone who can see the big picture and the importance of sharing knowledge and resources through links and networks while never losing sight of the on-ground priorities close to home.

John's vision and thirst for knowledge can be seen in his involvement with the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network where he chairs the Community Monitoring Project. John is responsible for the Saltwatch, Watertable Watch and Drainwatch monitoring projects. He is often on his feet talking to schoolchildren, visiting groups and agency staff. He speaks his mind but is also a good listener – someone genuinely interested in the ideas and opinions of others.

Through his involvement in the Urban Rural Links Program John has brought important issues like water conservation and sustainable farming practices to many urban children and adults. He runs a small non-profit plant nursery on his property and has organised numerous tree planting days. Since 2001 he has organised the planting of around 20,000 trees in the Dhurringile and Toolamba districts. When he works alongside planting teams like Work for the Dole, Green Corps or the local Dhurringile Prison Work Team his aim is always to educate and enthuse.

John's most recent project is the development of a Dhurringile and District Local Area Plan. The Local Area Planning Project is a partnership between the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network and Department of Primary Industries. The plan will be a living roadmap to help people overcome land management and social problems through community action. It has a 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' approach which reflects a great deal about John Laing. His own achievements are numerous, but his work in motivating and exciting can never be measured.



Pictured L-R: Lionel Woods, AFFA, John Laing winner of the National Landcare Individual Award, John Thwaites, Minister for Environment and John Landy, Governor of Victoria.