



YARRILINKS



Strategic Plan
2016-2021

INTRODUCTION

Yarrilinks Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit community-based organisation committed to building partnerships to conserve and restore biodiversity and maintain productive agriculture in the Yarriambiack region. We aim to connect agriculture to environment and city to country, uniting people in a common purpose. We recognise social and cultural outcomes are just as important for the local community as environmental outcomes and our annual Yarrilinks community planting weekend celebrates this core organisational principle.



BACKGROUND

Yarrilinks was formed during 1998 as a result of a local Landcare group meeting regarding the concept of Biolinks – the planting of ‘corridors’ of native vegetation to provide environmental linkages, movement corridors and habitat for native fauna and reserves for native flora in a manner that allows agricultural land uses to continue in an ecologically enhanced manner. Over 16 years the group has achieved 2,530 hectares with management agreements to protect and restore local native vegetation and 365,000 indigenous seedlings have been planted involving 300 landholders. A feature of Yarrilinks is the annual Community Planting Weekend where over 1000 volunteers from 30 different nationalities have been involved in the past 16 community planting weekends. Yarrilinks is now looking to build on the past success of the project to implement further environmental and sustainable agriculture outcomes within the Yarriambiack Shire.

Yarrilinks also provides support for the following groups:

- Lah Landcare group
- Far North Wimmera Conservation Farmers
- Wallup Ag Group
- Rupanyup Landcare group
- Wal Wal Lubeck Landcare group
- Warracknabeal East Conservation Farmers
- Minyip Landcare group




Yarrilinks is governed by a committee and employs a Landcare facilitator based in Warracknabeal, with the support of the Yarriambiack Shire and the Wimmera CMA.

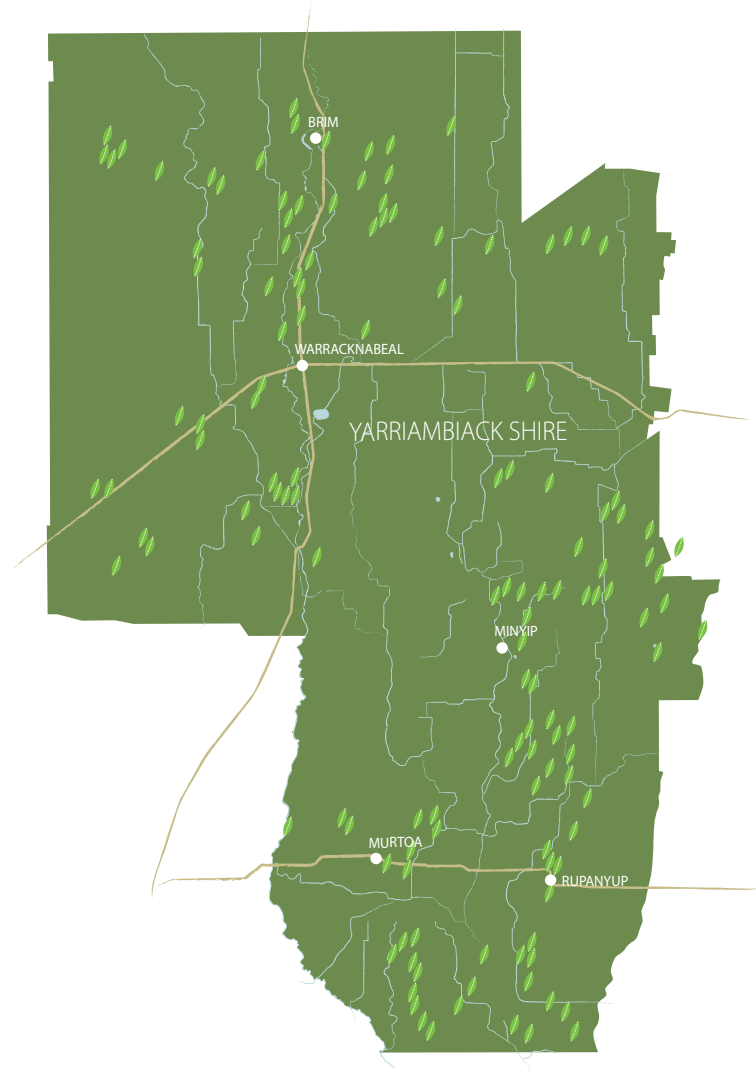
YARRIAMBIACK

REGIONAL MAP



LEGEND

-  On-ground Works
-  Shire Boundary
-  Major Townships
-  Highways
-  Creeks and Rivers



PLANNING CONTEXT

Yarrilinks operates within the borders of the Yarriambiack Shire in Western Victoria and works with partners across this border including Mallee CMA to the north.

The region covers an area of 7,158sq km and the main land use is made up of farming enterprises, largely consisting of dryland broadacre cropping and sheep. The population of the shire is around 7,500 and nearly half of all employment is associated with agriculture.

Yarrilinks projects are on the traditional country of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk people and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and custodians of the land.

The Buloke woodlands of the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression Bioregions are listed as a threatened ecological community by the Australian Government. The woodlands occur across the Yarrilinks area of works within the Yarriambiack Shire and is the predominate ecological vegetation class (EVC) in our region. Two waterways exist in the shire, the Yarriambiack and Dunmunkle Creeks, with weir pools in Brim, Warracknabeal and Lake Marma in Murtoa. These waterways and the Buloke woodlands are the main natural assets in our region. Yarrilinks is focused on supporting the community in the management and improvement of the Yarriambiack's natural assets.

LOOKING AHEAD

Challenges and opportunities facing farmers and communities of the Yarriambiack Shire include:

- Climate change impacts will need to be factored in to the design of on-ground projects and information dissemination.
- Decreasing involvement of landholders
- Decreasing funds available specifically for Landcare
- Increasing awareness of Natural Resource Management Issues
- A shift from rural living to regional centre living
- Increased funding available for Climate Change
- Changing funding model, i.e. tenders, competitive tenders
- Unclear roles of agencies involved in Natural Resource Management
- The series of poor seasons and the impact on the profitability of farm businesses and capacity of landholders to invest in environmental works.
- The aging and changing demographics of the catchment community and the evolving nature of Landcare groups, e.g. declining memberships, presents a challenge to Yarrilinks but also highlights the opportunity of working more with schools and the landholders of the future.
- The recognition of the increasingly important role that Landcare plays in contributing to the social well-being of rural communities
- The emergence of market-based incentives as cost-effective mechanisms used by government and catchment management authorities for achieving catchment health outcomes could potentially diminish the value of Landcare groups and networks to landholders.

While improving the condition of the regions identified assets continues to be the primary purpose of Yarrilinks, it is evident that the benefits from those activities are not restricted to the environmental and agricultural health of the region but extend to the social well-being of people involved.

VISION

Yarrilinks aims to protect, restore and re-establish the native vegetation in the region, balancing environmental activities with sustainable agricultural outcomes while facilitating social wellbeing.

PURPOSE

Yarrilinks is dedicated to being an integrative link in making Yarriambiack Shire an environmentally and socially healthy and sustainable place to live with a restored balance between ecological and agricultural productivity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Yarrilinks will, in all of its activities, endeavour to apply the principles of:

- Meeting the needs of community, landholders and investors;
- Applying best practice and adaptive management to on-ground works whilst encouraging creativity and innovation;
- A landscape approach to planning land management with emphasis placed on protection and maintenance of agricultural and remnant native vegetation assets, as well as a strategic approach to revegetation projects.
- Programs should endeavour to address the source of land degradation and pest introduction where possible.
- The importance of community engagement of the value of being committed to sustainable agriculture, ecological management and climate change.



PLAN OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

– TO GUIDE OUR ACTIVITIES OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
<p>To identify, plan and implement projects efficiently and effectively to optimise Landcare outcomes.</p> <p>To identify, plan and implement projects identified by landholders and the community</p> <p>Protect identified assets of the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarriambiack Creek • Dunmunkle Creek • Buloke woodlands • Agricultural soils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60H of land rehabilitated or protected from threats • A minimum of 2 grants per year expended on works • 5 landholder initiated projects and 40 landholders involved per year • Focus projects on our regional assets
<p>To support the Yarriambiack Shire Landcare Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All groups surviving and active • Maintain membership levels • Community attendance at Landcare Group meetings, forums and field days • Yarrilinks facilitator or committee member endeavour to attend each Landcare Group's meetings
<p>Involve the wider community in the activities of Yarrilinks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number and demographic range of participants involved in activities including Yarrilinks Community Planting and Junior Landcare • 5 field days, seminars and other public events conducted and 300 landholders, students or other interested persons attending per year. • 600 volunteer hours contributed to community natural resource management activities per year. • Continue to involve new Australians and a wide range of cultures in the Yarrilinks Community Planting Weekend
<p>To maintain productive and complementary partnerships with stakeholder organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract enough funding and in-kind support received from partners / sponsors to cover Yarrilinks weekend and landholder projects • 3 partnership programs conducted in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture within the district per year.
<p>To establish an effectively functioning management committee</p> <p>Expand the committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined roles for committee members • Invite members of Yarrilinks supported groups in the region to join the Committee

This plan will be underpinned by the intention to develop understanding and responses to the pressures on rural communities and the potential implications of climate change. This will, in turn, allow us to support, educate and assist landholders to adapt to an evolving environmental climate, ensuring our productive rural communities sustainability and long term viability.