



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Tarrangower Cactus Control Group, VIC
Category: Fairfax Landcare Community Group Award

Over the last decade, volunteers from the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group (TCCG) have formed an army of 'Cactus Warriors' who have destroyed millions of wheel cactus plants in their local landscapes including many historic gold mining sites.

Wheel cactus is an extremely resilient plant and is difficult to destroy due to its thick, waxy skin. TCCG members have spent years researching different techniques to eradicate the plant and have developed a specific injection tool which effectively delivers herbicide directly into the plant. To help control wheel cactus, TCCG has focused on creating a community-based approach, raising awareness of the weed within their community with newsletters, brochures and media releases. In addition, the Group maintains its high profile by participating in the annual Maldon Easter Parade and through market stalls and sausage sizzles.

Landholders are educated on how to treat wheel cactus infestations on their properties with regular community field days. The Group then assists landholders with free equipment loans and plant disposal. TCCG has a strategic action plan that is reviewed annually. The plan helps the Group to manage its priorities and organise its many relationships with volunteers, landowners, work crews, tertiary students, scouts, and contractors. Because of their high engagement with the community, the TCCG has been instrumental in creating positive change. It has linked townsfolk with their rural neighbours and involved people of all ages and abilities in restoring their local environment.

TCCG volunteers have formed an army of 'Cactus Warriors' who organise community field days and work crews from various Government organisations each year. To assist as many landholders as possible – as well as Parks Victoria - each field day is held at a different location on either private or public land. These field days attract between 30 - 50 landholders and volunteers to each event. TCCG has designed a custom-built trailer to accommodate and transport the equipment used at the community field days. This trailer maintains a large pool of injecting kits, digging tools, and a supply of herbicide, which are used on field days and are loaned to individual landholders.

Volunteering at field days on private property helps relieve the stress felt by some overwhelmed landholders. Educational materials, physical assistance, and social interaction all help increase their wellbeing by helping restore their livelihoods.

TCCG continues to investigate improvements to equipment, herbicides and control methods by participating in field trials and research projects. Last year the Group collaborated in a seed germination research project at Federation University, Ballarat, to investigate factors influencing the germination of wheel cactus seeds.

TCCG recently acquired funding from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation Philanthropic Group for a project to increase awareness of wheel cactus in the state of Victoria. They are supervising a part-time project officer who is mapping the distribution of wheel cactus infestations, producing and distributing educational resources, and presenting field demonstrations within Victoria.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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The Group has recently completed a project in partnership with the Mount Alexander Shire, to increase awareness of wheel cactus and other noxious weeds. The aim of this project was to produce five ward-specific brochures highlighting local noxious weeds and the responsibility of landholders to control these weeds. All Landcare groups within the Shire and Connecting Country collaborated and contributed their specific, local weed knowledge.

Sharing knowledge and creating awareness is an integral part of TCCG strategy. The Group regularly participates in local events such as the Maldon Agricultural Show, have designed 'Cactus Warrior' T-shirts to promote the issue, and frequently write media articles for newspapers and magazines. In addition, TCCG maintains an informative website to share updated knowledge about wheel cactus control to a worldwide audience and held a workshop in 2015 to increase wheel cactus awareness in the wider Victorian community.

Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

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For further information, photographs or interviews, please contact:

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Web Summary

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