



# 2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October  
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

**Nominee: Barossa Improved Grazing Group, SA**

**Category: Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award**

The Barossa Improved Grazing Group (BIGG) began five years ago. In that time BIGG has brought integrated land management practices to around 50,000 hectares of grazing land in the Barossa Valley and Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges, working with over 400 beef, sheep and dairy producers. Monitoring over 50 individual properties, BIGG has also focused on education, sharing its findings via workshops, webinars and social events such as pasture walks.

BIGG's on-ground work has included the rollout of a Rappa electric fence across 400 hectares of sheep and cattle grazing land, reducing pasture wastage while increasing ground cover. The Group has also demonstrated watercourse rehabilitation, with monitoring showing that ground cover doubled a mere two months after the removal of stock – in turn reducing soil erosion and improving water quality and livestock production. Deploying hard data has made BIGG's advocacy more effective; after machine direct seeding was found to be cheaper, ten local producers started using it instead of tube stock.

BIGG's monitoring work has helped farmers across the Barossa adopt best-practice pasture maintenance. Having a range of pasture varieties – cereals for early production, followed by rye grasses for spring and lucerne for summer – in one system is a way to offset climate variability by reducing the seasonal feed gap, improving livestock production and reducing soil erosion.

The Group's monitoring efforts also proved particularly useful after the bushfires of 2014. Aided by the SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Boards and Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges, BIGG developed and monitored native pasture sites, and the data they provided on pasture composition, pasture quality, ground cover and livestock requirements assisted the recovery of 20 producers directly affected by the fires.

The information was also disseminated more widely via videos and fact sheets, and has helped hundreds of landowners affected by the Sampsons Flat and Pinery bushfires in 2015. The findings were also presented at the NRM Science Conference in Adelaide, and at the 2016 National NRM Conference in Coffs Harbour.

The data collected by BIGG led to properties – together covering around 15,000 hectares – destocking for eight months after the fire until they had majority ground cover, and strategically re-grazing to reduce the risk of soil erosion. After two years, the composition of the native pastures had returned to pre-fire levels. Even in years without ample rainfall, farmers are now careful to maintain above 75 percent ground cover. To spread the word, BIGG has run workshops on grazing management practices, and implemented an incentive scheme designed to repopulate burnt land with native vegetation.

Engaging different generations and demographic targets, BIGG has delivered two webinars in the last 12 months, with over 200 online participants across three states. The Group has also worked with Barossa Young People in Agriculture to run a conference on climate variability, watercourse rehabilitation, and sustainable pasture management.

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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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](http://www.landcareaustralia.org.au)

## Ends

For further information, photographs or interviews contact:

Naomi Straw  
Landcare Australia  
[naomi.straw@landcareaustralia.com.au](mailto:naomi.straw@landcareaustralia.com.au)  
02 8440 8823

Georgie Keynes  
Barossa Improved Grazing Group  
[georgie.keynes@biggroup.org.au](mailto:georgie.keynes@biggroup.org.au)  
0409 287 261

## Web Summary

Since The Barossa Improved Grazing Group (BIGG) began five years ago, BIGG has brought integrated land management practices to around 50,000 hectares of grazing land in the Barossa Valley and Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges, working with over 400 beef, sheep and dairy producers. BIGG has also focused on education, sharing its findings via workshops, webinars and social events. BIGG's on-ground work has included the rollout of a Rappa electric fence across 400 hectares of sheep and cattle grazing land, and watercourse rehabilitation via monitoring. The Group's monitoring efforts proved particularly useful after the bushfires of 2014. BIGG developed and monitored native pasture sites, and the data the Group provided on pasture composition and quality, ground cover and livestock requirements assisted the recovery of 20 producers affected by the fires.

## Pull-out quote:

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