

Media Release



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From nothing a forest will grow

When most people look over the land at Western Water's Melton Recycled Water Plant they see a bare paddock.

But the water authority's staff and local environmentalists have a different vision – they see a forest.

Western Water and Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group (PLEG) are working together to transform an area of the treatment plant into a wildlife habitat corridor of grassy woodland.

"We identified this area as a critical link between isolated areas of bushland back in 2007, when we signed an agreement with PLEG to rehabilitate the area," Western Water's Managing Director, John Wilkinson, says.

The area sits between Pinkerton Forest, an endangered remnant Greybox Grassy Woodland on Western Water land, and Bush's Paddock, made up of critically endangered Basalt Plains Grassland, owned by Melton Shire Council.

"Our aim is to join up these 'islands' of bush to allow endangered species to move between different areas," Mr Wilkinson says.

"With the help of a grant from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Vision for Werribee Plains, we have been clearing the land of weeds and trialling different techniques for revegetation."

This weekend the dream of creating a forest from bare ground will take off, with a planting day to be held at the site.

PLEG spokesman Daryl Akers describes the project as "pioneering".

"To be creating a forest from nothing is really an extraordinary challenge, and will take decades," he says.

"By restoring the habitat in this area we can help endangered wildlife to recolonise, and make species less vulnerable to natural disasters such as bushfire."

The site presented particular challenges for revegetation after being used for many years to dispose of biosolids, the byproduct of the water recycling process.

Western Water staff and PLEG members have spent many months trialling soil rehabilitation and revegetation techniques to cope with the high nutrient levels in the soil.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend the planting day this Saturday (August 13). For details phone Daryl Akers on 0438 277 252 or go to www.pinkertonforest.com.

About Western Water

Western Water is one of Victoria's 13 regional urban water corporations. We provide water, recycled water and sewerage services to over 53,000 properties and 134,810 people in an area of 3,000 square kilometres. Our region extends from Lancefield in the north to Melton and Rockbank in the south and from Myrning in the west to Bulla in the east. We incorporate parts of Hume City Council and Melton, Moorabool and Macedon Ranges Shire Councils.

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