Bushland Heritage

THE HERITAGE AGREEMENT EXPERIENCE

The South Australian Heritage Agreement Scheme 1980–2002

The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation

National Parks & Wildlife South Australia

DEPARTMENT FOR environment and heritage

Government of South Australia

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Design by Public Communications, NPWSA, DEH

Published by National Parks and Wildlife SA, Department for Environment and Heritage.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department or the Government of South Australia.

FIS 16908 – August 2002

ISBN 0 7590 1045 5

Photographs:
(cover) Pale Groundsel *(Senecio hypoleucus)* in a Heritage Agreement at Forest Range.
(opposite) Heritage Agreement adjoining Rudall Conservation Park (in the foreground), Eyre Peninsula.

Acknowledgements:
The assistance of the following persons in the preparation of this publication is gratefully acknowledged: the Heritage Agreement owners who are profiled; Colin Harris, Tim Dendy, Neil Collins (project management), Elspeth Young, Lyndall Goulding, Maria Johns, Chris Morony, Darryl Wickham, and Bush Management Advisers Bryan Haywood, Kylie Moritz, Keith Payne and Andrew West (Department for Environment and Heritage); Lyn Dohle (PIRSA), Denys Slee (Denys Slee & Associates) and David Robertson (Icarus Design). Photographic sources are acknowledged in the text.

Printed on Spicers Monza satin paper, 50% recycled, chlorine free.

John Hill MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation

The Heritage Agreement Scheme turns twenty-one this year. This innovative program pioneered formal 'off-park' conservation in Australia. Not only has it been well-supported by South Australian landholders – there are now 1266 individual areas of bushland conserved under the scheme – but aspects of the program have been adopted in other states and overseas.

This booklet celebrates twenty-one years of the scheme and is very much a 'people's story'.

A cross-section of participating landholders tells the story of how and why they became involved and what their bushland means to them and their families.

In addition to individual landholders, the scheme has a variety of other participants, including conservation and community organisations, businesses, schools and local government, and they too tell their story.

The focus of the scheme has changed over the years. Initially the aim was to protect as much bushland as possible. This is still important but more resources are now assisting landholders to manage their bushland. The provision of fencing and practical advice is now complemented by management grants and, in some parts of the State, volunteer support for landholders.

Heritage Agreement areas are important as habitat areas, as links between remnant blocks of native vegetation and in conserving the character of our landscape. We need to work together to develop innovative management options for agreement areas. This may well be the focus when other Heritage Agreement owners tell their story in another twenty-one years.

P J Green/DEH

G C Bishop

Bob and Betty Lewis, Mount George, owners of one of the earliest Heritage Agreements

BUSHLAND HERITAGE: The Heritage Agreement Experience

The South Australian Heritage Agreement Scheme 1980–2002

This year marks twenty-one years of landowner involvement in South Australia's Heritage Agreement Scheme. The scheme, which conserves bushland on privately-owned land, was a first for Australia. There are now about 1000 landholders participating in the scheme, with 1266 agreements protecting 561 802 hectares of bushland. It remains an innovative nature conservation program and has achieved much in its first two decades.

Beginnings

By the mid 1970s, over 75% of the native vegetation that occurred in the agricultural region of South Australia at the time of European settlement had been cleared, as great an extent as any other Australian State.

A review into the status of native vegetation in South Australia was conducted by an Interdepartmental Committee on Vegetation Clearance during 1974–76 and reported to the Minister for the Environment in October 1976. The report, Vegetation Clearance in South Australia, which was released publicly the following June, suggested that urgent action was needed to restrain the rate of land clearance. Without such action, much of the remaining vegetation would be cleared leading to an impoverished landscape and continued loss of native species. It revealed that parts of the State had less than 10% native vegetation cover remaining, namely South East (5.1%), Murray Mallee (8.2%), Mount Lofty Ranges (4%) and Yorke Peninsula (6.4%).

One recommendation in the report was that incentives should be made available 'to encourage landholders to retain appropriate areas of native vegetation in an uncleared state'. In return for the incentives and other assistance offered under the scheme, the landowner would enter into a legal agreement called a Heritage Agreement over the protected bushland. It also recommended the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Vegetation Clearance.

G C Bishop

Pale Groundsel *(Senecio hypoleucus)* on Filsell's (formerly Brock's) Heritage Agreement at Forest Range

This was a significant recommendation and in some ways it was a difficult issue for sectors of the rural community. Land clearance was still occurring in some regions and land development was still viewed by many as a means of increasing the State's prosperity. Many farmers had spent a good part of their lives clearing scrub and some had carved productive farms out of the bush and the clearance of native vegetation remained a requirement of many leases. Issues such as biodiversity loss, soil salinisation and the declining quality of groundwater supplies were not yet widely talked about.

By the mid 1970s, South Australia had conserved three million hectares of bushland in 180 National Park and Wildlife Service reserves (approximately 4% of the State), but large areas of native vegetation were held in private ownership with little or no long-term management or protection. There was also a growing movement across Australia that nature conservation should (and could) not remain purely the domain of national parks.

The report was applauded by some sectors of the community and strongly criticised by others who interpreted it as a ban on land clearance. The Adelaide Advertiser on 6 June 1977 in its lead editorial expressed the hope that the measures would 'be acted on before it is too late'. A series of eighteen public meetings was held in country

areas with the support of local Members of Parliament and the United Farmers & Graziers of South Australia to discuss the report and its recommendations. Public submissions on the report's proposals were also received. Consultants were retained by the Government to assess the cost of the financial incentives and a legal mechanism for the scheme was investigated. The annual cost of the scheme was estimated at $260 000.

The structure of the agreement was based on a Heritage Agreement scheme proposed by Peter James, a lawyer from New South Wales who was then the Deputy Director of the National Trust of Australia (New South Wales). As Colin Harris, the then Manager, Projects Section, Projects and Assessments Division, Department for the Environment, and Chair of the Interdepartmental Committee, recalls:

'Peter James had devised a legal agreement that could be used to protect either built or natural heritage. We were impressed by what he was proposing and we brought him to Adelaide to report on how his scheme could be applied to the protection of native vegetation.

'At this stage we were not looking at controls over land clearance. The aim was to offer incentives to landowners on the proviso that they entered into a legally binding agreement to protect the area for conservation in perpetuity.

'David Wotton was the Environment Minister in the Tonkin Government of 1979–82 and he was a strong supporter of the proposed scheme. I believe that he clearly saw the importance and usefulness of this approach'.

Peter James' approach was groundbreaking in that it got away from the common law mechanisms of covenants and easements which he considered to be inappropriate and difficult instruments to use for this purpose. The Heritage Agreement was seen as a new legal agreement that would not be constrained by old common law terminology and precedents.

The proposal to introduce Heritage Agreements was accepted by Cabinet. Colin Harris says, 'Tim Dendy did a lot of the behind the scenes work in developing the proposal and in preparing the material that was presented to Cabinet. Tim had been the final Secretary to the Interdepartmental Committee, so knew the area well'.

Tim liked Peter James' model: 'We needed an agreement that could be attached to the land – that is, it would remain in place if the property were to change hands. Peter's model did this and overcame the difficulties we would have faced in trying to use common law concepts in this State'.

Apart from Peter James' model, the Department investigated initiatives taken interstate and overseas to protect heritage items on private land. Models included The Victoria Conservation Trust and New Zealand's Queen Elizabeth II National Trust. The latter was established by an Act of Parliament in 1977 to protect that country's remnant native forests on private land. Under this scheme, landowners could apply for an Open Space Covenant to protect native vegetation on their property. The scheme adopted in South Australia was similar in some ways to the New Zealand model. For instance, the ownership of the land remained with the landowner and was registered on the land title, its biodiversity values were

Caralue Bluff near Kimba. This Heritage Agreement area is now part of a conservation park.

G C Bishop

DEH

Marble Range has been protected by ten Heritage Agreements since 1988.

safeguarded, and the owners could apply to the Government for management assistance.

The scheme is launched

The Heritage Agreement Scheme was introduced as an amendment to the *South Australian Heritage Act, 1978*, gazetted on 18 December 1980. The scheme was launched with a slogan of 'Now it pays you to protect native vegetation on your land'. Landowners who entered into an agreement were eligible for Local Government rate remissions and could apply for a grant to cover the cost of fencing and some management activities. Colin Harris recalls that $20 000 was budgeted to promote the scheme in what was 'a well-coordinated promotion to the community'.

A Heritage Agreement is a legal agreement between a landowner and the Government to conserve and manage native vegetation in perpetuity. The agreement does not affect the ownership of the land although it is registered on the land's Certificate of Title. Subsequent owners are also bound by the agreement. When an agreement is placed over an area of bushland, it indicates that the main purpose of that land is the conservation of native animals and plants. There is no right of public access to Heritage Areas without the consent of the landowner.

Hundreds of applications or expressions of interest were received. The next step was for the bushland to be assessed for its suitability for inclusion in the scheme by biologists from the Department for the Environment and, if considered suitable, the application would go to the Native Vegetation Advisory Committee for approval. Although a large number of landowners expressed interest in the new scheme, not all finalised an agreement. Some did not want the legal restrictions on what they could do with their land and went on to preserve their bushland at their own cost.

Mount Lofty Daisy *(Olearia grandiflora)*

G C Bishop

P J Green

Sam and Lorna Jericho

The scheme received support from both farmers and the main farmer's organisation, the United Farmers & Graziers Association of South Australia (later the United Farmers and Stockowners Association of South Australia). Landowners such as: Kieran and Brendan Fitzgerald, Kimba; John and Les Evans, Mantung; John and Margaret Smyth, Salter Springs; Sam and Lorna Jericho, Rudall; Kelvin Ashman, Kapinnie; Bob and Betty Lewis, Bridgewater; Peter and Margaret Dormer, Longwood; Robert and Jenny Henzell, Uraidla; Brendan Lay, Harrogate; Rex and Kathleen Caudle, Delamere; Verne and Jean McLaren, Kingston;
Geoff and Cynthia Clothier, Lucindale, John and Shirley Eckert, Langhorne Creek and Garry and Maureen Wallis, Parndana, to name but some of the earliest applicants for Heritage Agreements and have remained strong supporters over the years.

Kieran Fitzgerald approached the Department in February 1978 seeking assistance to identify areas that should be retained as part of his land clearing operations. This was given and his later land clearance was based on this survey. The Jerichos submitted their application for a Heritage Agreement in December 1980. Sam Jericho's approach to land management was ahead of its time and was based on the premise that 'farmers … are not owners of the land they occupy to do with as they please but [are] merely stewards during their generation and that posterity also has a right to a stable and tree landscaped environment and habitat'.
In the south-east of the State, Verne McLaren conserved 400 hectares of bushland in the 1950s. He could 'foresee the time when only a small area of bushland will remain, because by law there is no limit to the amount one can develop'.
He considered that this land was 'far too valuable in its natural state to be cleared'.

Further measures

In the first two years of the scheme, 450 landowners registered interest in a Heritage Agreement, 170 applications covering a total of 15 000 hectares were approved and $450 000 was committed to fund incentive payments. The areas of bushland ranged in size from two hectares to over 1000 hectares and applications came from all agricultural regions of the State.

In spite of the early support for the scheme, it was not successful in slowing the rate of land clearance. As Rudall farmer Sam Jericho observed, '… the voluntary nature of the legislation only succeeded in obtaining areas held by dedicated conservationists and the scrub clearing in general proceeded at an even greater pace'. Notices of intent to clear native vegetation to the Soils Branch, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries were followed up

The Heritage Agreement Scheme fencing program – supported financially by the Native Vegetation Council and the Natural Heritage Trust – is an important part of providing protection for covenanted bushland

Darryl Wickham/DEH

but resulted in few Heritage Agreements. On 12 May 1983, regulations under the *South Australian Planning Act, 1982* were introduced to control the clearance of native vegetation.

Under these controls landowners were required to obtain planning approval to clear native vegetation. Aspects of the controls were contested in court and a Legislative Council Select Committee into vegetation clearance was convened. One of the outcomes of the review was that, from November 1985, financial assistance was paid under the *Native Vegetation Management Act, 1985* to landowners whose applications to clear native vegetation were refused.

At first the Government was opposed to paying financial assistance to landowners. Colin Harris says that '… the Government of the day had two main reasons for holding firm against compensation, the first being the potential cost, and the second being the precedent it would set in relation to other planning issues and decisions'. However, a proposal from the United Farmers & Graziers Association's Assistant General Secretary, Denys Slee, to tie the payment of 'compensation' to a Heritage Agreement helped to resolve the impasse on the issue. Payments were to be made provided the land was placed under a Heritage Agreement.

Denys recalls that '… the UFS decided they should send me overseas to see if I could locate any information which might help break what was becoming a protracted and bitter impasse between the farming community, government and to some degree, the conservation movement. I investigated the 'set aside' payment scheme used in the United Kingdom to provide for the protection of sites of scientific interest and felt that such an approach could be used here to compensate affected landowners'.

Early morning, Smith's Heritage Agreement, near Montacute

'The UFS sent a proposal to the Government for discussion. The silence was deafening. Serious discussions about compensation only got underway after the Select Committee reported'.

The 1985 Act was reviewed after nine months of operation and the process for paying financial assistance was made less complex. With compensation being paid to landowners, the Native Vegetation Council moved to a policy of not approving broadscale vegetation clearance.

A large number of agreements were finalised during the late 1980s and this resulted in quite long delays in finalising some agreements. The process was not without its frustrations for all parties concerned but as one landowner said, 'If you gave up, you wouldn't be a primary producer, would you?'

In 1994 there were 850 finalised agreements protecting about 411 000 hectares of bushland. The largest Heritage Area covered 10 000 hectares but across the State areas varied greatly in size. An average size in the Mount Lofty Ranges was 5-10 hectares while in the mallee country of western Eyre Peninsula, the average size was about 400 hectares and some areas exceeded 5000 hectares.

The scheme has been a major investment in the future of South Australia. It owes much to the strong support of the then Minister and Deputy Premier, Dr Don Hopgood, and the bi-partisan desire on the part of the major stakeholders to achieve a positive outcome for biodiversity conservation. Over $68 million in financial

Les Evans has been observing and photographing Malleefowl at *Spearlands*, Mantung for over 25 years

Les Evans

G C Bishop

Mallee vegetation on Wallis and Elliot's Heritage Agreement, east of Sedan

assistance was paid to 750 landowners who entered into a Heritage Agreement following land clearance refusal. The Government considered this an effective long-term investment as it is far more effective to retain remnant bushland than to have to rehabilitate degraded land in the future.

As David Wotton, the then Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, observed in 1995, 'The men and women who were the first to join the [Heritage Agreement] Scheme were pioneers in the sense that they were venturing into something new. It must be remembered too that it was new to the Government which took the bold step of trying this new measure….the Scheme, with the perspective of hindsight, can be seen to have been an astonishingly pioneering conservation measure'.

And after twenty-one years, how does Colin Harris see the scheme he first administered back in 1980?

'I think the scheme has stood the test of time well. Certainly it has experienced some difficulties, but then, it was a truly novel concept which got away from the constraints of older legal approaches to protecting heritage on private land. It was a groundbreaking initiative and remains a novel approach to nature conservation.

'The scheme is well-known throughout South Australia and beyond. The concept is still relevant and useful'.

Denys Slee has not been directly involved with the vegetation retention program for about ten years but considers that the Heritage Agreement program has been more successful than schemes interstate. However, he says that '… aspects of the program caused undue hardship to some individuals and I have concerns about the long-term management of conserved areas, particular with regard to weeds and fire'.

The first Heritage Agreements

The question is often asked, 'Who owns the first Heritage Areas created?' Agreements were numbered in the order in which they were registered on the land title and that was not necessarily the same order in which applications were received. The first four Heritage Agreements were finalised in June 1981, namely Rex Caudle Family Pty Ltd, K.S. Fitzgerald, and J.L and L.L. Evans (two agreements). The early agreements also included properties at Monarto. Heritage Agreements (Aesthetic and Scientific) were used to protect some of the land sold at Monarto following the abandonment of the city plan for the area.

Eatts' and Haskett's Heritage Agreements, Curtinye Hill, near Kimba

G C Bishop

Bob and Betty Lewis of Mount George, near Bridgewater in the Adelaide Hills were the owners of one of the very first Heritage Agreements. Their agreement was finalised during 1981 and comprised bushland adjacent to the Lewis' home. Part of their land was later bought by National Parks and Wildlife South Australia for incorporation into Mount George Conservation Park and they eventually sold the balance to a fellow member of the Friends of Mount George Conservation Park.

The Lewis' have had a long association with bushland conservation both on their own property and through their involvement with Nature Foundation SA and Friends of Parks Inc. Bob was the inaugural president of the Friends of Mount George Conservation Park in 1992 and served in that capacity until 1999.

Bob sees weeds as the major threat to our bushland. 'If we don't attack feral weeds we will have no native bushland left. For the most part we use the Bradley – Enid Robertson approach to weed control – working from the areas of least weed invasion to the bad areas'.

G C Bishop

Acacia imbricata, an endemic species, Butler's Heritage Agreement, near Tumby Bay

G C Bishop

Coolawang Creek, Lush's Heritage Agreement, near Waitpinga

After twenty-one years, there are now 1266 Heritage Agreements and new applications continue to be received. The focus of the program has now largely moved to the management of bushland. The Heritage Agreement Grants Scheme has been significant in assisting landowners to undertake planning and management works. The Scheme's fencing and management programs have been funded by the Native Vegetation Council and the Natural Heritage Trust.

The Scheme's contribution to natural resource management has been recognised by the rebate in the Water Catchment Management Levy that is given by the Onkaparinga Water Catchment Management Board for bushland protected by a Heritage Agreement.

Another new direction is the establishment of a revolving fund. Nature Foundation SA is to use the Heritage Agreement process to protect areas of bushland it buys before selling the areas on to private individuals.

The program remains innovative and the future will be left to determine how successful it has been in achieving its aims. Any history is open to interpretation, so let the final words go to Napoleon Bonaparte, 'History is how we interpret the facts at the present time.'

The Profiles

Selecting Heritage Area owners to profile in this booklet was not an easy task. The scheme is strongly supported by many committed landowners, all worthy of being profiled. Landowners from each of the State's six agricultural regions have been featured, along with a selection of other organisations with Heritage Agreements to illustrate the variety that exists within the scheme. Apart from individual landowners, the scheme has attracted other participants including schools, conservation and heritage groups (notably National Trust of South Australia, Field Naturalists' Association of South Australia, Natural History Society of South Australia, Bushland Conservation Pty Ltd and Habitat Conservation Pty Ltd), businesses, community groups and local government.

The participants have been selected to give variety to the profiles and include owners of large and small bushland areas, primary producers and non-primary producers, clusters of heritage areas, and early and more recent participants.

Geoffrey C. Bishop

G.J. Broad, *Wiltoo*, Lake Wangary Heritage Agreements 330, 348
C.S & T.B. Puckridge, *Marble Range*, Lake Wangary Heritage Agreement 335

DEH

Riley's Heritage Area on the western side of Marble Range

Marble Range is an important part of the lives of the families that live near this imposing range of hills on southern Eyre Peninsula. The range dominates the otherwise flat landscape to the north of Coffin Bay.

The range comprises steep quartzite hills with gently sloping footslopes, fans and alluvial plains. The highest peak rises to 493 metres above sea level.

Most of Marble Range has been protected by Heritage Agreements since 1988. There are ten Heritage Agreements covering a total of about 1600 hectares of bushland owned by the Broad, Puckridge, Riley and French families who combined their efforts to protect this important area.

Colin Puckridge has lived all his life on the property that his father bought on the eastern side of the range in 1921. In spite of his familiarity with the area, Colin can still look at the range each day and think how beautiful it is.

'We went up the range a lot as kids and got to know it well. It has always been an important place for me. I still enjoy walking there and looking at the plants and birds'.

G C Bishop

Colin Puckridge and Patsy

The Puckridges have 813 hectares of bushland under Heritage Agreement.

Marble Range is both geologically and biologically significant. A survey by the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia in 1979 gave the area an A-1 priority for preservation. The survey recorded 12 plant associations, 339 plant taxa (eight have national conservation significance), and 116 bird species of which 34 are known to breed in the area.

Colin Puckridge

A striking contrast – Puckridge's Heritage Agreement, Marble Range

G C Bishop

Geoff Broad, *Wiltoo*, Lake Wangary

The late Rollo Riley applied for a Heritage Agreement in 1981. A series of meetings was held over the next few years at Peter Broad's home and the landowners discussed protecting the whole of the range.

Geoff Broad says of his late father who was a strong supporter of the Heritage Agreement concept: 'Peter had been planting trees on the farm since his 20s and the Heritage Agreement scheme appealed to him as a way to protect the bush on our part of the range.

'He was keen to see this important area protected but remain in private ownership. This was significant as access to the range is through our farming country. We had always allowed people onto the range and still do'.

A bonus from the scheme has been funding support to fence the area as 'it was a real problem to get straying sheep down off the range'.

Geoff says that the natural regeneration of sheoaks has been remarkable. 'There are trees of all sizes; some are over three metres tall and there are young ones everywhere'.

G C Bishop

The Broads see bushland management and farming as going 'hand in hand'.

'We need to have a plan for what we are doing on our farms, it shouldn't just be random projects. One of my priorities is to protect the bush and replant areas to help prevent salinity'. Geoff is working on a project started by his father to revegetate sixty hectares to link an outlying hill to the range.

Colin and Trevor Puckridge have a similar approach to their land management. 'We have always tried to work with the local wildlife. When the range was being fenced, we did it so that the 'roos could get through the fence'.

G C Bishop

Above left: This outlying hill is being linked via a corridor to the main range. Above: Marble Range from Kellidie Bay Conservation Park. Below: Section of Marble Range owned by Gary and Shirley Riley.

The other Marble Range Heritage Agreements are G.J. & S. Riley (342, 395, 482), S.W. & S.M. Riley (674), J.B & M.J. French (422, 694) and F.J. Puckridge (427).

' We need to have a plan for what we are doing on our farms, it shouldn't just be random projects.'

G C Bishop

Brian and Grace Coombs, *Pepperwood*, Yeelanna

Heritage Agreement 373

The vegetation clearance controls disrupted the development plans of many farmers. This was very much the case with Brian and Grace Coombs of Yeelanna.

In 1979 the Coombs decided to develop their own farming property. They bought what was virtually a scrub block, twenty-five kilometres north-west of Yeelanna. Only 100 hectares of the 962 hectare property was cleared at that time. They worked out their plans for the property and began the long job of clearing the scrub.

Brian takes up the story: 'Then, without warning, the Government introduced controls on the clearance of native vegetation in May 1983. I was mighty cross when the controls were announced. We had bought the land in good faith and now it looked as if we would not be able to clear enough to make it a viable farm.

'We continued chaining regrowth and next thing we had a law enforcement officer at our door about to serve notice on us for illegal clearance'.

Work ceased and the Coombs negotiated with the Department regarding the regrowth. All went well until a rare plant species was found. 'I thought, that's the end for us!' said Brian. 'It wasn't, as it turned out, and we negotiated a compromise'.

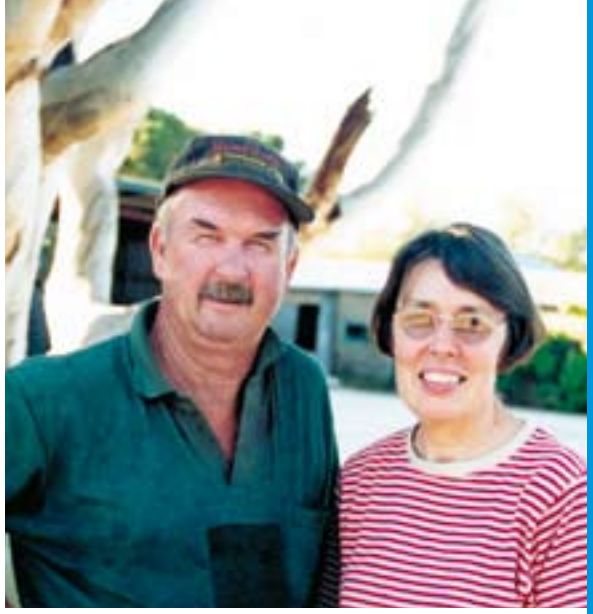
The Coombs clearance application went to the Native Vegetation Council and Brian attended their meeting in Adelaide. 'I think being able to discuss our plans with them face to face made all the difference', said Grace.

'At the meeting both parties were able to state their case and a compromise acceptable to both parties was reached'.

The Coombs family now have 240 hectares under Heritage Agreement and it adjoins other heritage bushland on Kenny's *Koolidie Station*. Their son Tim now lives on that property.

Brian Coombs: '... it is good to have some scrub on the place. We've got some favourite spots in our scrub and are coming to know more of the birds we see there'.

Graham Carpenter/DEH



G C Bishop

Brian and Grace Coombs

Brian says that they have not regretted going into the scheme. 'It has been good for the country and it is good to have some scrub on the place. We've got some favourite spots in our scrub and are coming to know more of the birds we see there'.

The Coombs say that they also have a 'green touch' on their home property. They have fenced off swampy and salty areas to exclude stock and they have planted them to salt-tolerant species. 'Getting plants established was hard,' says Brian. 'Having them eaten off by rabbits was pretty annoying. A big reduction in rabbit numbers thanks to a district-wide baiting program and calicivirus have made our replanting projects much more successful'.

G C Bishop

Thelma and Austen Eatts

A.A. & L.H. Eatts, *Curtinye*, Kimba

Heritage Agreements 113, 610

Curtinye Hill is a local landmark. The massive quartzitic hill, which is twenty kilometres south-east of Kimba, rises 110 metres above the surrounding country and is plainly visible from many kilometres away.

Austen and Lindsay Eatts were early supporters of the Heritage Agreement Scheme and in 1982 applied to protect their 175 hectares of Curtinye Hill under the scheme. With their wives, Thelma and Molly, they have been active in nature conservation and built heritage projects in the Kimba district for many decades.

Lindsay relates regarding Curtinye Hill: 'We wanted to find a way to protect the hill. A picnic ground had been developed at the base of the hill and lots of local groups were using it. We planned to approach the Kimba Council to have it made a public reserve to protect it beyond our lifetimes. The Heritage Agreement Scheme was advertised and it suited our needs. There was no real cost to us, it would be preserved as it is and we retained control over access.'

The Eatts family have been farming at Kimba since 1912. 'Over the years the family has spent a lot of time up on the hill', said Lindsay. 'We often had picnics there with family and friends. A favourite time to visit was after rain to see if the rocky creeks were flowing. As kids we knew where all the good quandong trees were.'

The Eatts neighbours, the Haskett family, put their part of Curtinye Hill under a Heritage Agreement at the same time as the Eatts. 'The agreement took ages to complete', said Lindsay. 'We would discuss what we wanted with the Department and nothing would happen – the lack of continuity of staff didn't help the process. We eventually signed the agreement in December 1986.'

Curtinye Hill supports eight different vegetation types and 136 native plant species and 46 bird species have been recorded.

Austen and Thelma Eatts have a separate Heritage Agreement over 200 ha near Lake Gilles Conservation Park. 'Moores – as we call it - is interesting mallee scrub and we didn't intend clearing it. The payment of fencing costs was an added incentive to protect it. The Department provided the materials and we erected the fence', said Austen.

'This country has some salinity problems; protecting this bush should help with this.'

G C Bishop

Lindsay, Kate and Molly Eatts

Another, smaller area of native pine woodland has also been protected. The area had been grazed for many years and Austen and Lindsay were keen to see how it would regenerate.

'It has come back quite well really', said Austen, 'although introduced grasses and wild turnip are still a bit of a problem. Fencing areas off is critical if we are to conserve areas of bush like this.'

Of the scheme overall, Austen and Thelma say that there was little direct benefit as such, but, 'It's more that we have conserved some native vegetation for future generations and they will know what the original vegetation of this area was like.'

Curtinye Hill, as seen from the south

G C Bishop

W.G., M.E. & W.R. Nosworthy, *Lake Hamilton*, Sheringa

Heritage Agreements 651, 690

One of Eyre Peninsula's most successful natural regeneration projects resulted incidentally from a Heritage Agreement application made back in 1981.

The Nosworthy family have been farming at *Lake Hamilton*, south of Elliston, since 1945. In that year, the 8000 hectare property carried just 800 sheep and thousands of rabbits. As Bill Nosworthy says, 'The country was eaten bare by rabbits; trappers had catches of 100 pairs a night.

Bill Nosworthy and his son Bill

G C Bishop

The onset of myxomatosis in 1959 reduced rabbit numbers to the lowest level in 80 years'.

The once dense sheoak woodland had virtually disappeared leaving stark open limestone plains covered by native grasses. Bill and Maureen were keen to restore some of this country and felt that the Heritage Agreement Scheme might support their revegetation plan.

The Native Vegetation Authority supported what they proposed to do but considered that it was outside of the intent of the scheme. Not to be deterred, the Nosworthys excluded sheep from a 1200 hectare paddock for five years.

'It was an expensive exercise', says Bill. 'We had to reduce our stock numbers to do it, but it worked. We thought we might get a few sheoaks back but after a couple of years there were literally thousands of them. As it has turned out, our timing was good as all of the old trees have now died. To maintain the tree and shrub cover, we really need to repeat this process every twenty-five to thirty years'.

The Nosworthys' conservation work was recognised by an Ibis Award in 1990.

The following year they applied for a Heritage Agreement over 980 hectares of mallee scrub. Some of this block could have been cleared for cropping but they decided to apply for a Heritage Agreement under the clearance controls. They also received assistance to renew some of the fences.

G C Bishop

Maureen and Bill Nosworthy

As Bill wryly commented, 'The 110 year old fencing was in pretty poor condition by then and probably did need replacing!'

Since then, the Nosworthys have purchased an additional 770 hectares of heritage bushland when they bought Bill Sivior's property. The two blocks are linked together by other heritage areas on neighbouring properties.

One of the highlights of their bush is the presence of Malleefowl. Foxes and rabbits are no longer a significant issue on *Lake Hamilton* and Bill considers that as 'the Malleefowl have not been wiped out before now, they will survive into the future'.

G C Bishop

Prolific sheoak regeneration on the eastern side of Lake Hamilton

G C Bishop

Andy and Kate Gilfillan with their elder daughter, Matilda.

Andy and Kate Gilfillan, *Creek Bay*, Antechamber Bay

Heritage Agreement 100

The Gilfillan family's Heritage Area covers 51 hectares of bushland near Antechamber Bay. It is one of the few remaining large blocks on the north coast of Dudley Peninsula.

Andy Gilfillan's grandfather purchased *Creek Bay* fifty years ago. Although the property dates from the 1840s, most of it was not cleared, until the 1930s and 40s when, in Andy's view, it was over-cleared. Paddocks were drawn up on a grid pattern with no regard to soil types. Sand dunes were cleared and have blown badly.

Andy joined his parents, Ian and Shylie, on the farm in 1982 after a stint on pastoral properties in Western Australia. Following a property management course, the Gilfillans are progressively refencing the property according to soil types. Bushland areas are also being fenced off.

'My parents applied for a Heritage Agreement back in 1983 as they were keen to see the area protected', said Andy.

'The area has sheoak on the ridges, numerous creeklines and areas of tall, dense KI mallee.

'The fencing grant was an added incentive. The block was nearly all unfenced and had sheep tracking through it. The benefit of excluding stock from bushland was not generally recognised at that time.

'The condition of the vegetation has improved greatly since the sheep were removed'.

Initially the Gilfillans were paid $5000 for fencing. As Andy relates: 'We put the money into materials and fenced as much as we could. There was no real interest in the outcome until a few years ago when the Department decided that the fencing needed replacing. The whole area is now fenced with a good fence. The contractor found some of the country pretty testing, especially the rocky areas and where creeklines had to be crossed. Some of the post-holes had to be blasted'.

Andy and Kate consider their bush a great asset. 'An area of this size has to be an investment in avoiding salinity and it forms a great windbreak for the rest of the property', said Andy.

'It also has tourism potential, combining a bush experience and great coastal views with a farm stay'.

View toward Antechamber Bay

Craig Whisson/DEH

Robert and Kay Hagerstrom, *Kiroka*, Flour Cask Bay

Heritage Agreement 271

Former Department of Agriculture agronomist Bob Hagerstrom saw some big changes in bushland management during his career with the department. Bob and Kay Hagerstrom farm south of American River and have some 17% of their farm protected under the Heritage Agreement Scheme.

Bob relates that he started with the Department of Agriculture in 1956 and during 1959 he was surveying blocks of bush on the West Coast.

'We weren't looking at the scrub from a nature conservation point of view – we were identifying areas that should not be cleared for soil erosion reasons', said Bob.

G C Bishop

Olearia ciliata var. *squamifolia*

'At this time, large areas were still being cleared for farming land. In less than forty years it has come full circle and farmers are now trying to replace some of the vegetation that was cleared, or protect what remains.

'On-farm conservation has taken on a whole new meaning'.

The Hagerstroms purchased *Kiroka* as 325 hectares of scrub in 1974. They liked the look of the gently undulating landscape, and besides, as Bob says, 'It was what we could afford at the time!'

They developed it as finances allowed, leaving areas of bush as they went. They applied to put some of these blocks under a Heritage Agreement in 1987 and now have eight areas heritage listed.

'The largest block is seventeen hectares and it has some magnificent Kangaroo Island Narrow-leaved Mallee on it – some trees are seven to eight metres tall', said Bob.

G C Bishop

Woolly Riceflower *(Pimelea octophylla)* occurs only on Kangaroo Island

G C Bishop

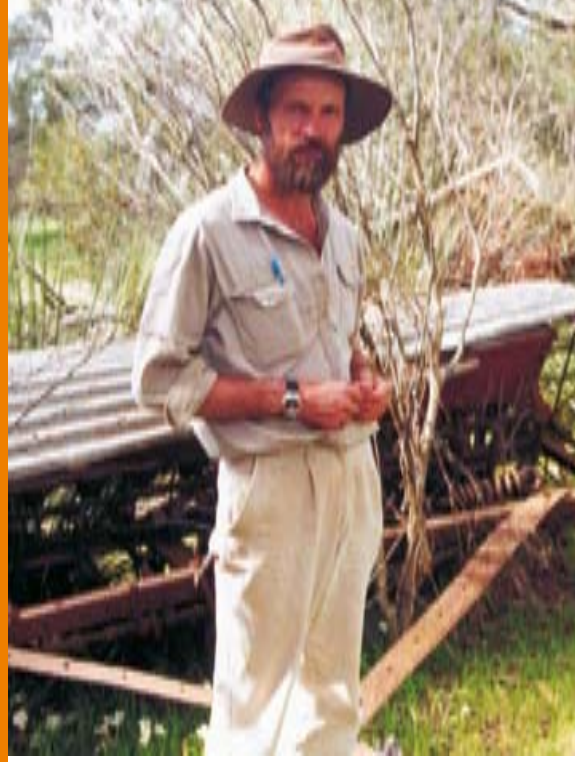
Robert and Kay Hagerstrom

'Another special area has some huge yaccas which must be hundreds of years old'.

The Hagerstroms fenced their bush themselves. Bob wryly observes that it was not an easy task fencing the limestone areas.

They have relatively few management problems in their bush. 'Weeds are not a significant issue. We are vigilant in removing weeds both from our farm and nearby roadsides'.

The Hagerstroms enjoy their bush. Kay observes that as fifteen hectares of bush surrounds their home, they have 'never felt the need to plant a garden - we have a big backyard full of wildflowers and there is always something in flower'.



G C Bishop

David Willson

David and Mandy Willson, *Timber Creek*, McGillivray

Heritage Agreements 235, 906

David and Mandy Willson's property, *Timber Creek*, at McGillivray was bought by David Willson's father in 1969. At the time, the whole property had been roughly cleared – it was covered by yaccas, stumps and the pastures were poor.

What is now their Heritage Area had been chained and left. David says, 'We rechained it and then I decided that it shouldn't be cleared. A few arguments followed but my father could see the point in preserving it. At the time he was concerned about our long-term viability'.

David has always had an interest in protecting Kangaroo Island's bush but still finds it difficult to determine what is practical conservation versus what is not going to be sustainable in the long-term.

'Lots of small remnants and strips along fencelines will not survive', says David.

'From a conservation perspective, it would have been far better to have left the same area of bush in a single block, but that didn't happen.

'The 1950s were still early days for land clearance on KI. Our experience didn't go back very far. The early graziers saw that the trees survived – the understorey didn't but there was lots of scrub around for the wildlife so it really didn't matter.

'Time has shown that it does matter, as many of these remnant trees are now dying', he said.

'It has all changed very quickly and we are losing our natural resources. We are now starting to ask where has it gone?'

The Willsons have two Heritage Agreements, of 169 and 91 hectares respectively. The 169 hectare block is at Haines and was purchased from John Ayliffe, and the other is on the home property. 'Our Heritage Agreements protect something I consider worth preserving. They give a guarantee of survival. The areas are fenced off and protected'.

As with many farmers, David says that finding the time and funds to do non-essential tasks is becoming harder. His involvement with the Timber Creek Landcare Group has been important in highlighting the importance of protecting local watercourses and bushland remnants.

'Assistance with fencing costs has certainly made some of these tasks possible', said David.

Protecting the habitat values of their bush is a prime concern to the Willsons. David has concerns about the potential impact of a devastating fire and the damage being done by large numbers of kangaroos.

'We can't just lock up an area and do nothing. It needs to be managed. We have eliminated the original fire pattern and if we don't burn sections from time to time, we could lose the lot further down the track'.

Kangaroo numbers are also an issue. 'We now have more kangaroos concentrated on less area of scrub with the result that some blocks look as if a mob of camels have been through them. Continued impact of this sort is not good'.

David suspects that there is still much more that we don't know about managing our bush than we have learnt to date.

In-the-bush field days have been an important part of the Bushcare Program. Biologist Neville Forde and students from Parndana Area School

G C Bishop

Lachlan and Margo Treloar, *Trefold*, Minlaton

Heritage Agreement 824

Jocelyn Thomas

Lachlan and Margo Treloar

P J Green/DEH

Kent and Lachlan Treloar with Ibis Award judge Ross Ford, Commonwealth Development Bank

Locky and Margo Treloar run a mixed farming enterprise near Minlaton on Yorke Peninsula. They have built up the family farm that was handed down to them.

'It is a good use of the scrub,' says Lachlan Treloar of his two Heritage Agreement blocks. 'With TV and other electronic distractions, all the great things we saw as kids won't be seen by the kids of today. We used to spend a lot of time in the scrub, and even if we were just mucking about, we still observed things around us.

'Conserving these two areas of bush means that some things, such as eagles' nests and native flowers, will still be there waiting to be seen'.

Block 1 (known as The Scrub) contains broombush and *Eucalyptus porosa*. It is only now being completely fenced, the cost covered by Heritage Agreement grant money. 'Boxthorn and Bridal Creeper is progressively being controlled with the help of a Heritage Agreement grant', said Locky. 'I think it would happen faster if Bridal Creeper rust could be obtained. Time is always a problem for us'.

Block 2, which the Treloars refer to as 'Out the Back', is a regenerating sand over clay dune swale and a swamp. The bush was chained in 1961 but did not produce a good cropping proposition because of rising salinity, a feature in many areas of Yorke Peninsula. The area was left and the bush grew up again. High land prices in the mid-1970s caused the Treloars to reconsider their earlier decision. It was rolled but they again left it to regrow. Today the block is a good example of broombush and mallee eucalypts with tea-tree around the swamp. The bush is very slowly encroaching on cropped areas and is still recording new species.

There are not many Heritage Agreements on central and northern Yorke Peninsula. Locky's brother, Kent, has a sheoak woodland conserved on his property. These are important areas. Kent has recorded 140 bird species on the Treloar properties and a recent botanical survey of Locky and Margo's two blocks increased the rare plant list to twenty taxa that are rated as rare for Yorke Peninsula and one species that is rare on a state basis. 'Exceptionally high conservation value' was the summary from the botanist.

Lachlan has been active in promoting sound land management practices over the years. He served on the Yorke Peninsula Soil Conservation Board for 15 years, and he and Kent entered the Ibis Awards a number of times and were regional award winners in 1990. Locky went on to be a regional judge for the awards which he found 'a valuable experience'.

The heritage scrub provides a place to go walking, picnic spots for the family and friends, and gives the Treloars a chance to see strange and new sights which nature will always provide.

Locky's observation on their bushland is simply, 'I think it is worthwhile to conserve it. You need to do what you believe in, regardless of what the rest of the world does'.

Jocelyn Thomas

Jocelyn Thomas

Ben and Carissa Jeanneret

Ben and Carissa Jeanneret, Jeanneret Wines, Sevenhill

Heritage Agreement 111

Half of the Jeanneret family's thirty hectare property at Sevenhill was under Heritage Agreement when they purchased it in 1986. This could be considered a second generation Heritage Agreement. In fact, one might say that it is a third generation as Pat Jeanneret's son, Ben, and his partner Carissa, have built up the Jeanneret Wines business on the property.

Situated south-east of Clare in the Skilly Hills, it is an important conservation area in a region of few Heritage Agreements and little remaining bushland. Jeanneret Wines is a just short distance away from the main Clare Valley thoroughfares. The winery is close to the Heritage Agreement area and the garden arboretum, a beautiful setting.

'The property is heavily wooded', says Ben. 'Mum enjoys walking through the block and up through the park every night'.

'The cellar door setting is a big bonus for us, but the kangaroos, birds and trees are a big problem for the vineyard'.

Ben sees a conflict in current kangaroo management because while there is access to culling permits, there is little help in deterring kangaroos by alternative means. He would like to see more community ownership of the conservation value and associated management required for their bushland, particularly by people who understand more than he does.

While the Heritage Agreement brings its problems of access, fencing and property value, Carissa sees the importance of keeping the conservation value in perpetuity.

'We are environmentally aware and would never have cleared or grazed our block and the Heritage Agreement makes sure the next owners and those after them will do the same,' said Carissa.

Three acres of the rare Brown Stringybark woodland *(Eucalyptus macorryncha)* were included in the Heritage Agreement a few years ago.

The heritage block is blue gum grassy woodland, and almost adjoins Spring Gully Conservation Park. The understorey has a diversity of grasses, daviesias, wattles, orchids and sundews in it, to name but a few of the plants found here. A member of the Conservation Park's 'friends group' has carried out some weed control in Jeanneret's bushland over the years.

The Jeannerets feel that weeds will become more of an issue as the Clare Hills become more developed, and some of the species in the arboretum that were planted before they bought the property are spreading.

JEANNERET
Clare Valley

District Council of Mallala, Dublin Parklands

Heritage Agreement 687

Jocelyn Thomas

Henri Mueller, Mallala District Council

As a good example of town planning in the style of William Light, the township of Dublin has terraces around the neatly set out town blocks and parklands beyond these to the north and west. The Dublin Parklands has survived many years of settlement and still has a reasonably intact understorey.

'I believe it to be one of the best examples of Adelaide Plains understorey', Henri Mueller, District Planner of the District Council of Mallala, is very ready to tell you.

'This area has been protected since 1992 and is part of the remnant native vegetation in our Council area which we intend to preserve and extend. We also have 8000 hectares of coastal samphire. This is a significant area which is very important to the gulf'.

The Dublin Parklands, which is twenty-one hectares in extent, is reasonably well fenced and is managed by the Mallala Greening Committee and the Dublin Community Club. 'These two bodies haven't yet found a common goal', said Henri, 'but a recently completed management plan may go some way to developing this'.

The parklands consist of scattered eucalypts - *Eucalyptus dumosa, E. phenax, E. socialis* and *E. oleosa* - with Nitre Bush and Geijera (or Sheep Bush) (*Geijera linearifolia*) dominating the shrub layer over a rich diversity of grass, orchid and bulb species. A total of sixty four native species have been recorded from the area. One species has a national conservation rating and five species are regarded as rare at state or local level.

Many people drive straight past Dublin when travelling north on Port Wakefield Road but the Council hopes to change this. Council and the Dublin community are developing an urban design for the entrances to Dublin and an interpretive centre at one edge of the parklands to enhance people's appreciation of the values of the countryside, the samphire and mangroves and the attractions of the area's beaches.

'This whole area has been labelled as 'degraded', unfairly. It is a label that is hard to shake and we will have to do a lot of work to change this. We want to improve our image and get a better attitude from the Adelaide community', said Henri.

Graham Carpenter/DEH

Eucalyptus gracilis - E. socialis open scrub with intact understorey

Issues in the Heritage Agreement parklands mostly revolve around access. The area outside of the parklands was released for sale recently and sold very quickly. However, the blocks do not have a water supply and landowners have, so far, solved this problem by laying a poly-pipe from the town's water supply. As this threatens the integrity of the parklands, action is being taken to have the water main extended.

Bikes are another problem in the parklands and a developed bike track is a source of weed invasion. Problem weeds include Bridal Creeper, Calomba Daisy and African Boxthorn. Many of the weed species occur only in distinct patches and this should aid in their control.

A paradoxical issue is that the external 'terraces' of the town have not been maintained and are a wealth of biodiversity. Henri says that with the increasing town population, council is faced with the dilemma of whether the terraces should be developed and the native vegetation sacrificed, or can they find another solution? 'Hand-in-hand with this is the question of developing the community's ownership and understanding of the precious resource they have in their backyard and how they treat their 'backfence' '.

G C Bishop

Andrew and Margaret Black

Andrew and Margaret Black, *Muntiri*, Milang

Heritage Agreement 347

Having a bushland block has its rewards but as Andrew and Margie Black have discovered, to manage it effectively requires commitment.

The Blacks have had a long association with nature conservation. Dr Andrew Black is a highly respected ornithologist and was a member of the Native Vegetation Authority (later Council) from 1985 to 2001.

'Andrew's interest in habitat conservation grew from his involvement with the SAOA [South Australian Ornithological Association]. We felt we should do something about conservation from a practical point of view, not that we originally saw ourselves as property owners', explained Margie.

The importance of off-park conservation was becoming apparent in the early 1980s. 'There wasn't going to be any increase in funding for the purchase or management of National Parks', said Andrew. 'And, as one departmental head put it, conservation would depend upon the preservation of bushland areas throughout the landscape, not just in the parks system'.

'We talked about buying some land but big areas on Fleurieu Peninsula were too expensive and the Murray Mallee was too far away for my professional commitments', said Andrew. 'As it turned out, we ended up with a place in between'.

'In July 1988 John Eckert [of Langhorne Creek] 'phoned to say that Yelland's Scrub (now *Muntiri*) was for sale and did we know anyone who would look after it? We went and had a look. As we were walking around the property, an owlet nightjar flew out in front of us and I'd made my decision!'

The Black family bought the property and a Heritage Agreement was placed over 76 hectares of bushland in 1990. The vegetation at *Muntiri* is quite varied. It lies between two regions, the Murray Mallee and the Mount Lofty Ranges, and elements of both are to be seen here. Parts of it are mallee and broombush but, there are also areas of open woodland with sheoak or native pine. Pink Gums - some are huge specimens - are scattered across the whole property. Twelve bird and sixty four plant species of conservation significance have been recorded.

'When we first looked at it I observed that there was very little Bridal Creeper to be seen', said Margie. 'It was summer, of course, and we were pretty naive at the time – next season virtually every tree had Bridal Creeper under it, often carpeting the ground. There were also scattered olives, boxthorns, various grassy weeds – and rabbits - to be dealt with'.

'We have put in a huge amount of time over the past decade to retain its values. Managing a property is a lot of work and it's not something that you can easily ask others to help you! We no longer get the time to visit as many other areas as we used to', said Margie.

'We have learnt lots over the years but, you constantly need to question whether you are doing the right thing and try not to make assumptions'.

'Bridal Creeper remains our most serious pest plant, but the infestation is now far less threatening', she said, 'and rabbit numbers have been greatly reduced by the use of warren fumigation and destruction. It has been through continual effort that we have achieved this'.

Natural regeneration is also occurring over the whole property, including some of the degraded margins.

'When we first looked over the place, there were only a few old pines and sheoaks remaining and no young ones. Lots of localised regeneration of pink gums and mallees – *Eucalyptus socialis* and *E. odorata* – pines, sheoaks and hop-bushes occurred after the good rains of 1992, and native grasses also took off. There are now young seedlings all over the property and the muntries are slowly recolonising exposed parts of the sandhills', said Andrew. 'It's a real pleasure to see this happening'.

Banksia ornata

Jocelyn Thomas

A.H., L.C. and B.J. Lush, *Mount Scrub*, Waitpinga

Heritage Agreements 121, 122, 125, 126, 616, 894

G C Bishop

Brenton, Laurie and Adrian Lush

Adrian and Laurie Lush spent thirty years of their lives clearing scrub and then another thirty years planting trees and caring for their remnant bushland.

The Lush brothers are fourth generation farmers and graziers at Inman Valley and have been involved in the Heritage Agreement Scheme since 1982.

Adrian sums up their desire to protect the remnant native vegetation on their land quite simply: 'It's like an old motor vehicle, the longer you look after it, the more valuable it becomes.'

Their grandfather acquired the Mount Scrub property in 1902. It has sweeping views to the Southern Ocean and includes the dramatic, rocky gorge of Coolawang Creek. Patches of bush were left when the land was being cleared over forty years ago and most of the larger areas are now protected by Heritage Agreements.

'The scheme has been a very worthwhile enterprise and we are pleased that we got involved', said Adrian.

'We have kept adding new areas and have linked up some of the blocks', said Laurie. 'Each addition is going to be the last, until the next one comes along!'

They feel that the scheme has prompted landowners to do something for nature conservation which they may not have otherwise done.

'This scheme and programs like Landcare and Trees For Life have increased farmers' awareness of the importance of conservation', said Adrian.

'We need to remember that just a generation ago, developing the land to make it productive was seen as a virtue.

'It is a big jump for anyone to go from that line of thinking to protecting the scrub for wildlife conservation'.

They see weeds as the biggest threat to the survival of bushland on southern Fleurieu Peninsula.

'We will preserve the native species if we can keep the weeds out', said Adrian.

'Finding the time to do as much as we would like to do is becoming more of a problem. It takes us most of our time just to run our farm', he said.

'It's difficult to use outside help to do weed spraying. By the time you have shown them what to do, you could have done it yourself.

'One way around this would be for the Department to have an experienced person working in the area to help landowners'.

Adrian's son, Brenton, has been doing an annual weed control program for blackberry and Bridal Creeper.

'We virtually have the blackberries under control

G C Bishop

G C Bishop

Smooth Riceflower (*Pimelea glauca*)

and there are few large infestations of Bridal Creeper left. It's a continual battle though', said Brenton.

'Weed seeds are continually being brought in by birds and it is impossible to find every plant in thick bushland. I do a different walk through the bush each time in order to pick up plants that were missed previously.

'Doing the work yourself enables you to build up knowledge about weed distribution and, if we don't have a lot of time, we can target key areas', he explained.

Fencing the bush had started before they got involved in the scheme and is now virtually complete.

'Darrell Wickham was very helpful with getting the fencing done', said Adrian. 'We tried unsuccessfully for years to get funding and now, thanks to Natural Heritage Trust support, it has happened.

'The fences will need ongoing maintenance. We have lots of kangaroos here and they can cause quite a lot of damage to the fences. If this happens, the sheep can get in'.

The Lush family enjoys their bush and are knowledgeable about its plant and animal life. As Adrian says, 'It's good to be able to go into our bush and see the way it is progressing. Our lives are busy but we need to make more time to go for a walk or have a family picnic there and enjoy what we have'.

G C Bishop

Bushland conservation is just one part of the Lushs' farming operations.

G C Bishop

Correa eburnea, an endemic Fleurieu Peninsula species.

Leigh and Jan Verrall, *Glenara*, Hermitage

Heritage Agreement 338

G C Bishop

Leigh and Jan Verrall

A wine label promoting a Heritage Area might seem unusual to many wine-buyers, but it fits well with the philosophy of Glenara Wines.

Glenara Vineyards at Hermitage, 6.5 kilometres north-east of Tea Tree Gully, is operated by Leigh and Jan Verrall in association with their sons Ralph and Bill. Ten hectares of their thirty hectare property are planted to wine grapes and most of the balance is natural bushland. The Verrall family have been fully certified organic grape-growers since 1992.

Leigh's grandfather, Perce Verrall, bought the property in 1923, and for many years Leigh worked it in partnership with his father, Ken. According to

G C Bishop

Looking towards Verrall's Heritage Agreement area across their vineyards in 1983

Leigh, they grew a 'fruit salad' selection of stone and pome fruits, but after the devastating fires of Black Sunday (January 1955) they turned in part to cash crops such as strawberries, tomatoes and cucumbers to survive this major setback.

'Our first vines were planted in 1971,' recalls Leigh, 'initially to prove the area and to see if we were mad or not!'

'We were told you couldn't grow grapes in the hills, but on present trends in the Adelaide Hills, I would say our conviction was right'.

'We were also told we were mad putting our bush under a Heritage Agreement, but you get used to this'.

'The bushland had been in our family a long time and we appreciated it for what it is. The Heritage Agreement program was an opportunity to formalise it so that if the property were ever to change hands, the bush would be protected for all time'.

The Verrall's property was known locally as *Curlew Farm*, so it is not surprising that they use the Eastern (or Bush) Curlew as their company logo. Prior to Black Sunday, the haunting sound of the curlews was commonly heard; they lived in the bush and came into the orchard to feed at night.

Leigh and Jan Verrall have adopted the Eastern (or Bush) Curlew as their logo for their Glenara wines. Their property at Hermitage once was commonly known as *Curlew Farm*.

Leigh and Jan applied for a Heritage Agreement in 1983 over eleven hectares of Pink Gum and Long-leaved Box woodland. It took quite a few years to finalise but, as Leigh observes, 'If you gave up, you wouldn't be a primary producer, would you?'

In addition to the main block of bush, there are smaller areas of bushland surrounding the vineyard which nestles in a picturesque valley. These areas have not been grazed at all in Leigh's lifetime and the understorey is in excellent condition.

Jan said that the Heritage Area had woody weeds scattered throughout it, but they have an annual program to control feral olives and South African Daisy. They have also had enthusiastic teams of Bush For Life workers in to cut and poison Cape Broom and briars.

Their knowledge of local plants has grown over the years and a bird list has recently been prepared. 'Botanist Rosemary Taplin has revised our plant list and the total is now 104 species of which eight are either rare or uncommon', said Leigh.

'We were concerned about the occurrence of Cape tulip on the property but it appears that the Bush Rats like the bulbs and are doing a good job on them. We've also found that they like our carrots!'

The Verralls are members of the Wildlife & Habitat Support Group. 'This has been really good and if we had more time we would go on more of the field trips', Leigh said. 'It's great to see good flora and fauna from other areas, and to see what others are doing to look after their bush'.

G C Bishop

Leigh Verrall: 'The bushland had been in our family a long time and we appreciated it for what it is. The Heritage Agreement program was an opportunity to formalise it so that if the property were ever to change hands, the bush would be protected for all time.'

Richard and Gwen Willing, *Minnawarra*, Myponga

Heritage Agreement 1049

After a busy career as a gasteroenterologist, Dr Richard Willing and his wife Gwen weren't happy with the idea of life in suburban Adelaide, so they packed their bags and moved to their 385 ha grazing property at Hindmarsh Tiers, near Myponga.

The Willings bought *Minnawarra* in 1976 and applied for a Heritage Agreement over 117 ha of bushland in 1981. The protected area includes beautiful wooded gullies and watercourses. Some 175 native plant species have been recorded from the area and of these, 56 have conservation significance at State level.

The Willings firmly believe that the maintenance of biodiversity is critical for the sustainable use of land for farming. 'I believe that maintaining biological diversity is the key to keeping our agricultural systems working', said Dr Willing.

'And to do this, we need to protect the operating basis of the bush or else we will lose the wildlife – both plants and animals – that it supports.'

Their Heritage Area comprises two separate blocks, one of which adjoins a national park. They are in the process of linking the other block to the park via a revegetation corridor. 'This project has been quite a challenge', said Gwen. 'It has involved double fencing the 550 metre strip, controlling the weeds and collecting lots of seed for the direct seeding.'

The Willings derive a lot of pleasure from their bush. They have regular teams of enthusiastic friends who come to do bird, animal and plant monitoring, and are about to do an invertebrate survey of the area. Local and overseas school groups also visit for a weekend in the bush. 'Teams of people descend on us for these scheduled surveys. We always have a great time, even if we don't get all the work done because of the weather', said Richard.

The bushland has been fully fenced over the past few years. They still laugh about this. The call for expressions of interest brought some contractors from the South East. 'They took one look at the country and disappeared!', recalls Richard.

G C Bishop

Richard and Gwen Willing

Apart from protecting the bush, the fencing is an enormous benefit for livestock management. 'Getting stock out of the bush was always difficult. On the down side, if that's the right word, we have noticed that some of the weeds along the creeks are no longer being kept in check', said Richard.

'We have increased our blackberry control program and now have them largely under control.

'It is amazing how much natural regeneration has occurred in a relatively short time. One of the last areas to be fenced was a swamp and it will be fascinating to see how this changes over the next few years.'

And what of the scheme itself? The Willings and their family consider the most important part of being involved is the knowledge that this area will survive into the future as native vegetation.

G C Bishop

G C Bishop

Right: *Eucalyptus obliqua* (stringybark) open forest occurs on the valley floors and east-facing slopes with an understorey of medium and small shrub and herb species.

Far right: Coral Fern (*Gleichenia microphylla*)

G C Bishop

Doug Day

Doug and Kay Day, *Meranwyney*, Lameroo

Heritage Agreement 572

It might not have been obvious at first but operating a host farm was a good way of getting to know the local flora.

When Doug and Kay Day of *Meranwyney*, near Lameroo, started a host farm operation in 1989, they knew where to find most types of native plants in their bush, but only knew a few by name.

The Days had paying visitors staying with them and getting involved in daily farm life. As part of the experience they took visitors on guided bush walks and this got Doug and Kay even more interested in the native plants and heritage sites on their farm.

When Doug's father bought this farm in 1958 only fifty acres of it had been cleared. Doug share-farmed his father's property until about 1970 while they were developing *Meranwyney*. The Days were still clearing bushland when the vegetation clearance controls were introduced.

Doug recalls that they put in a clearance application to find out how much scrub they would be allowed to clear.

'The property was assessed', said Doug, 'and we ended up putting about 500 acres [210 hectares] of bush under a Heritage Agreement.

'Some of the land was regrowth, but there were also areas that we would never have cleared. These included Blackfellows Hill, which is thought to be of significance to the local Aboriginal people.

'There are lots of shards on this sandhill and there is a soak at its base'.

Starting a host farm proved to be a worthwhile experience for Doug and Kay.

D W Day

Magpie-lark *(Grallina cyanoleuca)*

'We met lots of interesting people – both those who came to stay and other members of the Host Farms Association', said Doug.

'We started guided walks as we weren't keen on people just wandering around our bush, often not knowing what they were looking at. Visitors

Doug Day: 'You need to take time to walk around in the mallee and observe - there is lots there of interest once you start looking.'

D W Day

have commented that they found it much more interesting this way'.

Doug thoroughly enjoys the mallee. With a grin he observes that 'many people find the mallee boring and drive through it as quickly as they can'.

'You need to take time to walk around in it and observe. There's lots there of interest once you start looking', he said.

'We found [the book] *The Mallee in Flower* very useful in getting to know our plants, and we even found some that are not in it.'

The Days property is also listed as a sanctuary under the Wildlife & Habitat Support Group program run by National Parks and Wildlife South Australia.

'We were keen to have the place made a sanctuary to protect the Wedge-tailed Eagles that nest there. This has been a good program and Robin Storr has been a great co-ordinator'.

Managing their Heritage Area has presented relatively few problems. Fencing it to exclude stock was an important first step. Management includes controlling Bridal Creeper and Salvation Jane and removing feral bees.

The Days have been attempting to eradicate feral honey bees from tree hollows

D W Day

D W Day

Blackfellows Hill

'As we farm organically, we don't use herbicides, so we hand-weed trying to disturb the soil as little as is possible', said Doug.

'Feral bees are a real menace in the bush as they occupy tree hollows to the exclusion of native species.

'We don't really have a lot of remnant bush remaining and, I think, what is left is pretty precious'.

G C Bishop

John Eckert

John Eckert, *Nappyalla*, Langhorne Creek

Heritage Agreements 171, 1178

Farmer, naturalist, writer and enthusiast are terms that describe John Eckert of Langhorne Creek. He began observing the local wildlife as a young boy and although birds are his passion, he also has a good knowgledge of local plants, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Over the years John has protected and managed bushland on his own farms and on public land, written about local wildlife and enthused others to become interested in conservation.

John and his late wife, Shirley, moved to the Langhorne Creek farm in 1954 and within a few years they had fenced off the only remaining bush on the property. John relates:

'It was about twelve acres of old native pines that had been grazed for a long time. Within a few years, sheoaks were starting to regenerate and other native species started to appear.

'We later fenced off a thirty acre sandhill on land bought from a neighbour, mind you, we didn't really have the money to do it, but it was a case of now or never, before the sheep got back into it.

'There are lots of benefits of removing stock and fencing areas off. We originally found three orchids species on the sandhill: now we have recorded twenty.

'A disadvantage is that veldt grass has gone mad and will continue to affect the quality of the area'.

By the late-1970s, John felt that there needed some means available to legally protect private bushland. 'I went to see David Wotton [the Minister for the Environment] and Colin Harris and was told that a Heritage Agreement Scheme was being investigated.

'We applied for agreements over the remnant bush on our farm – our son Rick now owns one of these blocks - and on the original property near Belvidere. The areas were small but were accepted for inclusion in the scheme.

'I think the presence of nesting Whistling Kites and a rare acacia [*Acacia dodonaeifolia*] helped our case', said John. Subsequently a new species of greenhood has been found on the Belvidere land.

The Eckerts also took out a Heritage Agreement over 316 hectares on their property at Malinong, near Yumali. John bought this block as it had Malleefowl on it.

'I thought that by leaving this big block of bush and some smaller areas, the Malleefowl would survive. There were nine active mounds in 1976 but now there are only three breeding pairs left. 'I had overlooked the fact that land around us was being cleared and this was forcing more birds into what bush remained uncleared. The dry season of 1982 caused the population to crash and it has never recovered'.

John has bird lists compiled from observations made over four decades and names many species that either no longer occur in the district or their numbers are now much reduced. 'I don't think it is just the loss of bush that has caused this', he observes. 'Some areas are big enough to support viable populations so there must be something missing in the 'management' of the area. The lack of periodic fires or high kangaroo numbers, for instance, may be resulting in the loss of a critical food species'.

John was pleased that the Government eventually introduced financial assistance for landowners to conserve native vegetation. 'The early agreements only attracted those people who would have done it anyway. We were bearing the cost of conservation for the community. The financial assistance meant that the whole community and not just the farmers were contributing to nature conservation'.

'Assistance with fencing costs has been invaluable but rate relief is a bit misleading in rural areas like this where the bush has been valued at virtually nothing!'

The farmer and naturalist has now turned author. John contributed three chapters to the Strathalbyn Naturalists Club publication *Natural History of Strathalbyn and Goolwa Districts*. 'It's a good record but it's a pity it wasn't started 100 years ago! It should be seen as a foundation to build on into the future'.

J.L. & M.J. Evans, *Spearlands*, Mantung

Heritage Agreement 7

G C Bishop

(left to right) Les, Mick, Betty and John Evans

The foresight of John and Les Evans to conserve large areas of mallee vegetation on their farm was outstanding. This is how John's son Mick views the brothers' desire to protect natural habitat in the Mantung district.

The Evans family have been farming in the Murray Mallee for ninety-five years. John and Les Evans' grandfather took up land at Mercunda in 1907-8. Their father, Tom, a returned serviceman, leased a 3500 acre block at Mantung in 1925 – the family still refer to this as 'The Old Place'.

Additional land was taken up in 1934 and during World War II. 'These were tough times', said John. 'The Depression and a run of dry years; lots of people lost their properties. The stock firms, like Goldsborough Mort, continued to finance farmers – the banks just foreclosed on them'.

Initially, land was cleared for cropping. 'The father got his first sheep in 1934. The old fences weren't good enough for sheep and we couldn't afford to refence the land', said John.

'Clearing scrub using rollers was hard work, so you only cleared the best areas for cropping.' The picture began to change when large crawler tractors dragging chains started to be used to clear the bush.

'You could clear scrub just like that!', said Les. 'Lots of blocks were taken up and cleared for grazing. The leases required you to clear a certain amount each year and the banks were making easy money available for land development. Large areas were chained and just left'.

Experience showed the brothers that first growth mallee was the easiest to clear as there was little follow-up needed to kill shoots. However, they began to reappraise what they were doing.

'The first growth had lots of birds in it and was especially important for nesting hollows for parrots', said Les. 'These big trees were probably hundreds of years old and could not be replaced. We decided it was wrong to clear first growth and took to clearing the regrowth – the hard stuff!'

They were also concerned that clearing was forcing the Malleefowl out of the area.

In the late-1960s they met a young geographer, Colin Harris, and discussed their thoughts with him. Within a few years Colin was in charge of the new Heritage Agreement Scheme and the Evans became one of the scheme's earliest supporters.

'Putting 1300 hectares under Heritage Agreement rather than clearing it met with a fair bit of local comment. We were fairly unpopular and, I think, we were regarded as fools or misfits!', John quietly quipped.

'Compensation money got more people involved in the scheme and the Mantung–Maggea project has changed local attitudes. 'The group was started through Stephanie Williams and Joe Stelmann from National Parks. Mick [Evans] was the first chairman of the group'.

The Mantung–Maggea Land Management Group has successfully conducted a coordinated fox and rabbit control program that initially encompassed eleven properties around Mantung. Up to twenty five farms have now been involved in the program.

'It has done wonders for the Malleefowl population', said Les, who has observed and photographed the species for the past twenty-five years.

'Foxes were taking the young birds and they visited mounds on a daily basis. The young birds had little chance of surviving under this sort of pressure. Removing territorial foxes was important in changing this pattern.

'We were the first group permitted to use 1080 for foxes', said Mick, 'and it made a huge difference to the success of our project. Native animals are not affected by it and it doesn't pose the risk that strychnine does for off-target species.

'Warren ripping is important to control rabbits. Calicivirus has been a bonus for us'.

The Evans family are proud of their district and enjoy its varied bushland. John and Les' father was an observant man and they have inherited this attribute.

As John observes: 'We have to view things differently. While there is plenty of wildlife about we tend to turn a blind eye to it. It's only when things start to disappear that we notice. We need to have our consciences pricked much earlier than this'.

G C Bishop

Lynette and Leon Stasinowsky

L.E. & D.N. Stasinowsky, Mantung

Heritage Agreements 353, 579

The Stasinowsky family, Leon, Dennis, Shaun and Lynette, farm 8816 hectares of land at Mantung, Moorook and Wunkar. Leon's grandfather took up the original property, eight kilometres north-east of the small Murray Mallee town of Mantung, in the early 1920s. They have 1990 ha of bushland reserved under Heritage Agreements.

The family are active in both local and regional organisations and Leon is currently chairman of the Loxton–Waikerie Animal and Plant Control Board and the Murraylands Consultative Committee of National Parks and Wildlife South Australia.

'When I left school in the early 1960s, there was still lots of scrub in this area and the Government was offering farmers low interest loans to clear vegetation. We were still clearing scrub and cutting wood when the clearance controls were introduced in 1983. We were leaving 15 to 20 percent for shelter and windbreaks', said Leon.

'Lots of people applied to clear scrub. The controls resulted in a frenzy of activity and there was a lot of ill-feeling in this area. Many farmers had a lot of uncleared land and relied on wood-cutting and mallee stumps for part of their income. While we recognised the benefits of conserving scrub, it should not be at our cost.

'Payment of compensation was eventually agreed to by the Government and the next big step was to get people to manage the bush – fence it, and control foxes and rabbits'.

The Stasinowsky's clearance application was assessed and they put two areas of bushland under Heritage Agreement in 1990 and 1991.

Practical management in this part of the Mallee commenced with the formation of the Mantung–Maggea Land Management Group which has been one of the longest lasting and most successful Landcare groups in South Australia. Up to twenty-five landowners have been involved and it has had a significant impact in managing a large area of bushland for the conservation of Mallefowl.

Leon recalls: 'There was some initial apprehension about the group but once the results of the combined rabbit and fox control program became apparent more people wanted to get involved. Foxes were having a significant impact on Malleefowl populations and were also taking lambs.

'The use of 1080 has been a key factor in the success of the program', said Leon. 'The group got a permit to use 1080 which had not been used on foxes before in South Australia. We did a three-year trial under the guidance of Stephanie Williams and Rick Barratt [NPWSA].

'It proved to be effective and had added benefits – it did not stay around like strychnine and most native species are tolerant to 1080'.

Leon says that since the start of the program, there has been a marked increase in active nests and young birds in good seasons.

The success of the program has been due to the broad community involvement. 'We involved National Parks and the Animal and Plant Control Board from the outset. Bakara Conservation Park is part of the project area. We worked as a team for a better environment all round – for Parks managing the flora and fauna and for the farmers making a living from the land.

'Possibly the hardest thing has been the changes in agency staff. We have to start over again and train new people as to what we are doing! Some farmers in the area were anti but are now doing things on their land, and that's great', he said.

'It is important for the people involved to own the project and not have others simply come in and tell them what they should do. The group works together and that's important – otherwise, you talk longer, it costs more and less is achieved'.

'While we recognised the benefits of conserving scrub, it should not be at our cost'.

Michael and Joan Gaden, *Graythwaite*, Lowan Vale

Heritage Agreement 953

G C Bishop

Michael and Joan Gaden

In 1978 Michael and Joan Gaden bought a 1700 hectare property adjacent to their home farm with the intention of developing it over time in association with their two sons. However, these plans did not eventuate as originally intended.

'Of the 4200 acres [1700 hectares], 2400 acres [970 hectares] were cleared, fenced and under pasture', said Mike. 'The remainder was native vegetation'.

'We hadn't started any clearing when the clearance controls were introduced in 1983; we were concentrating on developing the infrastructure of the property.

'We made an application to clear. It was assessed and the Department's report recommended total refusal. They found various rare or endangered species on our land, including *Eucalyptus behriana*.

'We thought the refusal was pretty tough, to say the least! Sure the eucalypt is rare but I knew of more occurrences than just on our place and the birds they listed had never been recorded this far north, so I disputed their claims with the help of a local ornithologist and a botanist'.

The Gadens brought in a conciliator, David Tynan, and a revised application was put to the Native Vegetation Authority (NVA). 'The NVA members came here and were shown over the area. The outcome was that consent was granted for us to clear 500 acres, except for some small areas where *Eucalyptus behriana* occurs, and we would put a 1250 acre block under a Heritage Agreement'.

The next hurdle was to reach a reasonable valuation for financial assistance. 'The first offer was ridiculously low and I refused to accept it. The third offer was pretty near reasonable and the NVA agreed to erect vermin-proof fencing around the block', said Mike.

'We had to go twenty kilometres away to buy additional land which meant doubling up on infrastructure. But, the compensation did give us enough to put one son on his own farm'.

Mike went on to serve on the Native Vegetation Council for ten years from 1991, either as a member or a deputy. During this time he was involved in assessing many clearance applications and became more aware of the need to manage bushland areas.

He was aware that their Heritage Area had not been burnt since 1955 and many species were senescing and the biodiversity value of the block was decreasing. Burning sections over a period of years seemed like an essential thing to do.

Mike is a great believer in experimenting to gain knowledge. 'The argument that we don't have enough information to do such and such, in my instance for example, burn part of the block, is not getting us anywhere. We need to take a risk and experiment otherwise we never will have the information to enable us to manage native vegetation'.

A fire management plan was prepared for the property and a prescribed burn of a fifth of the block occurred in April 1999. 'The regrowth has been fantastic and previously unknown or scarce species have been recorded. Two enthusiastic local botanists, John Samuel-White and Kath Alcock, have been recording species for us', he said.

'A second section will be burnt this autumn and I hope we can organise photopoints to record before and after information. My observations suggest that species like banksia probably require a fire every ten to twenty years to encourage regeneration. You can overburn though; you can see changes in the vegetation in parts of Ngarkat Conservation Park due to too frequent bushfires'.

And where does he think bushland management is headed in the future?

'The Heritage Agreement Grants are helping landowners to do management work but it is getting harder for farmers to match the grants and more of the funds need to go into on-ground action rather than reports on what we might or should do. I'm not knocking the grants, we just need more resources going into practical work'.

He also feels that there needs to be more attention paid to what landowners know about the bush.

'Just because we are farmers doesn't mean we don't know anything. A field day was held here eighteen months ago for Heritage Agreement owners and events like that are a great opportunity to demonstrate management practices, whether it is weed control, rabbit, kangaroo or emu control, or prescribed burning. We all learn by example'.

G C Bishop

Verne and Jean McLaren

Verne and Jean McLaren, *V. McLaren Reserve*, Blackford

Heritage Agreement 253

In 1952 a young man in his early twenties was busy clearing bushland little knowing that within a few years he would become one of Australia's best-known conservationists. Verne McLaren AM, grazier, author and conservationist, has long held to the belief that farming and wildlife conservation can, and should, co-exist.

In 1945 Verne's father, W.G.W. (Bert) McLaren, left his apple orchard at Lenswood in the Adelaide Hills to take up 6880 hectares of undeveloped bushland at Blackford, near Kingston, in the south-east of South Australia.

Verne commenced developing his 2400 hectare section of the property in the early 1950s. Of this time he has written: '…I worked long hours on a bulldozer clearing dense bushland [and] at the end of each long day, I looked over the cleared land with a sense of achievement and with an eagerness to start next morning at daybreak. Each portion cleared in turn was sown to pasture and the results were exciting. Lush pastures produced top quality sheep and cattle. … After a period it was as though nature intervened, and I became more and more concerned for the welfare of native fauna in the area being cleared, and was conscious also of the total destruction of native flora'.

Working alone on a bulldozer in the bush, Verne had seen Common Brushtail Possums and Small Sugar Gliders jump terrified from falling trees and hollow trees that had housed nesting birds for decades pushed down and crushed into enormous heaps.

'Land clearance was termed "development" and outwardly it certainly was. Many land developers cleared large areas leaving no refuge for wildlife. At least I had a large area of bushland directly adjoining the cleared land, and that, to some extent, eased my mind', said Verne.

'The Government was giving people incentives to clear land and at the rate it was occurring in the early '50s, there would soon be little left. This was when Jean and I decided to set aside some of our bush – 1007 acres [408 hectares] were reserved.

'Some of our neighbours said it was too good to leave, but we felt it was too good to clear.

'I can't criticise others for clearing bushland when I have done the same, but I feel it is tragic that more people have not set areas of bushland aside. It can be likened to a carpenter who shaves off too much wood – it cannot be replaced', he said.

'In the 1950s the word "conservation" was scarcely known and to talk of saving 'useless scrub' one had to be out of one's mind! In 1966 Verne was appointed a founding commissioner with the National Parks Commission and in this capacity was always on the look out for suitable land to be purchased for parks'.

Verne also witnessed the drainage of many south-east swamps and the loss of local Aboriginal heritage. 'Countless Aboriginal camp sites have been ploughed under and many burial grounds are now covered with pasture. I'm pleased to say that some stone implements remain on our reserve.

'Had I cleared all my land, I would have been financially wealthier but poorer in mind with the knowledge that I destroyed all the natural habitat and everything that belonged to it'.

Over the years Verne become very involved with conservation, both in Australia and overseas including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Wilderness Congress but, as he says, 'One of my greatest pleasures is to wander with my family and friends through our wilderness reserve observing nature at its best – the wildflowers in season, the chatter of countless birds, and the trusting Malleefowl working its massive nesting mound while we sit in full view on the edge of the mound. There is serenity in natural bushland which does not exist elsewhere. It is a place of education for everyone.

'When we sold the farm we kept the Heritage Area', said Jean. 'We gave it a formal name but the family refer to it as Verne's Retreat.

'One hundred and thirty bird species have been recorded from our reserve', she said, 'It is dense bush and very valuable natural habitat'.

The concepts of land management that Verne adopted fifty years ago are becoming more and more common. As Verne says, 'Conservation is compatible with farming and grazing. Our bushland is a unique possession to us and it's an asset to conservation'.

Tim and Tanya Milne, Swedes Flat, Mundulla

Heritage Agreement 333

Tanya and Tim Milne

A work trip to the South East resulted in two young biologists buying an eighty hectare block of bushland between Padthaway and Mundulla.

Tim and Tanya Milne both studied and now work in the area of natural resource management. They had thought of buying a block of bushland but found everything in the Mount Lofty Ranges was too expensive.

Tanya was working in the South East and was told about 'a great block of bush' at Swedes Flat that had a Heritage Agreement and had been for sale. The Milnes contacted the Mazzeo family who owned the block and found they were still interested in selling. Tanya spoke with a biologist colleague, Tim Croft, who had carried out the original heritage inspection of the block. Tim was enthusiastic and said that it was a great piece of bush with a variety of vegetation types and very few weeds.

Tanya Milne

Above: Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*)

Below: The fencing was nearly right, thanks to Tanya's parents, Richard and Shirley Littlely!

Tanya Milne

Tanya and Tim bought *The Block* (as they call it) in May 1996. The property has a variety of soil types and landforms with five distinct vegetation types. The eastern part is low-lying blue and red gum woodland which is subject to seasonal flooding, while much of the western part is a sandy rise with low stringybarks on it.

'The vegetation is quite complex but the different vegetation types are very well-defined, relating closely to the landforms', said Tanya.

Both Tanya and Tim have had a life-long interest in the bush. 'We had a block of bush on our family farm at Back Valley and we often took visitors to the scrub, especially during the wildflower season', said Tanya.

'I went on to study zoology at university and have worked on various bushland management projects since completing my Honours degree'.

One of Tanya's projects has been researching the biology of the endangered Southern Emu-wren which lives in swamps on lower Fleurieu Peninsula.

A great block of bush

Tim's family had a farm near Bordertown and his parents have a Heritage Agreement block at Naracoorte. 'We often went to the farm as kids and did lots of bushwalking', said Tim.

Tim did a science degree at the University of Adelaide and then a PhD at Flinders University in conservation biology.

The Milnes go to *The Block* as often as they can. 'Family and friends often come camping – and working – there with us', said Tanya. 'We will probably go there more often once the children are older.

'We have had lots of help from our parents and others in fencing the block and carrying out rabbit control, and I think they actually enjoy it, too'.

Rabbits are their biggest problem, especially with continual reinvasion from nearby areas.

Tim relates that he and Tanya have slightly different interests in the block. 'Tanya sees it as a project and records what she finds there and what flowers when. She enjoys taking people through the bush showing them the different plants and animals.

'I just like observing and taking in the peacefulness of the area', said Tim.

'In buying the block we were thinking ahead. It will be a great place to bring up our children. We're looking forward to teaching them about the natural environment in our own bit of bush'.

Tanya Milne

Exploring the understorey - Tim's mother Julie and sister-in-law Bryony

Adelaide Hills Council – Lobethal Bushland Park

Heritage Agreement 88

FOLBP

There are seven local government bodies with Heritage Agreement areas and one of the largest reserves is the 116 hectare Lobethal Bushland Park at Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills. The park has two functions, with 112 hectares dedicated to conservation and the remainder as a passive recreation area.

This significant block of bushland survived being cleared for farming because of Lobethal's once famous Onkaparinga Woollen Mills. The company used the land to harvest and store water for use by the mill and the town, but this too has left its legacy. Runs were constructed to deliver water to the dams and these are now choked with blackberries.

The District Council of Onkaparinga took control of the land in 1982, largely due to the efforts of the then District Clerk, David Seaman, a keen photographer of native orchids (thirty seven species occur here). The reserve was originally known as Onkaparinga St John Bushland Park in recognition of the involvement of St John's Ambulance Brigade in developing recreational facilities at the southern end of the reserve.

St John's is no longer associated with the park which is now managed by a management committee of the Adelaide Hills Business and Technology Centre with membership from the community, Friends group, Council, Town Tourism Group, CFS and Adelaide Hills Business and Technology Centre.

A Friends group was formed by St John's and the members did much of the work for the recreational facilities. The group did not have a nature conservation focus although many of the woody weeds such as ash, pine and olive were removed during the early years of council ownership and management of the broad firebreaks changed. Council slashed and graded the breaks rather than cultivating as this was causing significant erosion problems.

G C Bishop

A stronger conservation focus came when Rosie Ketteridge of Chain of Ponds became secretary of the group. Rosie recognised the significance of the area which botanically lies midway between the higher rainfall stringybark forests and the open woodlands of the Charleston area.

The Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) is actively promoting the development of 'Conservation Precincts' to create wildlife corridors to link remnant bushland areas.

The Heritage Area has a management plan with a weed control strategy that is coordinated by

G C Bishop

Above: Minimal disturbance weeding techniques are used by the Friends' group

Right: Christmas Bush (*Bursaria spinosa*) is common in this open blue gum woodland

G C Bishop

The park has a high biodiversity. There are 266 native plant species including nine national, forty state and forty-four regionally threatened species.

the Adelaide Hills Council's Conservation and Land Management Unit. 'Management operates closely with the Friends group in containing weed infestation including long-standing problems such as gorse and blackberry infestation', said Ray James, Natural Resources Officer, AHC. 'Walking trails have been rationalised and are marked with Peramangk names as part of a Bushland Park Green Corps project. Horses and bikes have been excluded through fencing and other strategies'.

Other landholders

Tricia Machin, Chair of the Friends group, says that the size of the block is rather misleading as the area has some significant management issues that are threats to the vegetation. These include blackberry-ridden dam runs, a public road dividing the park, pressures for fire management and limited local hands-on support.

'The higher, drier areas are in the best condition, with good pockets elsewhere', said Tricia. 'The condition of the vegetation and weed occurrence were mapped by our group and the Council, with assistance from Australian Conservation Volunteers and Green Corps'.

Ray James considers that the park is in relatively good condition considering the impacts from past grazing and overuse for recreational purposes and the presence of woody weeds in wetter areas. The park has a high biodiversity. There are 266 native plant species including nine national, forty state and forty-four regionally threatened species.

'The size of the park appears to have substantially sustained the vegetation associations and the kangaroo and echidna populations. The major external edge effect is curiously buffered by the wide firebreak that is monitored for weed invasion', said Ray.

Weed control is a particular focus of the Friends group. 'The Friends have been targeting gorse – cut and swab methods work best – and other weeds such as cottonbush and *Monadenia*, the South African weed orchid, which is becoming a real concern', said Tricia. 'The Council have had a Green Corps team working in the park and follow-up work is done at these sites.

'All weeding done by the Friends uses the minimal disturbance approach, and we work to control isolated weed outbreaks in the best areas. The group has also made use of Heritage Agreement grants to employ contractors for additional minimal disturbance weed control in various parts of the park'.

Former Chairman of the District Council of Onkaparinga, Roger Brockhoff, says that recreational uses were at odds with the conservation values of the reserve. Visitors are now restricted to the walking trails, or as Roger aptly put it, 'If you want to see it, you walk it!'

Tricia considers that local government reserves often face greater threats than bushland in private ownership. 'With public access, there is potentially a much higher rate of visitation and many people still associate council reserves with recreation and not nature conservation. Local residents value this park – it is a part of Lobethal, but it is the recreation side of things rather than the long-term conservation value that they recognise. Perhaps greater promotion of Heritage Agreements, both by the Department [for Environment and Heritage] and local government, could change public perceptions so all values of such areas are recognised'.

Ray James considers that being heritage listed has meant pressures for alternate use of the land has all but disappeared and the Council has seen the need to fulfil its responsibilities under the agreement. 'It and the Friends group's albeit limited success in achieving this through financial assistance and sheer hard yacka is commendable. However, long-term containment of the principal threats to the park is really dependent on local involvement within or separate from the Friends activities. Local schools have made token efforts. Otherwise little local input has been forthcoming. Perhaps a greater focus on assistance for community education and promotion of volunteerism is needed'.

Bushland Conservation Pty Ltd

Heritage Agreements 20, 655, 669, 927, 1033, 1057, 1082, 1093, 1200

The purchase of a bushland property at False Cape twenty-five years ago was the beginning of an innovative conservation group. Now with fifty members, Bushland Conservation Pty Ltd is the largest, non-profit bushland owning conservation group in South Australia.

The company was started by four people - Robert Hannaford, Ian Hannaford, John Smyth and Michael Smyth - 'to protect and preserve existing landscape, flora and fauna'. They were concerned with the rapid rate of native vegetation clearance on Kangaroo Island and combined their resources to purchase 971 ha of mallee bush near False Cape on the south coast of Dudley Peninsula.

Their foresight and innovative approach has provided the vehicle through which many like-minded people have been able to contribute to the purchase and protection of bushland areas.

Bushland Conservation Pty Ltd currently owns four properties, a total of 1959 hectares. False Cape was expanded and was followed by two properties in the Tothill Ranges and a 120 hectares property near Rockleigh.

Bushland Conservation members at the Bushcare sign on the new fence at the Tothill Range property, funded by a Natural Heritage Trust grant.

John Smyth

G C Bishop

David Vincent and John Smyth at a Bushland Conservation company meeting on their property at False Cape, Kangaroo Island.

'Much has been achieved through our shareholders' combined efforts in the company', says Bushland Conservation's Secretary, John Smyth.

'Individual effort on this scale may not have been possible or could have floundered because of a lack of funds and energy.

'I believe that the sense of shared ownership and camaraderie has been a major strength for the company. Our shareholders come from very varied backgrounds, but all have a strong dedication to preserving our natural ecosystems'.

The company has no paid staff nor does it pay its shareholders any dividends. Members can visit the properties whenever they like and company meetings are held on the properties, generally combined with a working bee and a picnic lunch or an overnight camp.

The Bushland Conservation properties are further protected by Heritage Agreements. John Smyth was a member of the Native Vegetation Advisory Committee when the scheme was introduced.

'Apart from giving the vegetation long-term protection, being part of the scheme has saved

us ongoing costs such as council rates and this enables us to use our funds for other purposes.' said John.

'We obtained financial assistance through the scheme to fence the eastern boundary of the KI property. That was some fence, too. Being limestone country, the holes had to be drilled and the posts were cemented in position'.

The group has also applied for funding assistance under the Heritage Agreement Grants Scheme. Grants have assisted with the preparation of property management plans, an insect survey at the Tothill Ranges property and revegetation work at Rockleigh.

'This, and funding received through the Natural Heritage Trust, has been invaluable in speeding up the rate at which we have been able to renew the fences in the Tothill Ranges'.

The conservation efforts of Bushland Conservation were recognised in the 1998 National Landcare Awards when the company won the Bushcare Nature Conservation Award.

'It was great to have our efforts recognised nationally', said Company Director, Bill Matheson.

'We feel that our model is one that other groups could adopt, in fact, a similar group has now been established in the Murray Mallee.

'Our group has identified and acquired types of bushland which are not adequately conserved in the reserves system. Protecting and rehabilitating remnant bush is, I believe, the most effective way to preserve natural biodiversity'.

Bushland Conservation Pty. Ltd.

Working bee to remove an old 'community' rubbish dump on the Niblet Gap road on the edge of Bushland Conservation's Tothill Range property

John Smyth

National Trust of South Australia

Heritage Agreements 396, 399, 499, 502, 514, 531, 545, 551, 789, 995, 1010

The National Trust of South Australia is well-known for its role in protecting our built heritage. Of equal importance is its protection and management of areas of native vegetation.

When the National Trust was formed in 1955, the first properties donated to its care were two nature reserves – Roachdale near Williamstown and Watiparinga at Eden Hills. It now has twenty-seven nature reserves totalling over 1000 hectares. Twelve of these are protected by Heritage Agreements and another ten are likely to follow suit in the near future.

The reserves are mainly in the Mount Lofty Ranges (11) and along the River Murray (12), with the balance being on Yorke Peninsula (3) and the South East (1). They are as diverse as they are scattered, ranging from rare wetlands near Mount Lofty, through windswept native grasslands at Burra, to complex Riverland reserves with striking cliffs and floodplains.

National Trust member Enid Robertson was a member of the Native Vegetation Advisory Committee when Heritage Agreements were first introduced. Impressed with the long-term protection that the scheme afforded, Enid encouraged the National Trust to apply for voluntary agreements over its reserves. Former Nature Conservation Manager, Caroline Crawford, comments: 'Enid is very committed and enthusiastic about nature conservation and is a leading figure in what the National Trust has achieved over the years.

'She and Maud McBriar were members of the Trust's Nature Preservation Committee and introduced to South Australia the concept of management plans for bushland areas. Enid's management plan for Watiparinga set a precedent for how we should approach bushland management'.

Caroline and fellow Nature Conservation Manager Carlsa Carter considered that Heritage Agreements fitted well with what the Trust is seeking to achieve with its nature reserves.

'The agreements give legal recognition to the conservation value of the native vegetation – it is equivalent to placing a building on the Register of State Heritage Items', said Caroline. 'Many of the areas were too small to be of interest to National Parks and if they had not come to the Trust they may have been lost for good.

'The Trust wants to provide an example to others as a leader in the area of nature conservation, and I think that the Heritage Agreement Scheme is helping us achieve this. Our reserves have active management programs, we use the minimum disturbance approach to control the weeds and to make good use of natural regeneration wherever practicable,' she said.

Heritage Agreement and Natural Heritage Trust grants have been used by the National Trust to undertake management projects on many of its reserves.

'The grants have enabled us to get work done on the ground that our volunteers would not have been able to do. For example, we have employed specialist operators to remove large pepper trees in the Riverland, dense gorse in a peat bog and to 'sponge' herbicide onto Bridal Creeper growing amongst native orchids', said Caroline.

NTSA

Enid Robertson has been a driving-force behind NTSA's nature reserves and an inspiration to many bushcarers

The grants have also enabled the Trust to incorporate community education. Carlsa has successfully involved students from the Mannum Primary School in landcare activities and fauna surveys at Lenger Reserve. This has been a rewarding collaboration for both the National Trust and the school. Carlsa later commenced a similar community-based project at the Burra Mine Site

Grasslands.

Caroline sees the biggest drawback with grants is that the National Trust is limited in what it can apply for as it has difficulty in finding the in-kind contribution.

'Like lots of other groups, we have a relatively small volunteer base and, as they get older, the tasks they can do will change. Attracting new volunteers is not easy', said Caroline.

'Heritage Agreement Grants are an essential part of our operations. They drive the programs forward and they also ensure that we keep records of the work carried out. Records are an important part of any management program as they enable us to keep track of progress'.

E L Robertson

E L Robertson

Then and now. *Above:* A solitary clump of Grey Box trees on Viaduct Hill, April 1974. *Below:* From the same position in July 1998 showing the restoration of the grassy woodland habitat

G C Bishop

Former Nature Conservation Managers Dr Caroline Crawford and Carlsa Carter

Upper Sturt Primary School, Upper Sturt

Heritage Agreement 1130

This is one of only two Heritage Agreements held by schools (the other is Redeemer Lutheran School at Tanunda). Upper Sturt Primary School, near Crafers in the Mount Lofty Ranges, signed an agreement over its 0.75 hectares of bushland in 1996. The bush, which is on the school campus, had been cared for by the school community for about twenty years prior to being put under a Heritage Agreement.

Raelee Grubb, the School Services Officer, has been at the school for twenty years, relates that the school principal in 1970, the late Bob Chapman, loved the bush and was especially keen on the terrestrial orchids, and got the community behind protecting this area of bush.

'It has really grown from there', said Raelee. 'Bob loved the bush and he enthused the students. The Principals who followed Bob, David Craig and now Sue Coad, have given the school a strong environmental education focus and our bush is a central part of this.'

The Upper Sturt Primary School has fifty students and they are actively involved in learning about the bush and help carry-out some of the management tasks. Bushland issues have been incorporated into the teaching curriculum. Sue Coad and Karen Fletcher have largely been responsible for the teaching resources used by the school.

USPS

Upper Sturt Primary School has a strong environmental education focus and their bush is a central part of this

USPS

The school's Environment Committee is responsible for caring for the bush, or The Scrub, as it is affectionately known.

'The students really care about their bush', Raelee said. 'They used to play there but don't anymore. We used to hold a combined schools sports day here but we have now moved to a local oval. The visiting children didn't respect the bush that surrounds the oval and our students got quite upset about them running through it'.

Upper Sturt's environmental education covers years R to 7, and there are some whole-of-school activities. These include participation in Kids' Congress for Catchment Care, Frog Census, Clean Waters Program and Clean Up Australia Day.

Students enthused by the bush

'We have had fantastic support from outside people for our bushcare program – experts like Andrew West, Trish Makin, Greg Sarre, Janet Pedler and the Native Orchid Society have all been a great help to us', said Sue Coad.

'All the staff and many parents have done bushcare workshops.

USPS

Opening of the interpretive signage

'Our bushcare activities include trail management, weed control – we have targeted broom and blackberries - and revegetation of degraded areas. A herbarium has been prepared and an interpretive sign was installed on the edge of the bush a couple of years ago.

'We have done an orchid survey – there are over 25 different species found here – and a bird survey was done last year', Sue said.

'Karen's Year 6-7 students have looked at what plant species are needed to support the different groups of birds that occur in the region. They looked at beak types in science, made beak masks in art and planted out native grasses for species that feed on grass seeds'.

G C Bishop

The school has developed an environmental and social program with Raukkan Aboriginal School. 'Upper Sturt students have visited environmental and cultural projects at Raukkan and they have experienced our very different Hills environment. The students have investigated the different needs of the two environments', said Sue.

Upper Sturt is very much a community-based school. Parents of former students started the local Landcare group which meets at the school. The school also hosts the local catchment management group.

The school's revegetation work has moved from 'planting trees' to collecting seed from The Scrub and propagating plants to revegetate degraded areas.

UPPER STURT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Clianthus formosus (Sturt's Desert Pea)

Southcorp Wines Pty Ltd, *Markaranka*, Taylorville

Heritage Agreement 1120

A number of commercial companies are participants in the Heritage Agreement Scheme. One of the largest Heritage Areas is that owned by Southcorp Wines on *Markaranka*, a 1275 hectare vineyard and grazing property, north-west of Waikerie.

Penfold Wines (now part of the Southcorp group) bought the historic *Markaranka* station on the banks of the River Murray in 1989. Penfolds had been buying wine grapes from the previous owners and now there are 177 hectares of vineyards on the property.

In 1996 Southcorp received planning consent to clear thirty hectares of scattered trees in order to extend the vineyards. Consent was given on the basis that the company would protect and manage 450 hectares of river flood plain country.

When Markaranka Vineyard Manager Jack Caulfield came to the property in 1997 the Heritage Agreement had recently been finalised.

'The company entered into an agreement to put the river flats under Heritage Agreement and a Natural Resources graduate, Michelle Stewart, was preparing a management plan for the area. The plan was completed in September 1997 and is currently being implemented', said Jack.

G C Bishop

Jack Caulfield, Vineyard Manager, Markaranka

G C Bishop

Above: Heritage Agreement area viewed across a section of the vineyards

Left: Prolific regeneration of River Red Gums has occurred since livestock were removed

The river flats are seasonal wetlands, the extent of inundation depending on the flow level of the River Murray. A large central lagoon contains some water for part of the year in most seasons. The flats are an open forest of River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), River Box (*E. largiflorens*) and River Coobah (*Acacia stenophylla*) with a shrub layer dominated by chenopods and lignum. It is scenically attractive country and many of the huge, ancient red gums are silhouetted against the high river cliffs.

Sheep grazed the country for many decades prior to the signing of the management agreement. 'I thought the weeds would have gone mad after the stock were removed but fortunately that hasn't happened', said Jack. 'There has been a lot of regeneration of small shrubs and grasses, and there are thousands of young red gums in the lagoon area'.

One of Southcorp's first actions was to reinstate the original water flow to the area. Jack says: 'Various built structures and silting of the intake channels were preventing seasonal inundation. Wetland Care Australia had a look at the swamp for us and made recommendations. We then went in and removed various obstacles, such as banks and pipes'.

G C Bishop

A section of the flood channel from the River Murray

The River West Local Action Planning Program (through the Natural Heritage Trust) provided funding for the project during 1998.

The management plan identified weeds and rabbits as issues to be tackled and this is occurring. 'Rabbits were very active, so in 2000 the local Animal and Plant Control chaps came in to do 1080 baiting and warren ripping. Numbers were very low the following year and we're yet to determine whether a follow-up program will be needed this year', said Jack.

'The Riverland APCB also do weed control for us. We don't really have the resources or equipment to do this work but they do. I said to them, "You find and kill, and I'll pay!" It has been a successful program.'

'They do a yearly search for Golden Dodder; this seems to be most evident after high water periods. The other problem weed is Noogoora Burr which gets brought downstream by floodwaters. It is especially bad in the big lagoon', he said.

The wetlands are the seasonal home to a host of waterbirds. 'We get huge numbers of ducks, pelicans and other species. They stay around as long as the water lasts and then they move on', said Jack.

'It's a great area but running the property takes up most of my time, so I don't get here all that often.

'My goal is to oversee day-to-day management, and eventually to restore the area to its natural state'.

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Future Directions

Since its inception, the Native Vegetation Council has put over 80% of its funding into supporting the ideals of the Heritage Agreement Scheme. Peter Dunn, the current Chair of the Council, states:

The Native Vegetation Council is just as committed to the program now as it was back in the early 1980s. As can be seen from this celebration of twenty-one years of Heritage Agreements, a great deal has been achieved and the pride that participants have in their bushland is clearly shown by their words.

Some of the future directions that the Council supports are:

- ***Greater regional ownership of the scheme through regional land management groups***
- ***Targeted agreements and incentives for high priority conservation areas***
- ***Management plans for Heritage Agreements, developed in co-operation with landholders***
- ***Improved information for landholders about managing their bushland***
- ***A range of Government and non-government organisations providing support to landholders***
- ***Increased involvement of pastoral and indigenous landholders in the scheme***
- ***Improved taxation arrangements and other incentives for landholders who commit to long-term biodiversity conservation***
- ***Heritage Agreement owners will have greater involvement in determining what is needed to better support their conservation efforts.***

The Native Vegetation Council sees Heritage Agreements as being critical in future decades for biodiversity conservation across our landscape.

Dedicated landholders, such as those profiled in this booklet, are essential if a great scheme is to become even better.

G C Bishop

Coral fungus *(Ramaria sp.)* in Stringybark forest at Myponga