

# Hotham-Williams Project REPORT

PHCC General Meeting December 2020

Melanie Durack, Program Manager, Hotham Williams



## **RLP – Numbat Neighbourhood**

**Jul 2018 – Jun 2023 \$2,174,505**

*Managed by Mel Durack, supported by Christine Townsend (Farmers for Fauna Coordinator) 3 days/week.*

- Delivery of Year 3 Quarter 2 tracking well and reporting will occur within the next few weeks.
- Agreements for 2020/21 Community Environmental Grant Round are all signed and majority of purchase orders now sent to landholders for the 8 projects which include:
  - o 14.8 km fencing
  - o 162 ha vegetation protected
  - o 9.5 ha weed control (revegetation preparing plus *Juncus acutus* & bridal creeper)
  - o 8.5 ha revegetation
  - o 14,000 ha feral animal control
- An agreement was signed with Indigenous Workabout (IW) for a weed mapping project in several Shire of Cuballing reserves. Propose to continue to work with IW next year through weed spraying activities.
- Weed mapping of bridal creeper has occurred by PHCC staff and volunteers along with Williams river in the Williams townsite in preparation to support spraying activities in 2021. This overlaps with the River Action Plan deliverables.
- An agreement was formalized on 3<sup>rd</sup> December with PYNOC (Daniel Christensen) to assist landholders with feral animal control around Dryandra Woodland. A review of the agreement will occur in June 2021.
- Agreement finalized to continue to support the partnership with DBCA to value add to Dryandra specific work including a fauna habitat survey, monitoring regimes and supporting the feral free enclosure until June 2021.
- Land for Wildlife field visit for a Williams farmer is scheduled for the coming weeks.
- PHCC coordinated a release of the RHDV1-K5 virus to control rabbits across the Boddington, Cuballing, Wandering and Williams Shires over 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November with nearly 40 landholders participating. Follow-up will occur with landholders through post monitoring to record if there has been a reduction. Helen Parsons coordinates this project.
- Regulation 7 and 10 granted under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* to enter and disturb a culturally significant site for the purpose of assisting local Noongar elder Mr Travis (Jock) Abraham with protecting a Noongar gravesite near Dryandra. PHCC will be assisting with erection of a fence around the gravesite, installing seating and planting seedlings. Work are planned to commence in the new year and planting next winter.
- A numbat dig workshop was held with landholders and community members on 13<sup>th</sup> November in Dryandra Woodlands. The aim of the workshop was to teach landholders to identify numbat digs and scats to determine if numbats are utilizing on-farm habitat and moving out of Dryandra.
- Mel and Christine along with volunteers, Victoria and Christina assisted with the annual Numbat dig survey in the Dryandra Woodland Numbat-Woylie enclosure over 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November.
- PHCC were able to support the annual Numbat drive survey (vehicle hire) in Dryandra woodland conducted by the Numbat Taskforce and Dr Tony Friend. 35 numbats were recorded which is more than 3 times the amount recorded in 2019!

- Monitoring of phascogale nest boxes in the East Yornaning Reserve has occurred, unfortunately with no sightings, however a suspected exist noise was heard!
- Peter Denton who owns a small local Cuballing nursery and is a local vegetation expert was engaged to assist with species selection and a proposed planting program for a property near Narrogin. Through the recent grant (CEG) process PHCC proposed to support *Juncus actus* control pending the landholders confirmation to plant native species in the creekline which links to Dryandra woodland, rather than planting of Messina clover (non-Australian plant). A proposal to be provided to the CEO for approval and agreement subsequently prepared.
- The project supported a recent Williams community fox shoot breakfast which saw 40 people cull 54 foxes, 5 feral cats, 2 feral pigs and 189 rabbits over the 2 night event!

**Newmont - Hotham-Williams NRM & Conservation Project** **Jan 2018 - Dec 2022 \$500,000**  
*Managed by Mel Durack, supported by Kristy Gregory 2 days/week until 31<sup>th</sup> December 2020.*

- Further meetings have been held with the Wandering Shire to discuss plans for the Pumprheys Bridge proposed restoration works as a result of the River Action Plan (RAP). Further discussions on plans have been held with Williams Shire. PHCC have been invited to speak to the Wandering Shire at their next council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December.
- An agreement is being prepared to engage Urbaqua to develop the detailed and site specific concept plans for the 8 sites which were field assessed through the RAP.
- **South32 have advised they will support PHCC's \$750K funding request to deliver community restoration projects as a result of the RAP as well as value adding to existing projects through supporting officer employment. A draft agreement is anticipated this month.**
- Restoration plans continue to be prepared for each of the 8 priority river sites by Kristy Gregory.
- The PHCC-Newmont partnership which was a finalist in the 2020 Community Partnership Resource Sector Award's was unfortunately not selected as the award winner. Further details see <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/12/Two-winners-announced-for-Community-Partnership-Resources-Sector-Awards.aspx>
- Mel Durack continues to represent PHCC at the quarterly Newmont Community Reference Group meetings in 2020 and is the current chair. A visit to the Boddington site occurred on 17<sup>th</sup> December where an overview of environmental and community programs was provided.

**South32 - Tunbridge Gully Stage 3&4 (South32)** **Jul 2018 – Jun 2021 \$78,141**

*Managed by Mel Durack and delivered by Helen Parsons working 2 days/week.*

- A weed and vegetation survey to compare results from a baseline 2015 is schedule to commence on 7<sup>th</sup> December.
- The annual eco monitoring of transects has been undertaken in Tunbridge Gully to track the success of the native flora and fauna returning to the area. A significant reduction of *Juncus actus* was recorded along with increase in native flora and fauna.
- South32 has been undertaking consultation for their expansion project ahead of a public environmental review period which is now due in early 2021.
- Mel Durack continues to represent PHCC at the quarterly South32 Mine Community Liaison Committee meetings in 2020.
- Helen Parsons assisting with this project and additional other project support 2 days per week.

*Managed by Mel Durack and delivered by Helen Parsons working 2 days/week.*

- An official opening and sign unveiling of the Ranford Pool restoration area occurred on 24<sup>th</sup> November. PHCC have been supporting the Friends of the Reserves – Boddington (Inc.) (FOR) and the Boddington Shire by coordinating project works.
- A funding application which PHCC assisted the FOR with for further bridal creeper control in the Shire of Boddington has been successful under State NRM funding community grants. Hotham-Williams staff with continue to assist the community group with the project.
- Further liaison with Shires reported in other projects above.

### **Other Project Support**

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- Mel attend a workshop for the NRM Strategy Agriculture review on 11<sup>th</sup> November.
- Worked with Karen Henderson to coordinate electronic purchase orders and procedure for the CEGs as well as training for the project officers involved with the Numbat, Greening Farms, Banksia and Black Cockatoo projects.
- Supporting Black Cockatoo and Greening Farms project delivery in the Hotham-Williams as required.

### **Planned Events (and/or PHCC sponsoring or presenting) – check website**

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*Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all face to have events have been delayed until later in 2020/early 2021.*

- Numbat Neighbourhood events:
  - o Williams Primary School Excursion to Dryandra (inc. Project Numbat) – Date TBC
  - o Managing your bushland & pest animal workshop proposed – Date TBC
  - o Potential Project Numbat School Incursions – Date TBC
  - o 1080 accreditation workshop – February 2021
  - o Dieback Green Card Training (in conjunction with disease mapping) – TBC
- Tunbridge Gully
  - o *Juncus acutus* field Workshop (to be delivered with Greening Farms project) – Feb 2021 TBC

**Communications** – See most recent issues of **“Landcare Matters: Hotham Williams” November and December 2020 Editions – Attachment 1.**

### **Work Health Safety**

- Mel attended WHS Training for Supervisors and Managers on 9<sup>th</sup> November through Pinnacle Safety along with Jane O'Malley and Steve Fisher.
- Repairs have now occurred to verandah railing outside the Boddington office by the Shire of Boddington.
- Purchase order approved to have recovery points installed on the Hotham-Williams vehicle and these will be fitted in December.

*Melanie Durack*

***Program Manager, Hotham-Williams***



NRM is the management of natural resources such as land, water, soils, plants and animals. It brings together land use planning, water management, biodiversity conservation and sustainability of Industries such as agriculture, mining, tourism, fisheries and forestry.



### Wandering Farm Productivity Group



Over 40 people attended the Wandering Farm Productivity Group Field Day on October 1.

Vet, Tim Watts spoke to farmers about ewe and lamb nutrition, managing the phasing out of mueling and the use of electronic tags. There was a sheep handler demonstration and Ross Major from Ballard Seeds spoke on different pasture varieties available, and landholders were then able to see some of these species first hand.

PHCC's Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator, Paula Pownall attended the event and dinner was provided for the attendees through funding from our Greening Farms Project.

For more information about the Wandering Farm Productivity Group please contact Brendon Hardle on 0428 258 350.

### Grant Updates...

A total of 39 Community Environment Grant projects, including 22 in the Hotham Williams Sub-Catchment, were approved for funding under our Numbat Neighbourhood, Black-Cockatoo and Greening Farms Projects.

The work to be carried out includes:

- fencing to protect remnant woodland and creeklines
- feral animal and weed control
- revegetation to increase habitat for threatened species
- planting saltbush for stock fodder

Successful landholders have been notified and almost all should have received their funding agreements by now.

Our project officers will be there to support landholders for the duration of their projects.

### Swan River Goby

During the recent studies carried out on the Hotham and Williams Rivers, it appears that secondary salinity of waterways is the main factor affecting overall condition.

This is reflected in the tolerances and ranges of aquatic fauna including the Swan River Goby, or *Pseudogobius olorum*. This native species is a very specific yardstick for salinity levels, not because it disappears when salinity increases, but in fact it inhabits an area which has changed from freshwater to saline. Therefore, its presence further and further inland is directly related to the salinisation of inland river systems. The Swan River Goby can also tolerate extreme temperatures, and has a fast reproductive cycle, living for about a year and becoming sexually mature once they have attained 25 mm total length at five to seven months of age (Gill et al. 1996). It is amazing to think that their ability to reproduce and travel has taken them all the way to the Hotham River Nature Reserve, which is 185km from Mandurah!



Photo of a fyke net set up in the Hotham River for survey of fish species



Photo of Swan River Goby, courtesy of Wetland Research & Management

**COVID-19** We value the health and safety of our whole community and PHCC is now accepting visitors on an appointment basis only. Please contact us to make a booking via phone on 6369 8801 or 0455 166 780 or via email.

#### Coming Up...

- Numbat Dig ID Workshop in Dryandra Woodland for Farmers for Fauna landholders – 13th November
- Pest Control & Bushland Management Workshop – early 2021
- Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus*) control demonstration site – early 2021



These projects are supported by the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, Newmont Boddington and the Shires of Boddington, Cuballing, Wandering and Williams



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# Landcare matters

Hotham-Williams sub-catchment update



Edition 49  
December 2020



NRM is the management of natural resources such as land, water, soils, plants and animals. It brings together land use planning, water management, biodiversity conservation and sustainability of industries such as agriculture, mining, tourism, fisheries and forestry.



## Eco Monitoring in Tunbridge Gully



The annual eco monitoring of transects has been undertaken in Tunbridge Gully (Boddington townsite) to track the success of the native flora and fauna returning to the area. Annual weed control is having great results with the ongoing decline of invasive weed *Juncus acutus* (Spiny rush) throughout

the creekline. The several thousand seedlings which have been planted in the 7 hectare area are maturing and there are the beginnings of a new shaded canopy. There is evidence of native wildlife beginning to return, including the brush tail possum. Kangaroos are in abundance as are spiders and other small insects, which all aid with the spread of native plant species.

Photo monitoring has also been conducted from the south end of the creekline, to where it meets the Hotham River. Native vegetation has increased dramatically since the start of the monitoring project with the aim of increasing the biodiversity and improving the water quality within the ecosystem.

## What's Happening...

The Williams Fox Shoot has recently been held and the 40 attendees eradicated 54 foxes, 5 feral cats, 2 feral pigs and 189 rabbits. PHCC was able to support this great event through our Numbats Neighbourhood Project by funding the breakfast.

If you would like more information on the Williams Fox Shoot you can search for their group on Facebook.

**COVID-19** We value the health and safety of our whole community and PHCC is now accepting visitors on an appointment basis only. Please contact us to make a booking via phone on 6369 8801 or 0455 166 780 or via email.

## Numbat Dig ID Workshop



Local landholders and interested members of the community attended PHCC's Numbats Dig ID Workshop in Dryandra Woodland on Friday the 13th of November. By learning how to identify numbat traces, landholders can determine if numbats are utilising on farm habitat which can indicate if the numbat population is increasing. This increased trajectory is one of the outcomes of PHCC's Numbats Neighbourhood Project.

This workshop which included in the field searching for digs and scats was presented by Tamara Wilkes-Jones, who has years of

experience being involved in the annual Numbats Dig Surveys. The workshop provided a great opportunity for local landholders to catch up with each other and for PHCC to thank them for the hard work they have been doing controlling feral cats and foxes as well as offer our support. A number of people who attended the workshop managed to spot a numbat on their way through the Woodland.

Our Hotham-Williams team were lucky enough to see three numbats on the way to set up for the workshop!!

### Coming Up...

- Stay tuned for an educational video all about **numbats** and how to identify their traces that we are creating with the help of Tangents TV.
- We are looking for expressions of interest to hold a **1080 accreditation course** in February 2021. Please email [christine.townsend@peel-harvey.org.au](mailto:christine.townsend@peel-harvey.org.au) or call 63698801.
- **Pest Control & Bushland Management Workshop** – early 2021
- **Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus*) control demonstration site** – early 2021

*Do you have an NRM event or information you would like us to promote? Please contact Christine Townsend at [christine.townsend@peel-harvey.org.au](mailto:christine.townsend@peel-harvey.org.au) or 0455 166 780 or 6369 8801*



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