

Murrumbidgee Landcare's Cross Property Planning project

Land holder case study: Stuart Meiklejohn, 'Houlaghan's Rise', Downside

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| Name: | Stuart Meiklejohn |
| Location: | "Houlaghan's Rise", Downside |
| Property size: | 277 ha |
| Farming enterprises: | Mainly cropping, with some prime lamb production |
| Soil types: | Red clays |
| Rainfall: | Around 550 mm |

How long have you been farming in the area?

I grew up here; my grandfather was here since 1920, and my father lived here all his life until his recent move in to Wagga. I moved off the farm for 18 years, but came back here with my family about five years ago.

How did you become interested in natural resource management (NRM)?

I've probably been interested in it since we moved back here. When we returned, I saw how many of the scattered mature trees had been lost in the drought, and wanted to replace what had been lost. I was keen to put in denser plantings, including both trees and shrubs, to improve the property.



Above: Stuart inspecting a healthy seedling, planted this winter as part of his revegetation works through the CPP project

Why did you join Murrumbidgee Landcare's Cross Property Planning (CPP) project?

We had a specific goal we wanted to achieve, of revegetating a large area of the property surrounding the house. We would never have been able to do this work, on this scale, without the funding assistance that we got through the project.

Have you noticed any benefits from your work through the project?

It's still only early days, but it has already raised plenty of comments from our neighbours - all favourable, thankfully! One friend even commented that we are going to be "living in a forest"!

What are your 'keys to success' when undertaking NRM work?

I think my main tip would be to ask for lots of advice! I really benefited from the knowledge of neighbours and friends.

Also be sure to plan ahead, to allow plenty of time to complete the different stages of the project.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask for assistance - some jobs are just too big to do on your own.

Are there any changes that you've made that you would do differently in hindsight?

Next time I would put the tree guards on as we planted. With this project, we planted all the seedlings first, to get them into the ground as quickly as possible, and then we went back and put the guards on them over the following weeks. Unfortunately the cockatoos had discovered them in the meantime, so we lost some before we could get the guards on. We didn't lose too many, but it was a lesson for next time.

Do you have any remaining NRM concerns that you would like to work on?

The local Travelling Stock Reserve is currently in a terrible state, and is infested with weeds including Silverleaf Nightshade. I think it would be an ideal spot for a revegetation project, if we can get all the relevant people and organisations lined up. That's my next project!



Left: Some of the more than 3,000 seedlings Stuart planted through his revegetation works this year