

Midlands Conservation Partnership

TASMANIAN
LAND
CONSERVANCY

Bush Heritage
Australia

NEWSLETTER 01 – SPRING 2023

Kangaroo grass. Photo by James Hattam.

FROM THE TEAM

Welcome to this first edition of the Midlands Conservation Partnership (MCP) newsletter. We want this newsletter, which will come out twice a year, to be useful for MCP participants, stakeholders and the Midlands community. We hope it will keep you connected to the program, give you the updates you need and inform you about the approaches to conservation and land-management that have worked on other properties. Through it, we hope to foster a sense of community among all those who work towards improved biodiversity in the Midlands.

The program celebrated its tenth anniversary late last year with a fantastic event in makala/Ross. Thank you to those of you who opened your property gates for visitors and joined us for the day. A short film, featuring some of the MCP landholders, was made to celebrate the anniversary, and you can watch it at vimeo.com/tasland/mcf10.

The tenth anniversary seemed like a good time to evaluate the program, and we felt the time was ripe for a small facelift. You might have noticed the change of name: the Midlands Conservation Fund is now the Midlands Conservation Partnership. This name is intended to move the focus away from the program model (the endowment fund) to better reflect the partnership between MCP landowners, Bush Heritage Australia, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy and others, working together to ensure the best conservation outcomes for the Midlands. Find out more about the new strategic direction for MCP on page 3.

MCP also welcomed Pierre Defourny as the new Coordinator. With a background as an economist and in conservation management, Pierre is passionate about achieving conservation in productive landscapes with multiple land-uses. Pierre has enjoyed meeting all of the MCP landholders over the last few months and looks forward to working with the Midlands community in coming years. Matt Appleby is one of the most familiar

faces of conservation in the region, and his ecological expertise continues to underpin the scientific integrity of MCP.

We also want to thank Heather Campbell for her fantastic contribution to the program over the last 4.5 years as Bush Heritage CEO and MCF Board Member. Heather has been appointed as the new CEO of Greening Australia and we wish her all the best continuing her environmental work in her new role.

The program evaluation also showed that satisfaction with MCP remained high or very high for all landowners who completed the survey. This has been shown through the recent renewal of eight conservation agreements. We are keen to ensure this program continues to meet your expectations and address your needs, so do not hesitate to get in touch with the team if you have questions or feedback. We hope you enjoy this first newsletter.

Pierre Defourny, MCP Coordinator
Matt Appleby, MCP Ecologist

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CONSERVATION
AGREEMENTS

WITH 14 LAND
OWNERS

7,360 ha

OF HIGH-PRIORITY ECOSYSTEMS
PROTECTED, INCLUDING

1,628 ha

OF CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
LOWLAND NATIVE GRASSLANDS

\$336,640

IN STEWARDSHIP PAYMENTS
INVESTED FOR CONSERVATION IN

2023



Orchids caged to protect from browsing at Kingston. Photo by Pierre Defourny.



Simon Cameron. Photo by Matt Newton.

MCP COMMUNITY: KINGSTON

Set in the foothills of turupina/ Ben Lomond, Kingston has been farmed by the Cameron family since 1905 and conservatively managed primarily for wool production since that time.

The property is highly significant for its extensive areas of critically endangered valley floor native grasslands and, in particular, its species-diverse lowlands kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) grasslands community. This community at Kingston makes up more than 10% of the remaining extent of that threatened ecosystem in lutruwita/Tasmania. Lying between 270 and 510m above sea level, Kingston is slightly higher in altitude than many other Midlands properties, a colder area perceived as less productive, which might explain why the native grasslands here haven't historically been converted to exotic pastures or crops.

Since the 1950s, the owners have recognised the importance of their native grasslands and woodlands in producing some of the highest quality superfine wool in the world and they have managed these areas to ensure their native integrity and

productive health is maintained. Current owner, Simon Cameron, joined the program in 2019. On his property, Simon protects 1,672 ha under Conservation Agreements. The MCP area on Kingston ensures that 1,000 ha of threatened lowland native grasslands, 583 ha of grassy woodlands, 46 ha of wetlands, 12 ha of lowland alluvial systems and 3 ha of upland riparian vegetation are protected and managed in a way to maximise biodiversity benefits. Twelve species of threatened flora and three species of threatened fauna have also been recorded on the property including

the EPBC-listed grassland cupflower, grassland flaxlily, clover glycine and Midlands greenhood orchid. Simon is actively managing for these threatened species, caging rare and threatened orchids to allow their seeds to be collected, fencing off areas of silky bushpea and actively controlling weeds. His farm now derives a significant portion

of its revenue from its conservation work, which is also a key part of Kingston's pioneering partnership with the national menswear retailer MJ Bale.

The MCP area on Kingston is directly adjacent to MCP areas on Buffalo Brook and Bonney Plains and other protected areas to the north, east and west, creating a very large, connected patch of high

conservation value landscape in the North-Eastern Midlands.

'I consider myself very fortunate to have been invited to participate in the MCP and extend my thanks to the donors who make it possible. Yes, the funding is important but perhaps equally is the recognition from others that managing our lands for their natural values is what needs to be done.'

– Simon Cameron

Some of the threatened species that occur on Kingston:



Silky bushpea
(*Pultenaea prostrata*)
TSP: vulnerable.
Threats: native grassland clearing and inadequate management.



Eastern quoll
(*Dasyurus viverrinus*)
EPBC: Endangered.
Threats: predation by cats, disease, climate change



Midlands greenhood
(*Pterostylis commutata*).
EPBC: Critically Endangered, fewer than 100 plants have been surveyed across 9 sites. Endemic to lutruwita/Tasmania.
Threats: native grassland clearing and inadequate management.



MCP Ten Year Celebration at Beaufront with Julian von Bibra. Photo by James Hattam.

MCP STRATEGIC PLAN TO 2027

The Tasmanian Midlands have been designated as a priority place under Australia's Threatened Species Action Plan for 2022-2032.

Reflecting on the lessons learned from the ten-year program evaluation, and in order to harness the opportunities coming with this designation, MCP has refined its vision and developed a five-year strategic plan that outlines the program's approach going forward.

At the centre of this strategy is a desire to maximise the program's conservation impact while meeting MCP participants' needs through additional services to landowners, such as ecological advice and access to grants and projects.

The focus on EPBC-listed critically endangered lowland native grasslands of lutruwita/Tasmania will also be strengthened to ensure the conservation impact of every dollar invested in stewardship payment is maximised.

The capital fund model guarantees the long-term underwriting of the program, to give landowners confidence that MCP is by their side for the long-term.

However, in recent years the investment earnings have not been enough to cover the stewardship payments and the shortfall has generously been covered by Bush Heritage Australia. To ensure the sustainability of the program, a review of the organisation's investment policy is underway and a new push for fundraising will start shortly. Supporting this fundraising push is a new communication strategy, including the new program name, branding and logo, a dedicated brochure for events and donors, and refreshed web pages.

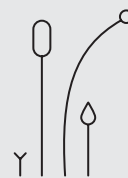
Finally, at the centre of this partnership are the farmers who manage those important areas for conservation. We will aim to increase their sense of belonging to the MCP community through sharing tips about best practices that have been implemented to address certain issues, and showcasing the great work they do on their properties to protect precious natural values.



VISION:

To promote and facilitate long-term community-based protection and management of threatened native grasslands and associated wetlands and woodlands in the Tasmanian Midlands.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS ARE:



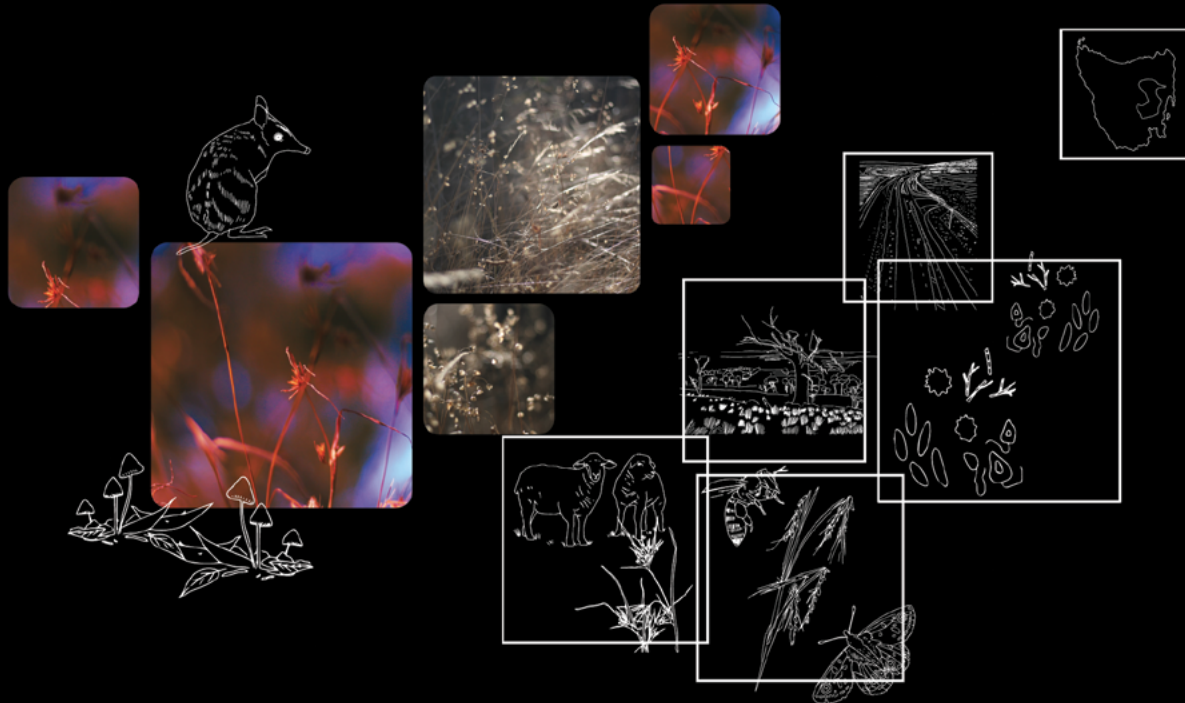
By 2027, 75% of the current extent of the nationally critically endangered Lowland Native Grasslands and associated grassy woodlands and wetlands are protected in the Tasmanian Midlands



By 2025, MCP is recognised as the pre-eminent model that delivers conservation impact in the Midlands agricultural landscape



By 2027, the condition of Midlands Conservation Partnership target communities under stewardship has been maintained or improved since the date of agreement



IMAGINE THE INVISIBLE: THE ROLE OF CURIOSITY AND DESIGN IN ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION