

# Vocational education introduces young people to Landcare



By Lisette Mill

**The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network is connecting with young people through a vocational training program that encourages them to investigate future career options in conservation and land management.**

The Green Line Project is based at Woolsthorpe, a former railway siding, and also along the disused railway land that stretches 37 kilometres from Koroit to Minhamite. The Network has partnered with South West TAFE Vocational Education Training in Schools students studying components of the Diploma of Conservation and Land Management (CLM).

This partnership commenced in late 2015, and was launched with Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources funding in June 2016. Nine students aged between 15 and 17 from colleges around Warrnambool are participating. The students attend one day a week over two years during term time.

The students are learning practical work skills, gaining knowledge of remnant vegetation on the Victorian Volcanic Plains and being introduced to Landcare and community projects.

The Green Line Project includes two shelterbelt demonstration plots (400 metres by 20 metres). The students have collected seed from the railway land,

propagated the plants and planted them within the shelterbelts. The plants were chosen to demonstrate to landholders the best species for shade and shelter on nearby farms. The students have also set up intricate trials of planting and weed control methods to show what works best in low disturbance establishment regimes.

The project is supported by Victrack, Landcare Australia Limited and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. The former Victorian Minister for Training and Skills, Steve Herbert, praised the project for providing engaging and practical opportunities for vocational education and training students in emerging areas of employment.

Students have responded to the project with enthusiasm. Many of them have little prior knowledge of conservation work. The project aims to teach them valuable skills that may be useful to their future careers and improve their understanding and appreciation of the local landscape. It is hoped students that graduate from the program may go on to be land managers.



*Native vegetation shelterbelt species for The Green Line project growing at the South West TAFE nursery at Warrnambool.*

David Smuthwaite, senior teacher from South West TAFE, said The Green Line project was an integral part of the TAFE Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

"It will be exciting to be part of this work as rehabilitation of this significant resource unfolds," he said.

Keith Williams, a student from Warrnambool Alternative VCAL Education (WAVE) School, has been learning to follow a site grid for different trials.

"There's a lot of maths, way more maths than I expected. I thought we were just going to plant trees ... there is more to it," he said.

Eden Addison from Warrnambool College was given the task of mixing up Blackwood seeds to be direct seeded into spots raked over with an old CFA fire rake.

Eden was surprised at the number of seeds one tree can produce and how cheaply a handful of seeds can become a new shelterbelt. Within four weeks of planting the seeds in scrapes in August, the new plants were visible.

"It's so easy. I thought this would be hard but it is easy," Eden said.

**For further information contact Lisette Mill at Basalt to Bay Landcare Network [basalttobay@gmail.com](mailto:basalttobay@gmail.com)**



*Students from South West TAFE visit the Sungold Field Days Allansford shelterbelt demonstration site.*