

*Diane Harwood**How did you come to be involved in NRM?*

I grew up in Melbourne in the 1940s and 50s, when a popular past-time was the Sunday drive, with a picnic at one of the beauty spots in the Dandenongs or the Mornington Peninsula. My parents were both keen bush-walkers who fostered my love of the bush by encouraging my brother and I to go exploring. I remember being annoyed even then by the Watsonias which were taking over the bush around our holiday house at Belgrave Heights.

It was not until 1985 when my own children had all started school, and I was living in Denmark WA, that I began to address the invasion of the Watsonias. I visited Bush Regenerators in Sydney who were working in urban bushland reserves using a minimum disturbance method developed by the Bradley sisters. This involved working from the least weed-infested areas to allow the bushland to recover naturally.

What are your biggest achievements in NRM?

In 1989 the Denmark Shire gave a small group of us permission to trial the "Bradley Method" here in Pioneer Park, a two hectare reserve on the Highway at the entrance to town. Although there are still some Watsonias along one edge today, the bush is flourishing without any assistance other than an annual weeding session. Following our success with that reserve, we started work in other reserves around town, and along the Wilson Inlet foreshore. This ability to be consistent and persistent is the key to success in controlling environmental weeds. Our work covers not only the physical weeding, but also running workshops, preparing information sheets and talking to people.

*Who or what inspires you?*

Nothing is more inspiring than to work with a crew who are also devoted to the bush, and to see the native plant communities maintain and improve condition.

What do you hope to achieve in the next five years?

Over the coming years I hope to encourage more young people to take up the fulfilling and rewarding work of caring for our wonderful natural areas. I would also like to influence more people to take responsibility for the plants in their gardens... and prevent them from leaping the fence and invading the bush (that's the plants, not the people!).

My dream is to have management plans for all our bushland areas, and a team of trained people working consistently to maintain their integrity. This has to a large extent been realised. In 1999 I was able to arrange for TAFE to run the first Bush Regeneration course in WA. Now we have a team who have studied Conservation and Land Management, can recognise a whole range of plants from their first emergence, and are skilled in the minimum disturbance hand removal technique.

What are the biggest challenges facing the South Coast environment and how can these be met?

The increase in population here on the South Coast will place even more pressure on the environment. Communication between and within government and non-government agencies will be important to ensure that development takes place with due recognition of the natural values, and to minimise the damage which can occur when providing living spaces for people. Management of issues such as clearing, drainage, fire, access and even views will need a co-operative approach, and full use made of our strategic plans.