



The Victoria Naturally Alliance – a shared vision

MEDIA RELEASE

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Project Hindmarsh a springboard for large-scale restoration

A pioneering tree planting program near Nhill that has successfully linked Victoria's Big and Little deserts and this week celebrates its 10th anniversary should be used as a springboard for much larger nature conservation projects across the state, the Victoria Naturally alliance said today.

“In Western Australia a project called Gondwana Link is restoring and reconnecting habitat from Margaret River on the coast all the way inland to Kalgoorlie,” Victoria Naturally’s Carrie Deutsch said.

“Victoria is the most cleared state in the country. We've lost 70 per cent of native vegetation, and on private land that figure jumps to 92 per cent. Victoria is just crying out for a project like Gondwana Link.

“We need to take what we’ve learnt from Project Hindmarsh, an incredible conservation effort based out of Nhill that has involved more than 3000 volunteers, many from Melbourne, and a third of local farmers, and roll it out across the state on a much larger scale,” Ms Deutsch said.

Such projects will be crucial under climate change, which scientists predict will force many of our native plants and animals to migrate further south or to higher ground as they try to escape the heat.

“But with much of Victoria devoid of native vegetation many species will be hemmed in by cleared land. We need to protect and replant native bushland across the state to give them room to move.”

Project Hindmarsh turns 10 this weekend and will celebrate with the launch of Project Hindmarsh - 10 years and Beyond, a book and short film tracing the history of this ground-breaking initiative.

Greening Australia’s south west regional manager Ron Dodds said that since the first tree planting weekend in 1998 Project Hindmarsh has gone from strength to strength.

“We linked up the Big and Little deserts in just four years,” he said. “And we effectively reestablished 2000kms of native bushland by planting more than 1.5 million trees and shrubs in one of the most overcleared parts of the country.”

Carrie Deutsch said the Victoria Naturally alliance, which is led by the Victorian National Parks Association and includes Greening Australia (Vic), would like to see large-scale projects similar in scope to Western Australia's Gondwana Link come out of the State Government’s recently-launched Land and Biodiversity White Paper inquiry.

“Project Hindmarsh has shown us that a small group of people with a big vision can achieve remarkable wins for our environment,” she said.

“We need to take their vision to the next level and the State Government’s Land and Biodiversity inquiry offers us that chance.”

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The Victoria Naturally Alliance wants to see Victoria's native plants and animals protected from threats including climate change and habitat loss. For more information go to www.victorianaturally.org.au.