

Case Study 1

Malcolm Fyffe



A series of events in the middle of the 1990s saw Malcolm make the adjustment from teaching to farming. His property, “Glenwillow” located in Sandon, has been farmed by a succession of family since the late 1940s which meant that Malcolm was not unfamiliar with sheep and how to manage the land to support them productively.

The country on which Malcolm farms requires heavy inputs to maintain productivity and in recent times this has taken its toll. The changes he has seen in and around his farm have led to collaborative investment in restorative works. These include stock exclusion from existing native stands as well as along waterways to mitigate erosion and, in particular, the planting out of a degraded drainage line totalling 1000 m in length and 50 m in width through one of his ‘best’ paddocks. “This work has been undertaken through partnership with the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA). Other works, including stock shelter belts cum wildlife corridors have been via the Envirofund Grants scheme and I’ve managed gorse on and adjacent to my paddocks on my own initiative”, says Malcolm.



Despite these improvements, and in some ways because of them, Malcolm is dedicated to diversifying his interests and use of his land. This led him to the Connecting Country launch held in April 2008 in Castlemaine. There he was inspired by the wide range of other people in his community interested in nominating their property to become part of the biodiversity blueprint. In addition, Malcolm says “I would also like to revitalise the local Landcare group as an important focus for land restoration works within the local community”.

The opportunities afforded to people managing all or part of their land for biodiversity conservation are diverse but imprecise, especially regarding carbon sequestration. “If there was another way to farm my marginal country from which I could derive a comparable income I’d sell all the sheep in a jiffy and plant trees but I’m not sure if that’s the right choice at the moment”. Malcolm is a farmer unattached to particular practices or traditions looking to diversify his land use. “Connecting Country offers a way to keep abreast with emerging trends and programs, one or several of which may help with the transition I’m looking for”, he said. However, when it was cheekily suggested that a slow fire could be put through his planting to reduce the rank *Phalaris aquatica* growth, ungrazed for 3 years, Malcolm quailed at the thought of any harm coming to his planted trees! Malcolm’s quality of ownership and a sense of responsibility will ensure that the connectivity he has created will form a link in a wider network throughout the region and on into the future.