



# Mid Murray Landcare SA

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## Activity Update September 2026

If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive this free update, please email Aimee Linke at the above email address, or view it on our webpage. These projects are from varied sources of funding, primarily Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board's Grassroots Grants.

*Objectives - Support the Mid Murray Landcare committee to implement objectives of their strategic plan which align with the key objectives of Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board. Maintain strategic partnerships of the Landcare community keeping partners informed of activities and opportunities in the region including the Mid Murray Council, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, local community, volunteers and land managers.*

### **1. Activities – Support the Mid Murray Landcare Committee meetings, annual general meeting, and monthly activity updates, host and support five websites. Encourage the participation of land managers in activities like habitat box surveys, turtle nest monitoring, bat monitoring, workshops, conferences and other events.**

- 1.1 We held our monthly committee meeting in Cambrai at the Mid Murray Council Chambers.
- 1.2 Chris Tugwell our chairperson was notified by Landcare Association of SA that he was nominated for an award in the Individual Landcare category for establishing Australia's first International Dark Sky Reserve, inspiring scientific collaboration and transforming Landcare by recognising darkness as a natural resource. The state winners will be announced at the Bridges Event Centre in Murray Bridge on Friday evening, 16 October. The gala event features special guest presenter Peter Garrett AM and MC Sophie Thomson (Gardening Australia).
- 1.3 The Landcare Award nominations for Aimee Linke, Chris Tugwell, Cambrai Primary School and the Dark Sky Committee were featured in The Leader Newspaper and The Murray Valley Standard, thanks to Leila Kasprzak.
- 1.4 Turtle Symposium was held during Nature Festival week in Adelaide at Conservation Council SA; there were one hundred and thirty attendees at the event from all over Australia. There were thirty-one presentations, some great student presentations with prizes awarded, eight displays, silent auction to raise funds, one workshop, one field trip, a comedy night and the Keynote speaker was Emma Carmody, Commissioner for the River Murray – South Australia, 'What the river remembers: turtles, treaties and the politics of water'. A very successful event thanks to Dr Sylvia Clarke,



the inaugural 'President' Society for Australasian Turtles, the new president was selected at the end of the symposium and is Dr Carla Eisenberg from Charles Darwin University Australia.



**Photo 1 Dr Ricky Spencer presenting at Turtle Symposium in front of 130 people.**



**Photo 2 Emma Carmody Commissioner RM SA.**



**Photo 3 Display 'Turtle Tales from the West, Bibra lake, Albany.**

*Objectives - Provide opportunities at Mid Murray Landcare SA Nursery for volunteers to participate in hands on activities to grow and provide plants to land managers, schools, community groups and other projects to support healthy natural landscapes by supporting revegetation projects and increasing future native seed availability.*

**2. Activities - Provide opportunities at the Mid Murray Landcare SA nursery for volunteers to participate in activities to support on ground projects throughout the Mid Murray region. Support land managers, groups or schools with on ground project activities including site visits, plant identification, project design and implementation.**

- 2.1 Volunteers Dave, Mick, Greg and Brenton maintained nursery plants, potted on seedlings and sowed seed.
- 2.2 We supported nine landholders or groups with native plants, plant identification or other projects including The River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) with native plant donations to support the upgrade of their new cafe and ranger base in Glossop in the Riverland.
- 2.3 Nature Festival Open Gardens - supported 'Wattle Be Will Be' open garden in Springton with a Mid Murray Landcare SA plant stall, there were over one hundred and forty people who visited the garden on that day, it was also supported by Butterfly Conservation South Australia who had an information display.
- 2.4 Keyneton Primary School watered and weeded the new plantings at Keyneton Nature Reserve, so far there is a 100% success rate. Phil and Aimee also did some weed control at the reserve, there are lots of introduced bulbs flowering, the application of the selective herbicide Fusilade is starting to have an impact on the introduced perennial grasses we are trying to overcome, Phil also controlled more of the very persistent rabbits.

*Objective - Support the management of Meldanda on behalf of the Cambrai Primary School Governing Council and provide opportunities for volunteers and youth to increase their knowledge, participation, and leadership in landscape management by supporting educational conservation initiatives.*

**3. Activities - Provide support for volunteer participation in activities at Meldanda to further develop and maintain seed production gardens and continue its development as an outdoor educational site, dark sky location and camping facility.**

- 3.1 Volunteers Mick, Brenton, Cameron and Sheralee helped with weeding, mowing and brush cutting, focussing around the large campground area and entrance from ford. We said goodbye to one of our volunteers Cryss and welcomed back a past volunteer Wayne.
- 3.2 Meldanda campsite for September has seen twenty-one camp nights, sixty-seven students, forty-one adults with one astronomy camper and one scout groups. The scout group also incorporated astronomy activities as part of their camp experience, by chance, with a visiting 4WD club. An Aboriginal group from Mannum had a cook up of kangaroo tail and fish and the Cambrai Lutheran Church group held an outdoor service.
- 3.3 Site visit with Engineer and Mid Murray Council Environmental Officer to look at best location for new soakage for the septic system.
- 3.4 The first of the Meander at Meldanda signs was installed by volunteers Cameron, he did a great job, and we are looking forward to working with Cambrai Primary School to get the others installed soon.



**Photo 4 Meander at Meldanda signage installed.**

**Activities - Support Cambrai Primary School and other groups with the engagement of youth in outdoor and environmental activities at Meldanda.**

- 3.5 Cambrai Primary School, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Education Officer and Mid Murray Landcare SA staff and Chairperson were filmed in preparation for the finalist presentations for the 2026 Public Education Awards, the short video will be presented at the awards dinner held later in the year at Adelaide Convention Centre.
- 3.6 Meldanda Environmental Education, ten people from Mannum Garden Group visited and had a tour of Seed Production Area.

*Objective - Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders for mutually beneficial outcomes of the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve. Support the Dark Sky Committee, Mid Murray Council, volunteers and stakeholders to maintain the internationally recognised dark sky accreditation, promote the importance of "Skycare" and the value of protecting the circadian rhythms of nocturnal species and preserving a natural resource that is disappearing globally: darkness.*

4. **Activities - Support the community to preserve and manage the dark sky habitat, by providing resources, information and opportunities for the community and volunteers to participate in this habitat protection, identifying suitable measurement sites for monitoring equipment, engaging with landholders willing to host the equipment, setting up and calibrating the equipment and teaching landholders how to download the results.**

#### **Chris Tugwell**

- 4.1 Meeting first meeting of new dark sky board which use to be section 41 council committee. Two radio interviews about the Landcare finalist one with Matt Stephens and the Country Hour, which is a national broadcast.
- 4.2 Worked on Mid Murray Landcare's strategic plan update. Filming at Meldanda for the public education awards.

#### **Kate Wills**

##### 4.5 Social Media

Our strategy shifted toward pull-back-the-curtain updates, technology insights, and celebrating our volunteer pipeline. Total Reach: We achieved over 50K views across Facebook and Instagram. Audience Expansion: 86.2% of our total views came from non-followers, our content is successfully breaking out into the wider regional SA community. Top Performer: Our "Meet the Crew" Project NightWatch feature was a major winner.

##### 4.6 Project NightWatch (SQM Network)

The technical, logistical, and volunteer components for Station 01 (Sedan) have completely aligned this month: Site Selection: Thanks to our host landholders, Richard and Helen Costi, digging physical test holes and logging soil profiles, our technical team has confidently finalised the exact location. Tech Breakdown: Our software whizz, Skye, has successfully deployed our cloud architecture and locked in a secure VPN tunnel between our cellular hardware loop and the backend data collector. The entire automated telemetry system is tested, talking, and monitoring live data from a testing bench ahead of field placement.

Skycare Dashboard: In an absolute milestone for the project, Skye has officially built and deployed our live tracking platform onto a dedicated secure subdomain. The dashboard is fully live but unpromoted to the public while we refine the visual layouts. It has already successfully cached data points and logged test site-nights (bench testing), meaning our data pipeline is 100% operational.

Frame Fabrication: The Swan Reach Men's Shed partnership is rolling beautifully. Neville and the crew are finalising the frame modifications to support our weather-proof 2-box enclosure layout. Installation Countdown: We have officially locked in Monday, 12th October as our physical installation day with the Swan Reach Men's Shed crew.

## 4.7 Tourism, Local Business & Events

October 31st Event: Planning is underway for our daytime public outreach event on Saturday, 31st October. We are currently working through the finer details to prepare for the community reveal of our automated sky-brightness monitoring network and the "Skycare Live Dashboard" framework. "On the Map" Local Business Campaign: Next month, we began collaborating with regional tourism bodies—including the Mannum Visitor Information Centre and the Murray River Lakes and Coorong Tourism Alliance—to get our "Local Businesses On the Map!" initiative underway. This will be an ongoing project to chip away at over the coming months to engage commercial operators, build local advocacy, and ultimately map the true economic scale of our 3,200 km<sup>2</sup> reserve.

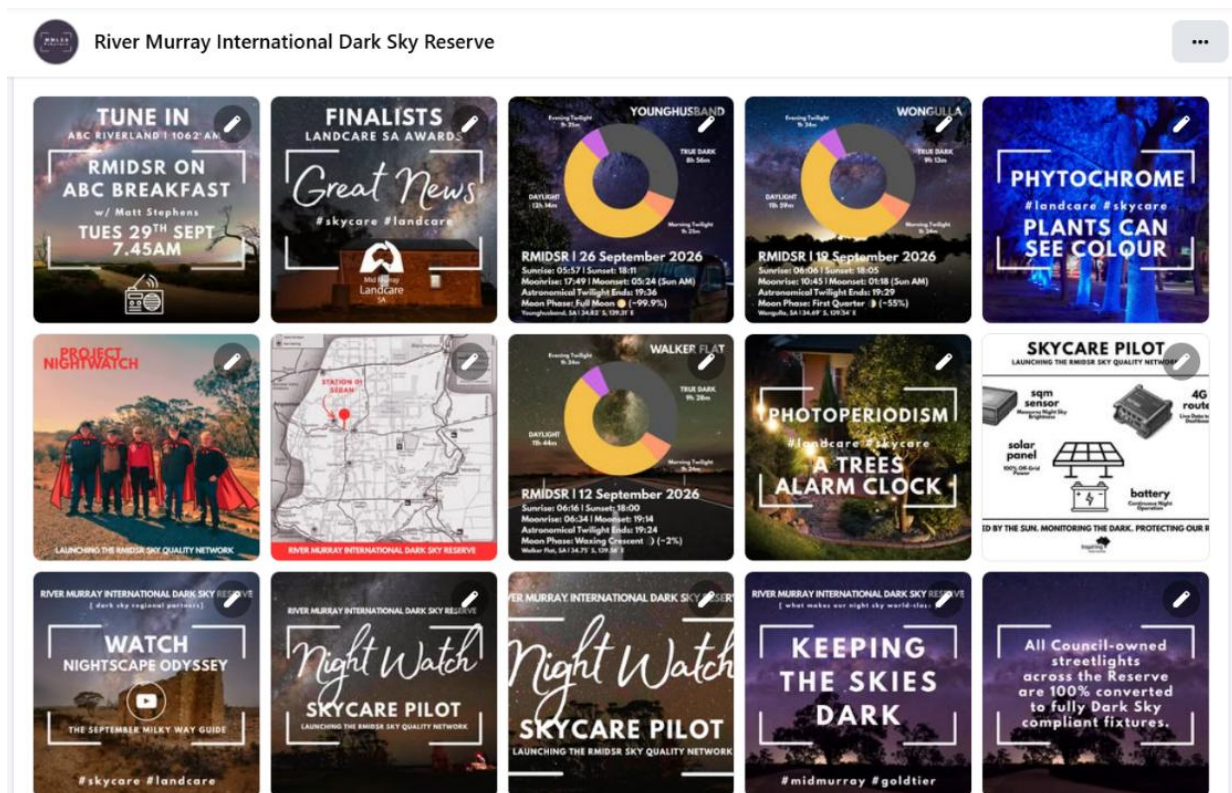


Image 1 snapshot of dark sky social media activity for the month.

## 5. Murray Darling Carpet Pythons

- 5.1 There were three records submitted to iSPYthon this month, one near Purnong/Walker Flat in the cliff, one upstream from Blanchetown in the cliff and one near Katarapko in a tree hollow.