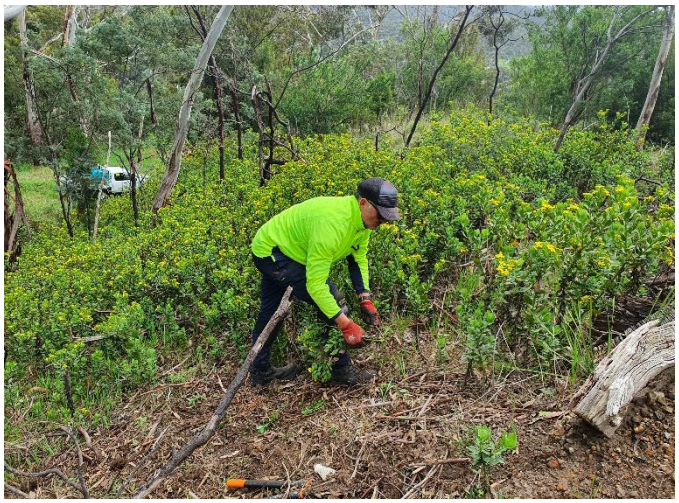
The Derwent Catchment Project

Increasing Productivity. Restoring Landscapes

Annual Report 2021-2022



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Executive Summary

The Derwent Catchment Project continues to grow and develop as an organisation and we are excited by the support and continuing interest in our activities. This year we welcomed Sarah Gatenby-Clark to our Executive committee and have been benefiting from her expertise and personal interest and passion for the Derwent Catchment. We also were excited to have the new Mayor of the Derwent Valley Michelle Dracoulis recently join us on the committee.

We thank Central Highlands and Derwent Valley Councils for their ongoing support and are really excited to welcome Brighton Council as a new partner in our delivery of Natural Resource Management services in the Derwent Catchment. The combined funding provided by our three Council partners has enabled us to leverage additional funding with over $1M secured for the region.

Since late 2021 we have been working closely with Brighton Council, and the local community to raise the profile of natural resource management in Brighton. As NRM is a new area of activity for Brighton Council, we have been engaging with the local community and key stakeholders to identify issues and foster collaboration. We have made good progress in developing strategies and plans to guide NRM in the region.

This year our on-ground works team has continued to tackle weeds in the Central Highlands and Derwent Valley along roadsides, rivers and on public and private land. Over the year our team has surveyed and treated weeds along 850 kms of roadsides, 50 kms of riverbanks and 20 kms of lakeshore.

We have received funding to continue our targeted weed management plans for orange hawkweed, African feather grass and karamu. This provides support for our team to continue controlling and reducing infestations of these high priority invasive weeds.

Our programs to restore river health across the Derwent Catchment are making excellent progress removing willows and other weeds and revegetating the Tyenna River, Ouse River and more recently the Lachlan River.

Our best practice farming programs continue to work with landholders to support farm resilience. Peter Ball, our pasture specialist is managing several demonstration sites and case studies and sharing the outcomes with local pastoralists through delivery of our Grazing Time workshops. Additionally, we are growing our capacity to assist farmers by providing farm management and biodiversity plans.

We continue to protect the most important stands of the Miena cider gum in the Central Highlands working with Hydro Tasmania and private landholders to instal tree bands and wildlife-proof fences to reduce browsing pressure. The project received a grant from TasNetworks to install wombat gates as they were causing havoc with the bottom of our large 700 m exclusion fence. The project will monitor the impact of this infrastructure over time to determine its effectiveness and to ensure the fencing stays intact.

We are facilitating several NRM programs with a broad range of collaborators across industry, government and community that benefit from our pragmatic approach to strategic planning. These include development and implementation of a biosecurity preparedness program for the region as part of the building better regions program.

We look forward to continuing to work with stakeholders, councils and community members to improve the regions environments and farming resilience.

Climate Change Initiatives

Central Highlands Climate Change Policy

We have developed a policy for Central Highlands Council based on the Tasman Climate Policy. It is a simple document that sets out some priorities for Council and acknowledges the role Council plays within the broader community. This has now been endorsed by Council.

Derwent Valley Declared a Climate Emergency

We have been working with Derwent Valley Council on their approach to climate change and are excited to see the Council take the step of making a climate change declaration. This declaration allows local government to acknowledge the risk and the need to act at a local level. Embedding climate change imperatives into local government business as a priority. We look forward to continuing to work with the Derwent Valley Council in climate adaptation and mitigation through this initiative.

Brighton NRM strategy

An important part of the Brighton program has been developing a draft Brighton NRM Strategy. This has included development of a communication and engagement plan, a literature review, land use mapping and consultation with stakeholders such as the Derwent Estuary Program to develop actions and targets. Importantly, as NRM is a new area of activity for Brighton Council, we have been engaging with the local community and key stakeholders to

identify issues and understand community knowledge, experience and perspectives about natural resources. We have also run educational and awareness raising activities including having a stall at the kutalayna Collective's Winterfest in Bridgewater. The draft NRM strategy is currently with Council staff and the kutalayna Collective for preliminary comment prior to going to Council for release for public comment. We look forward to working with community and council to finalise the strategy and improve understanding and management of Brighton's natural resources.

Foreshore Management Plan

In addition to the NRM strategy a foreshore management plan is being developed for Brighton. The plan is informed by the draft NRM strategy but is a more practical plan to guide on-ground works. The plan initially focuses on areas where there is community interest in undertaking activities to care for the foreshore. The plan will cover the following areas:

- The Bridgewater Foreshore, where Bridgewater Landcare group is active;
- The area adjacent to Swan Park at Herdsman's Cove. Where Council will be installing a playground at Swan Park; and
- The Old Beach Foreshore area where there is a new Friends of Old Beach Foreshore group.

We are working to capture the communities' ideas and aspirations, along with Council and other stakeholder goals for these areas. The plan provides practical information to guide community work on the Derwent foreshore and will allow for collaboration and coordination of works between community Council, DCP and other stakeholders. The plan aims to help minimise approval processes, as well as assist to secure funding for community groups to follow up on current and undertake future works.

Weed Management Program

This year our team has surveyed and treated weeds along over 850 kms of roadsides, 50 kms of riverbanks and 20 kms of lakeshore! We have also begun treating weeds along unused railway corridors, treating 10 kms so far.

Fennel control along roadsides

As outlined below, our targeted weed control programs for African feathergrass, orange hawkweed and karamu continue to progress. We hope to continue to work with private land holders over the coming years, to help improve their understanding of weeds in their backyard, and how they can reduce the impact of these weeds on the environment.

Brighton Weed management plan

The ground team have already begun work on the weed management issues within the Brighton municipality. An extensive survey was conducted along all the roads and the foreshore to understand where weeds were distributed. This information was used in collaboration with other data to create the Brighton Weed Management Plan. This plan was delivered to the Brighton Council and will help guide the decision-making process for on-ground weed management and community engagement.

Roadside weed control and general activities

Funded by Central Highlands, Derwent Valley and Brighton Municipalities (respectively)

In addition to our targeted weed control programs, we have undertaken weed control along the region's roads, townships and at targeted sites.

A summary of our achievements this year include:

- Roadside spraying ~ 850 kms of roadside. New weed eradication zones were added to the works plan with the introduction of the last year's updated weed management plan.
- Roadside control of fennel between Ouse and Gretna along the Lyell Highway. This is this second year of fennel control and there is a notable reduction in the size of infestations.

- English broom and blackberry control along the Lyell Highway between New Norfolk and Gretna.
- Blackberry control along Gordan River Road at Westerway.
- Weed control within townships in the Central Highlands.
- Treatment of all the new weed management zones within the Derwent Valley municipality.
- TasRail have engaged the DCP to manage weeds along their non-operating train lines from New Norfolk to Westerway. We have completed 10 km of control this year.
- In collaboration with Hydro, we have controlled Californian thistle and ragwort along the shoreline of Great Lake between Tods Corner and Cramps Bay.
- Control on Elisha's tears in Fenton Forest. This is follow-up from control efforts undertaken last year as part of a Weed Action Fund grant.
- Removal of weeds along the banks of the Lachlan River up from the Lyell Highway. This includes mechanical removal of blackberries and willows to make space for native plantings.
- Control of large infestations of boneseed at Peppermint Hill.
- Treatment of Patterson's curse near the Salmon Ponds.
- Removal of ragwort within the Ouse River at Waddamana, helped by local residents.
- We have been targeting weeds along the boundary between the Derwent Valley Catchment and the Central Highlands. Weed control on public and private land along this boundary is important to reduce the chance of weeds spreading to the Gordan River Road. Lots of weed control has already been undertaken to maintain this area with the aim of protecting the values of the World Heritage Area.
- In Brighton the ground crew undertook the treatment of Patterson's curse, a declared weed, to continue legacy management of the problematic weed. There is a small distribution within Brighton municipality and maintaining treatment is crucial to long-term success. The team has also treated isolated sweet briar and blackberry growing along the foreshore.
- The Friends of Old Beach Foreshore Landcare group is an active community group that enjoys cleaning up and looking after the foreshore region at Old Beach. With help from Derwent Catchment Project, the group has organised and ran two working bees to remove rubbish and removed over 300 kilograms of boneseed. On National Tree Day, the group planted over 20 trees near the protected salt marsh to help provide habitat.

Weed Action Fund large grants

Orange Hawkweed Biosecurity Program

Weed Action Fund Grant – funded by State Government

OHW is a 'sleeper weed' that has been managed on an ad hoc basis over the last decade. There has been concerted efforts in some locations but not holistically for the species across the State. This year we received funding through the Weed Action Fund to develop a comprehensive biosecurity program for Orange hawkweed. This program works with key partners towards eradication for OHW. Key partners are Hobart City Council, Central Highlands Council, Hydro Tasmania, Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, Parks and Wildlife Tasmania and State Growth.

Works this year have been survey and/or control of all known location. Extension surveys have been undertaken using Fonzie the conservation sniffer dog in Highlands. Development of a draft Biosecurity Program and a plan for increasing awareness and communicating with people about the threat that Orange hawkweed represents to Tasmania.

Fonzie on the job sniffing out hard-to-find OHW

African feather grass biosecurity program

Weed Action Fund – funded by State Government

This year, with support from the Weed Action Fund (WAF), we continued working towards our goal to eradicate African feathergrass (AFG) in the Derwent Valley. Our successful bid in the WAF large grant round, will support this program for the next three years.

The largest AFG infestations in Tasmania are located within the Huon and Derwent Valley. Ongoing funding for this project from the WAF will allow us to continue control works and monitoring in the region. We are collaborating with the Huon Valley Council developing a working group and biosecurity plan for AFG in Tasmania. The biosecurity plan will allow for a direct course of action to eradicate AFG from the Derwent and Huon Valley.

Over the last year we have targeted infestations along the Plenty River, and along the Derwent River upstream of New Norfolk. This seasons' control efforts were a great success.

Karamu biosecurity program

Weed Action Fund – funded by State Government

This on-going project aims to remove infestations of this priority weed along the Derwent River. The successful bid for a large WAF grant, has added to the initial and continued support by Derwent Estuary Project, State Growth, Crown Land Services, Parks and Wildlife, Derwent Valley Council. This additional funding will allow us to increase our control efforts and provide the much-needed resources to target hard-to-reach infestations. This funding has also allowed other stakeholders including the Hobart City Council, Kingborough Council and Huon Valley Council to revisit and control their known infestations, survey for unknown infestations, and engage with their communities. As a representative of the Derwent Valley Council, we have been working with these councils to develop a working group and a biosecurity plan for karamu. Our goal, is to develop a universal approach to karamu management and control across municipalities.

The Entrance to the Valley Granton to New Norfolk

Funded by State Growth

The aim of this project is to protect the Murphy's Flat wetlands, to increase amenity along the entrance to the Valley and to reduce the threat of weeds entering the Derwent Catchment from the road corridors. This year's

work continued on the Lyell Highway and Boyer Road, with efforts extended further upstream to include the Lyell Highway between New Norfolk and Granton, and Gordan River Road.

State Growth has extended its funding to collaborate with our biosecurity network program which has been targeting blackberry and other alternative fruit fly hosts. The extra funding has allowed for an increased buffer to be created around the horticultural regions of the Derwent Valley. TasRail has also increased its vegetation management within this region and looks to continue its contribution.

Adopt a Shore program

Funded by Hydro Tasmania

The adopt-a-shore program is funded by Hydro with In-kind support from Inland Fisheries Service. In recent years this project has been focused on controlling ragwort around Elizabeth Bay at Great Lake. The focus has shifted to the Miena Township due to complications from Covid-19. The working bees are helping control English broom along the shoreline and neighbouring streets.

Adopt-a-Shore working bee with Inland Fisheries Service

Planting and Revegetation

We have increased our capacity to provide advice and offer support to farmers undertaking on-farm restoration projects which build long term farm resilience. DCP now offers a comprehensive service which includes collecting seed from other robust natives on the property, growing the seedlings, undertaking the planting and maintaining the plantings for a number of years. This ensures the best the chance of success for shelterbelts and native plantings.

Mt Spode Planting

Landcare Action Grant funded by Department of Natural Resources and Environment – The Tasmanian State Government through the TFGA

Last winter we assisted two landholders at Mt. Spode to revegetate their properties. Our on-ground works team planted close to 2,000 plants on 5 ha of north-facing slope. The landholders have excluded stock from this area allowing it to revegetate. Established trees will provide shade and slope stability leading to increased soil and moisture retention.

Tree planting on north-facing slopes at Mt. Spode

River Restoration

Tyenna River Recovery/Willow Warriors

Funded by Inland Fisheries Service, Lenah Estate & Tassal

This program is a fantastic example of collaboration between industry, community and Council. We are very pleased to have Lenah Estate and Tassal on board, investing in equipment and increased capacity for Willow Warriors working bees, which we now run once a month.

This year our focus was on revisiting previously treated sites at the mouth of the Tyenna River and working downstream into new areas. After surveying the previously treated areas it can be noted that there was a greater than 85% success rate in willow treatment. Willows have been successfully controlled from Maydena through to Tyenna.

The Willow Warriors have grown with volunteers with the Derwent Canoe Club joining the fight. With the influx of new members and diverse skill sets including competent paddlers, a new section of volunteers was created to access hard-to-reach areas. These volunteers are now fully inducted and can operate independently of major working bee events, allowing for boots on the ground more regularly. As working bees push further downstream in the coming year, Willow Warriors will encounter thick willow infestations.

Ensuring there is good access and receptive landholders has been a crucial role played by the DCP's permanent Willow Warrior volunteer John, who lives in the area. With John's support and ongoing engagement with the larger stakeholders in the area, the Willow Warriors will have a busy year ahead of them.

Willow Warriors tackling willows along the Tyenna River

Ouse River Recovery Program

Landcare Action Grant funded by Department of Natural Resources and Environment – The Tasmanian State Government through the TFGA

Over the last year we have focused on controlling blackberry infestations, ragwort and planting and maintaining native vegetation. The area was flooded towards the end of last year damaging some seedlings. We have planted more than 150 native trees along the riverbanks.

Flood damage and surviving plantings along the banks of the Ouse River

Lachlan River Recovery Program – Preparing Australian Communities (Australian Government)

We are excited to be working with the Derwent Valley Council to undertake a significant river restoration on the Lachlan River. After the serious flooding in 2018, we received a grant from a Community Recovery & Resilience Grant (State/Australian Govt) to provide education and support for landholders and to develop flood restoration plans for the Lachlan River, Sorrel Creek and Glen Dhu Rivulet which were badly affected.

This project will allow us to improve water quality and flows, improve riverbank vegetation health and improve biodiversity by removing willows and other weeds that are blocking the river's flow and degrading its condition. We have been consulting with the local community, discussing their thoughts, concerns, and ideas for making the Lachlan River more resilient to flooding.

Our on-ground works team have begun controlling willows along the walking track between Hobart Road and Humphries Road. They have also undertaken general weed control along the bottom stretches of the river, approximately 1.5 kms, controlling blackberry, willow, broom and thistles. Some revegetation has been undertaken in this area with more to come. The next stage of this project is to start weed control work at the headwaters to the Lachlan River ensuring all willows on tributaries to the Lachlan River are surveyed and treated.

Platypus Walk at Hamilton

We continue to manage the 'Platypus Walk', a community walking trail in Hamilton that follows the Clyde River. We have undertaken substantial revegetation in the area adding an additional 133 trees to the site. This work follows 1 km of dense willow removal undertaken in 2017.

Revegetation along the Platypus Walk

The Platypus Walk also received some damage after flooding events in the region. To mitigate this, our on-ground works team have been replanting and replacing vegetation guards that were damaged. They have also been performing targeted weed management of weeds within the vegetation.

Agricultural Best Practice Farming

Derwent Pasture Network – funded by NRM South (Australian Government)

The Derwent Pasture Network, our dryland focused ag program, continues to work alongside pastoralists to tackle the challenges of grazing in the semi-arid regions of the catchment. The program taps into local knowledge, supported by our pasture expert Peter Ball, to overcome the challenges of improving productivity and reducing erosion in the rugged low-rainfall environments that we have throughout the Derwent region.

Demonstration sites and case studies

Our multi-year demonstration sites are shedding light on fertiliser regimes and pasture species choice. We have found that specific nutrient combinations as well as timing of fertiliser application dramatically influences pasture productivity. Applications of phosphorus and potassium lead to significant growth in clover leading to higher levels of soil nitrogen. Early autumn nutrient application increases winter and early spring growth responses. Other multi-year demonstration sites include:

- our steep north-facing slope demonstration sites where we are investigating seeding persistence perennials in combination with de-stocking
- looking at impacts of broadscale broadleaf weed mitigation sprays on clover growth,
- sites comparing persistence and biomass difference between cocksfoot and phlalaris and multi versus single species comparisons.

Fi Hume (Arundel) amongst the prolific clover growth at our fertiliser trial site

Additionally, we have started case studies investigating the role of sub clover in pastures and its role in productive and sustainable grazing systems. These case studies are being developed in response to questions raised during our grazing course sessions. Specifically, there was interest as to whether the potential benefit of growing sub clover is worth the management effort in a low rainfall dryland pasture. We are finding out!

Pasture Course

Topics covered this year with course participants include differences in pasture species composition and productivity, application of the Pasture Condition Tool including assessing pasture condition, identifying, understanding and managing pasture species and condition change, assessing pasture production limits and carrying capacity, managing pasture for clover.

Grazing Time dryland pasture course

In addition to our Grazing Time workshops, we have also facilitated focus groups and seminars on NRM topics of interest in the region such as the latest on legumes, winter cleaning, renovation preparation and carbon farming. Carbon farming is an emerging market that can be confusing to navigate. The aim of our seminars was to break down the different schemes and explain the eligibility requirements. We are providing advice and support to landholders as these schemes evolve.

Communications

In our pursuit to provide resources and share what we know about land management in our region we continue to update our Derwent Pasture Network (DPN) website. Updates include information about common conditions for sheep and cattle catalogued through Bruce Jackson's Tasmanian livestock health project, info cheat sheets on managing annual weedy grasses, how to improve clover in pasture and a 'pest timeline' to support management of black headed cockchafers and winter corbies.

Pasture Condition Tool

Funded by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment – The Tasmanian State Government

We developed a pasture condition guide to help graziers assess and manipulate pasture condition on farms (better pasture = increased productivity and reduced erosion). Following road testing and incorporation of user feedback the tool was launched last year and over 3000 copies have been printed and distributed to local businesses and landholders. We are so excited to share this information with graziers and to continue working with them to put the tool into practice.

The tool is available on our website https://www.pasturenetwork.org/pasture-condition.html

Farm planning/ biodiversity plans

We are now offering biodiversity plans that support farmers and land managers to better understand what natural assets they have in the form of remnant native vegetation (such as patches of forest, woodlands, non-eucalypt woodland and grasslands), native vegetation along rivers and creeks, wetlands, and rocky outcrops. The biodiversity plans offer a prioritisation of natural assets to access premiums and market opportunities that reward activities that improve vegetation condition.

Conservation

Miena cider gum Program

Funded by Department of Natural Resources and Environment – The Tasmanian State Government, Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks

We have been working on implementing actions to aid the recovery of and improve the resilience of Miena cider gums. Last winter we successfully installed browsing protection, including tree bands and wildlife-proof fences, around surviving trees at St. Patricks Plains and Rainbow Point. Our team has been regularly checking this infrastructure and conducting maintenance to ensure there has been no wildlife break-ins or damage.

A wombat gate installed in the 700 m fence

We are very happy to report that the banding and fencing are having a notable effect, with a positive increase in canopy health and low evidence of possum tracks up tree trunks. Additionally, we successfully received funding to install wombat gates in the largest fence surrounding trees at St Patrick's Plains. These gates will help keep the fence in good working order and allow wombats to traverse the site more easily whilst keeping possums out.

Strategic Planning

Biosecurity planning for the Derwent Catchment

Funded by Tasmanian Climate Change Office

This project aims to undertake research to prepare agricultural and tourism businesses in the Derwent Catchment for biosecurity impacts under predicted changes in climate. The Derwent Catchment Biosecurity Network has developed a regional biosecurity plan based upon a threat assessment that considers the changing distribution of pests, weeds and diseases under climate change projections. The plan identifies a risk-based approach to prevention and response to new and emerging threats, that builds upon the learnings and experiences across sectors, and across jurisdictions.

The Derwent Catchment Biosecurity Network has members from Derwent Valley Council, Central Highlands Council, Lanoma Estate, Westerway Raspberry Farm, Meadowbank, Wandin Valley Farms, Inland Fisheries Service, Tassal, Huon Aquaculture, Waterfalls Café - Mt Field, Biosecurity Tasmania, Huon Aquaculture, Hort Innovation Australia, Hop Products Australia, Hydro Tasmania, Fruit Growers Tasmania, Curringa Farm, Bejo Seeds, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, SFM and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

We were recently successful in a bid for a grant to fund the implementation of the key priorities outlined in this plan. These include:

- Development of template for property and business biosecurity planning
- Support for at least 20 land holders undertaking property and business biosecurity planning
- Planning and feasibility study for installation of publicly available, permeant machine wash down facilities in the Catchment
- Development of contractor biosecurity hygiene checklist for use by land managers when contracting machinery operators for works in the Catchment
- Communications undertaken for small landholders, Catchment visitors and community
- Signage aligned with Biosecurity Tasmania signs at State entry points
- At least 10 news articles and/or social media posts in local communications networks
- At least one biosecurity field day for small landholders

Implementation of this actions will lay the foundation for improved biosecurity practice in the region and preparedness of local businesses to a range of biosecurity threats.

Nursery

Karen, our nursery manager, continues her great work at the nursery in Hamilton. Improvements in infrastructure with installation of a heat bed in the hot house, will allow for improved germination of seed and propagation using cuttings for plants that are difficult to grow from seed. This will lead to a greater range of plants being available at the nursery. We have also increased production of species suitable for dry north facing slopes.

This year over 15,000 plants have gone out the door!

Karen has been out and about collecting a wider range of seed from the Derwent Catchment and familiarising herself with plants suitable for Brighton. Seed was also collected from Liawenee as part of the Inland Fisheries planting project.

In addition to her day-to-day work in the nursery, Karen has been collecting seed for use in the 'Hydro-mulch' for restoration of the site at the Pelham landslide, as well as propagating larger species for planting in spring. Over the year there has been an increase in demand for site assessments for revegetation projects and for plantings on both public and private land, such as Derwent Valley Council's war memorial at Gretna.

Successfully funded projects such as the Lachlan and Tyenna River recovery projects run over three years and will keep the nursery busy collecting and propagating over the coming years!

Grant applications

Grant	Status
Weed Action Fund – A biosecurity Program for African feathergrass $81,917	Successful
Weed Action Fund – A biosecurity Program for Karamu $147,312.	Successful
Weed Action Fund – A biosecurity Program for Orange Hawkweed $149,247	Successful
Community Grants Hub – Volunteer grant to support local community groups with tools, equipment and small infrastructure, $5,000.	Successful
Drought Resilience Practices in Mixed Farming Systems, TASAg Innovation Hub (Future Drought Fund) $145,000	Successful
TASAg Innovation Hub (Future Drought Fund) Biosecurity Collaboration in the Derwent Catchment $100,000	Successful
TASAg Innovation Hub (Future Drought Fund) In partnership with Rural Business Tasmania, Drought Risk Assessment $50,000	Successful
TASAg Innovation Hub (Future Drought Fund) Building flood resilience in the Derwent Valley – in partnership with Derwent Valley Council $906,090	Successful
Landcare Action Grant - Habitat protection and weed eradication to protect a population of threatened Golden galaxis $10,000	Unsuccessful
Restoring the Clyde River within the Bothwell township $10,000	Unsuccessful
Weed Action Fund – Control of alternate Fruit Fly hosts in 1.5km buffers around vulnerable commodities the Derwent Catchment. $165,000	Unsuccessful
Cattle Hill Community Grants – Central Highlands Community Weed Management Program $120,000 ($60,000 a year for 2 years)	Unsuccessful
Smart Farms Soils Extension Project – Farmer-led soil monitoring and testing hubs- facilitating farmer-led capacity and knowledge building in soils across Australian regions (lead Soils for Life, DCP as Tasmanian partner) $225,000 over 2 years	Unsuccessful

Thanks for taking the time to read through and for supporting the Derwent Catchment Project. We look forward to working with you in the next 12 months.

Your Sincerely,

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