

**TRLA Small Grants Program 2024**

# **CHANGEMAKERS 2346**

**Think Global, Act Local**

**Building Stronger Futures and Communities for Manilla and  
the North West**



# Changemakers 2346 Small Grant Report - Manilla Landcare

Think Global, Act Local was a forum to bring together experts, community leaders, and stakeholders to share knowledge about ways they are developing sustainable practices to support human and environmental health.

The event was termed **Changemakers 2346** and was presented as part of the Renewable Manilla Festival. The festival is a celebration of building a brighter future where climate awareness and readiness can involve the whole community and support community run initiatives. We hoped that being part of this Festival would increase participants at the panel and enrich an existing event.

Changemakers 2346' featured a panel of 6 people (which include 2 school students). Approximately 35 people attended to hear about local initiatives. Topics covered included sustainable agriculture, improving residential gardens to serve as wildlife habitats and learning about school based environmental initiatives from one of the local schools. The panel reflected the *TRLA Mission to aspire to grow the Landcare movement in the Tamworth Region by*

- *Engaging the community using environmental education*
- *Promoting sustainability*

Changemakers 2346 was an education opportunity to bring together local people to share the innovative work that locals are doing in their fields. The focus of this event was to engage local people and create networks and connections. Considerable background work was done to initiate conversations with potential panel members, some who had not presented in forums like this, to see if they would be interested in sharing their work with the Manilla community.

The event aligned with TRLA Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 in particular the **people** and **biodiversity** pillars.

**PILLAR 1 Thought Leadership:**  
*Host forums, seminars, and conferences to bring together experts, community leaders, and stakeholders to share knowledge and best practices.*

**RENEWABLE**  
*Manilla*

**2346: CHANGE MAKERS**  
SAT. 20 April 10.30-12.30pm MANILLA TOWN HALL

This event aims to bring together individuals passionate about building stronger communities, celebrating innovation, and collaboration. We believe that by sharing insights, experiences, and innovative ideas, we can inspire positive change and empower individuals to contribute actively to embrace positive change.

Supported by Tamworth Regional LANDCARE

**Jaqueline Cronin and students**  
Vice Principal St Michael's Environmental Advocate

**Zoe Burke**  
Local Regen Farmer  
Halls Creek

**Eliza Weekes**  
Urban Native Garden  
Moore Creek

**Gavin Heywood**  
Founder of Serum Australis  
Local Regen Farmer, Wongo Creek

Join us and hear from local change makers  
Visit our website to learn more about each of the speakers, and our other events  
[www.renewablemanilla.com.au](http://www.renewablemanilla.com.au)

**Saturday 20 April**  
10.30-12.30pm  
Manilla Town Hall

Manilla Community Renewable Energy Inc.

# OUTCOMES: AGRICULTURE AND THE CONNECTION TO HEALTH

Gavin Heywood and Zoe Burke provided the opportunity for the public to learn about sustainable farming practices they are using on their farms. Topics included regenerative agriculture including soil health, increasing carbon, soil microbes, plant diversity, holistic grazing, and cropping.

This aligns with TRLA's objective:  
*Human Health through Healthy Soils*  
4.1 Support sustainable agriculture in our region.

It also aligns with TRLA Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

## **PILLAR 1 People– Education**

*Share existing or develop community-focused workshops, training programs, and educational materials to raise awareness about sustainable land management practices.*

These farmers appreciated the opportunity to connect with each other as well as share what they are doing. Change is often challenging so creating the opportunities like this may help to build engagement and innovation.



# OUTCOME: ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

A teacher from St Michael's Catholic School and two students described the work they are doing to develop sustainable practices at their school. Teacher, Jaqueline Cronin, is an environmental champion within the school, and she appreciated learning about other local initiatives (one of the Regen farmers is also a school parent) and being in a supportive crowd with likeminded people. She said that she 'got some ideas for things to try at school' (including worm castings – learnt from one of the Regen talks, and more knowledge on planting natives from the suburban garden talk). The school were very supportive in lending us their PA system and expressed their desire to be part of future events, including the Manilla junction river bank project currently being planned. We were able to encourage them to connect with the Landcare school grants program, and informed them of the new role withing TRLA supporting school environmental education. We were also able to introduce Jacqui to Susan Wilson.

It also gave young people the opportunity to learn the skills and develop the confidence to present in real-life contexts.

The sustainability talk aligns with TRLA Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

## **PILLAR 1 People– Education**

*Establish partnerships with schools, local organizations, and community leaders to integrate environmental education into curricula and community events.*



# OUTCOME: SUPPORT CLIMATE READY COMMUNITY

Eliza Weekes spoke about the environmental and health benefits of developing a sustainable home and garden. She demonstrated what was possible in an urban setting by sharing her journey and learnings.

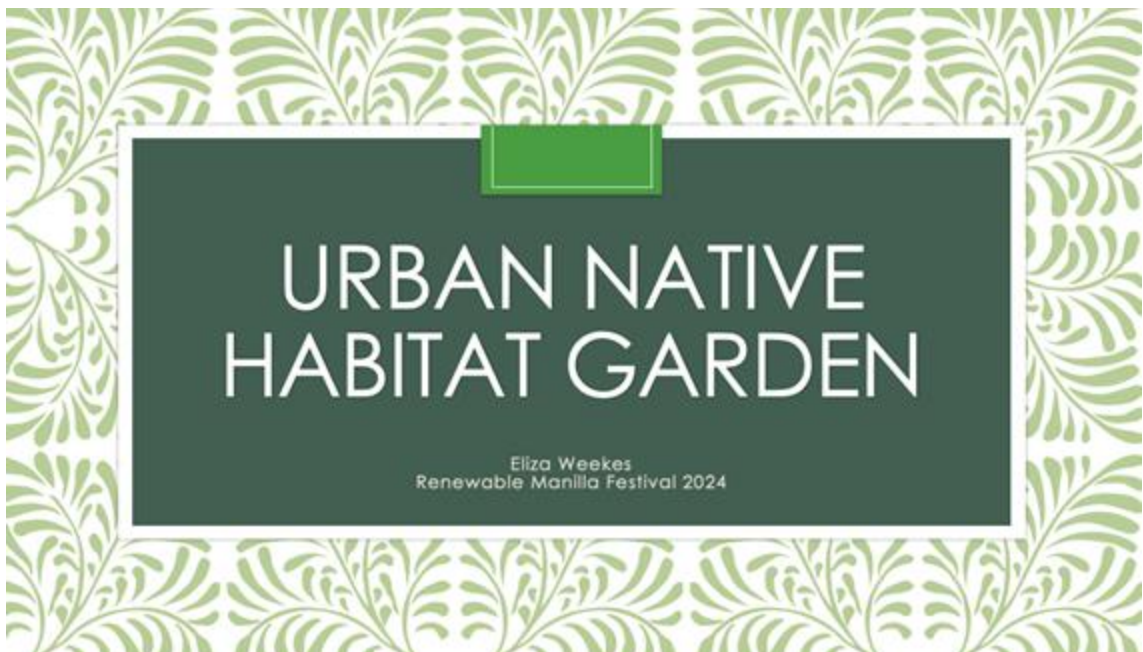
This aligns with TRLAs objective:

6. *Support a Climate Ready Community*

6.1 *Build Climate awareness and readiness within the Tamworth region*

Eliza's talk aligns to the TRLA Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

**Pillar 4 Biodiversity - Education:**  
*Share and connect people to educational programs on the importance of biodiversity for ecosystem health.*



# OUTCOME: MOBILIZE COMMUNITY LEADERS AND HOST FORUMS

All the speakers are positive role models for sustainable practice in their fields. They were provided the opportunity to showcase their work in their local community; a rare opportunity. Jaqueline Cronin, the teacher who presented with the students, said that the kids ‘felt very important’ and it was wonderful to see them being environmental leaders in their school community. The regenerative farmers whilst already known to each other, were inspired to learn from one another and continue to connect in the future. Furthermore, the panel was chaired by Lester McCormack, a local agronomist who is well known in the community.

The panel aligns with TRLA Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

## **PILLAR 1 People– Support**

*Mobilize community leaders and influencers to champion sustainable practices and serve as role models.*



# OUTCOME: FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

All speakers expressed their gratitude for being able to share their knowledge and experience in a supportive environment amongst people who were keen to learn about progressive sustainable techniques to incorporate into their own projects and enterprises. All expressed their willingness to be part of future events. It is hoped that by giving local changemakers a voice, that their work will be better supported and appreciated at a local level. The audience asked a number of questions of the presenters and this stimulated engaged dialogue.

This event aligned with TRLA Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

## **PILLAR 1 PEOPLE - SUPPORT**

*Foster a sense of community pride and ownership through grassroots campaigns, highlighting success stories and positive impact.*

One of the the objectives of the panel was to engage local people and build a sense of community in addressing environmental issues. The intergenerational panel brought in a local audience that might not ordinarily attend events such as these. Through this event we wanted to celebrate and highlight the positive impact that people are making in our community.



# FEEDBACK

We developed a survey for the audience participants.

In the feedback people shared that there should be more Landcare events in Manilla, more sessions about trees and recycling, and events to discuss ways to locally provide and source grass fed and organically grown food.

We also followed up with one-on-one conversations with all panel members to get their feedback.

The following are some quotes from the surveys and follow up conversations:



**“The speakers were interesting - same message in a different way”**

**“It was an encouragement to keep on going, everyone gets busy, so meeting up (with other local farmers) often doesn’t happen”**

**“Buzz in the street, nice vibe”**

**“Nice to be with like minded people”**

**“This would never happen in my city – country towns are special”**

**“I had no idea people were doing this in our area”.**

The word "FEEDBACK" is written in large, white, hand-drawn letters on a dark green chalkboard background.



# IMPACT SUMMARY

Measuring impact of educational events is not a simple task. Numbers alone, especially in small regional towns, are unlikely to be the best measure of success. However, there were a number of outcomes that the small grant has contributed towards. As explained above, the event has met many of the key areas that TRLA is working towards.

This small grant has supported our small Manilla Landcare group to create an opportunity for the community to come together, to make connections and learn. Events like these are not common in our community, often we need to travel to Tamworth to access Landcare events – one participant commented that they would like more Landcare events in Manilla. While the long-term qualitative impacts of education are hard to measure, this event has potentially instigated and consolidated new connections with like-minded people in an environment when their views often differ from the majority.

This small grant has made visible Landcare’s contribution in our community. The Landcare stall featuring native trees, shrubs and grasses (staffed by TRLA Coordinator Susan Wilson and Ninna Douglas), was appreciated by attendees and speakers, and sparked a number of conversations with Manilla residents and participants at Renewable Manilla. It created a positive way to interact with the public and increase people’s awareness and understanding of who TRLA are and what we do. Tamworth based musician, Andrew McClemon played at the event as we hoped his presence might spark curiosity and invite people into the space.



The Renewable Manilla event featured on [NBN news](#) and there was also a news [report](#) about the proposed river bank work that local Manilla Landcare volunteers, TRLA and Oz Fish are partnering on.

## THE CHALLENGES

Engaging community on environmental issues and solutions in small regional towns can be challenging due to a variety of reasons. So, to be able to offer a free event like this in our community was a unique and valuable opportunity. We hoped that more people would have attended, especially considering the inputs into the event, including the significant time invested by volunteers to make this event possible. However, we recognise that change can be slow and it highlights the work that needs to be done.

## THE BUDGET

These events cost money to run. The small TRLA grant enabled us to buy vouchers from local shops to give to all panelists, offer catering which was provided by the Manilla Hospital Auxiliary, and contribute to venue hire and insurance costs. There was also considerable investment of in-kind support from volunteers to make this event possible. Importantly, all of this money was invested into the local community.

Item	Cost	In Kind	Cost
Venue Hire	\$50	Project management	2000
Speaker fees/gifts	\$1300	Promotion	100
Insurance	\$50	Accommodation	500
Local musician	\$500	Travel	300
Printing and promo	\$50	Evaluation	1000
Catering	\$550		
<b>Total Grant Funding</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>Total in Kind</b>	<b>3900</b>



Thank you to TRLA and Renewable Manilla for their support.

Report produced by Claire Rafferty, Fiona Kelly, Roxanne Lawson and Claire Rafferty - July 2024