



Project Report

Official opening of the Grey Grass Tree Enclosure - View Point St Arnaud



Recovery and Protection of the depleted iconic Grey Grasstree (*Xanthorrhoea glauca ssp. angustifolia*)
2016-2016

St Arnaud was settled in the 1850s during the Victorian Goldrush. While some gold was found, more silver and lead were unearthed and mining struggled on until the 1920s. As the township straggled over the hills a round it, the highest point became known as "View Point", a popular picnic spot.

On the south slope leading up to View Point, a large colony of Grasstrees was growing although decimated by tracks, rubbish dumping and fires. Grey Grasstrees can attain a height of 4m and live for up to 1000 years. Keen gardeners aspired to have a magnificent specimen in their garden and many were barrowed down the hill to a slow

death in the town. Over time, formed roads followed the winding tracks and the colony was cut into four. Being within a stone's throw of the town, the area was frequently burnt for fire protection. Most adult plants were lost during this era and the remaining plants today have been dated from then- that is around 100-150 years old.

In 2010, after the terrible Black Saturday fires of 2009, the area was once again targeted for fuel reduction burns.

Surveying the scene after the burns St Arnaud Field Nats decided to seek funding to provide protection for this remnant colony.



Danielle Green, Victorian Parliamentary Secretary visiting the View Point location behalf of the Victorian Government, hosted by Anne Hughes.

At the same time, news came through that our Grasstrees were in fact a threatened and rare species found only on the inland slopes of the Great Dividing Range - the Grey Grasstree- *Xanthorrhoea glauca* ssp. *angustifolia*. Lovers of Box-Ironbark forests this species was now found in only small scattered groups and under threat from clearing for agriculture, grazing animals, housing developments, fire, vandals and illegal collection.

In 2014, the Grey Grasstree was listed under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act of 1988 confirming our opinion that this species was special and in need of help.

We got our funding and in 2015, set about fencing the first two colonies - 659m of rabbit, hare, kangaroo and wallaby-proof fencing. on the western side of View Point Rd.



Grey Grasstree View Point with Field Nats fencing team- Haviva Perkal, Chris Campbell, Barry Robertson and John Boadle who completed fence.

During a monitoring day on our fenced colonies, we walked over onto the eastern side of View Point Road. The further we went down the hillside, the more Grasstrees we counted and we decided to look for funding to fence the 2 remaining colonies. Funding came through in late 2015 through the Victorian Government's Community Volunteer Action Grants and with the help of the locally based Drought Employment Program crew (DEP) we were able to complete the fences during Summer 2016. This was another 932m of rab-

bit-proof fencing.

Now we are moving- getting the fence up on the SE enclosure -705m with the DEP crew.

Once the fencing was completed we did a walk through and counted 996 Grey Grasstrees but found only 1 juvenile - and it was outside the fence!



Anne Hughes
President