Diversity Across the Wheatbelt.

We’re Putting it back, together

Aerial photographs depict work funded by Alcoa during the 1990s.
There are those rare moments in life when a vision becomes reality.

Such a vision was shared around a campfire at Dryandra, near Narrogin, in 1996. It was shared between a group of people from Western Power, wishing to assist farmers address land degradation and to improve nature conservation and biodiversity values on farmland within river catchments.

And so the Hotham-Williams Western Power Greening Challenge was born. Western Power provided the funds for seedlings, volunteer planters and fencing. Farmer groups within the Hotham-Williams River Catchment, 150km south east of Perth, provided the land, prepared it for planting and benefited from accelerated farm and catchment revegetation plans at less personal cost. The then Department of Agriculture and CALM provided technical help and project coordination and the community landcare coordinators provided the hands-on support to farmers.

Together, these partners planted 4.2 million seedlings over the seven years of the project. More than 100 local species were planted on 4,700 hectares of farmland and 860km of fencing was erected to protect the plantings. The number of farmers involved grew from 20 at the beginning of the project to over 250 in 2003 - farmers dedicated to protecting the plantings in the long term, improving the environment and the viability of their land.

The Greening Challenge also recruited a volunteer workforce of over 5,000 people during the life of the project. Families, retirees, school children, company employees, government agencies, local community groups, MOTT Activate group and even the entire crew of HMAS Anzac volunteered their time. They forged the all-important rural-city link, extending an awareness of landcare issues. What better way to increase understanding than to get city people involved in implementing solutions? They were an integral part of the program's success.

The Greening Challenge became the largest volunteer based revegetation program in Australia. It won many accolades and provided an enduring landscape record of the efforts of so many. It succeeded because individuals and groups shared a vision.

As coordinator of the Greening Challenge during that period, I was particularly impressed by the tolerance and patience displayed by the farming community, as they assessed the enormity of the revegetation tasks ahead of them.

But no one can do it on their own!

Men of the Trees has been working with Western Australian farmers since 1979. Inspired by the Greening Challenge experience, MOTT now has a renewed vision to strengthen its ties with farmers and the Western Australian community to implement large-scale revegetation projects in the Wheatbelt.

And that is why we have just launched, Putting it back, together.

I encourage members, friends and family to turn our vision into reality. Help us help the rural community by coming together to support Putting it back, together.
Men of the Trees has always had a key objective to grow and plant trees on degraded land, starting with Richard St Barbe Baker in Africa in 1922. Times have changed, planting techniques have changed, but the need for large-scale revegetation has not. This is why we need to be ‘Putting it back, together’.

The Western Australian Wheatbelt is home to some 69,000 people with agricultural production contributing in excess of $7 billion dollars annually to the WA economy. But times have never been tougher for our farmers. Changing weather patterns mean unreliable winter rainfall to grow annual crops. Together with rising input costs (fertilisers, diesel, sprays…) and fluctuating commodity prices, farmers do not have any guaranteed return from crops. In fact it can now cost a farmer more to put in a crop than they will get in return. The majority of farmers have debts that we city people cannot imagine. It is understandable then that revegetation projects are the first ones to be knocked off the ‘to do’ list, regardless of their perceived importance for natural resource management (NRM).
Some statistics:
• WA Wheatbelt is over 19 million hectares in size.
• Approximately 93% has been cleared for European-style agriculture.
• 18 million hectares are cleared (including roads and towns as well as agriculture).
• Revegetating just 10% of the cleared land equates to 1.8 million hectares.

No one can do it on their own; we cannot wait for government to foot the entire bill - nor the farmers.

Today it is harder than ever to access government funding. Today it is harder than ever to access corporate funding. Today environmental problems are not going away.

Today it is time for Men of the Trees members to step into the breach and help put the landscape back together. Together - each one of us, together - with our farmers, together - as a community.

Men of the Trees have set an initial target for ‘Putting it back, together’ of raising 1,000 lots of $1,000 to enable us to work with groups of farmers in 2011 and beyond. We hope that as the program matures we will be able to replicate ‘Putting it back, together’ throughout the Wheatbelt.

What will we do with the money raised?
We are calling for Expressions of Interest from farmer groups to work with us on ‘Putting it back, together’, implementing plantings that will fit in with the landscape, with the farmer’s needs, with NRM outcomes in mind. The money we raise through ‘Putting it back, together’ will fund seed collecting, growing of seedlings, farm design, site preparation, volunteer plantings and much more.

What are we doing?
Working with farmers and the natural resource management community to plant well designed revegetation projects that will:
• Halt wind and water erosion - keeping valuable top soil in place.
• Utilise excess groundwater - to halt salinity and waterlogging.
• Act as living bridges so native fauna can move across the landscape.
• Fit in with the farmers' needs.
The Morbinning Catchment Group is one of the groups that has been chosen for the Men of the Trees' 2011 'Putting it back, together' planting. The first proposed project involves 5 neighbouring land managers who want to revegetate and protect a creek that runs through their properties.

In March 1989, the Morbinning Catchment Group was one of the first catchment groups to be formed in the State. They were one of the groups supported by Alcoa during the decade of landcare and did a huge amount of work in that time - but there still remains a lot to be done. Many of those who we will be working with were youngsters during those early days, but have now taken over the farms and have a keen interest in protecting their land for their own children and are looking for ways to make their farms sustainable into the future, particularly in a potentially changing climate.

The Morbinning Catchment Group consists of 20 farming families on 16 farming units covering 25,673 hectares. The types of activities 'Putting it back, together' will be assisting with include, but are not limited to:

- Prevention of further soil erosion.
- Halting salinity.
- Restoration of native vegetation to encourage native fauna to return to the area.
- Joining of remnant vegetation to provide corridors for native fauna.

Over the years the group have already:

- Mapped soils across the catchment and individual farms.
- Conducted electrical conductivity and magnetometry surveys.
- Completed farm planning.
- Worked with Greening Australia, becoming one of five 'Living Landscape' catchments in the WA Wheatbelt.
- Worked with the SGSL (Sustainable Grazing on Saline Lands) by planting a variety of salt tolerant species to reclaim unproductive land.
- Planted areas of farm forestry under the FPC.
- Rehabilitated creeklines with oil mallee plantings and other suitable trees.
- Planted large areas of sandalwood to increase production on sandy soils.
- Landholder funded planting of native plant species.

Coordinator, Sarah Aynsley, said, 'Although the catchment group has been involved in a number of projects over the years, we are mindful that conservation is an ongoing commitment. The various tree plantings in the area have proven to be extremely beneficial and this is further encouragement for us to continue improving our environment with a view to sustainable agricultural as well as preserving our land for future generations.'

Men of the Trees' members and supporters, as well as sponsors of 'Putting it back, together', will have the opportunity to help plant the much needed seedlings next winter and meet the land managers involved. Remember to support the Morbinning Catchment Group by helping us to raise the funds.
Water flowing off the Morbinning catchment flows directly into the Yenyening lake system. Land managers in Morbinning have long been concerned about the health of the Yenyening Lakes and have been proactive in participating to develop a management plan.

Living so far from the coast, farmers used to use the lake for family picnics and for waterskiing.

Help us help the Morbinning Catchment Group put their landscape and their community back together.
MISSION

To bring people together to grow and plant trees and to achieve healthy, productive, sustainable landscapes.

VISION

To be well respected nationally for our leadership role in engaging with community and, together with partners and volunteers, improve the health, productivity and sustainability of degraded land.

GOALS

Our key goals are:

Goal One: To acquire and revegetate 2,000 hectares of Wheatbelt land to a hydrological and ecological steady state, and to champion biodiversity plantings across WA to improve the health, productivity and sustainability of degraded land.

Goal Two: To become a leader in environmental education specialising in revegetation, food and community engagement.

Goal Three: To achieve 200 new active champions to help MOTT achieve this vision.

Goal Four: To ensure continuous improvement to achieve excellence in financial and organisational management and governance whilst maintaining a strong community spirit.

In Western Australia we have a number of locations from which the society operates.

Headquarters - St Barbe Grove Nursery, Hazelmere
City Farm, East Perth
Peel Region
Dowerin Region
Revegetation Team
Rockingham Nursery
Help us put the landscape and rural communities back together. How can you help?

- Join together with friends and family to raise individual $1,000 lots.
- Businesses can contribute one or more $1,000 lots.
- Sponsors can contribute larger amounts to Men of the Trees.
- Bequests and salary sacrifices are welcome.
- Think of innovative ways to raise $1,000 lots - sponsored cycle-thons, sponsored walks, calendars, book sales... let's see how creative we can be.

Help us help the rural community in ‘Putting it back, together’.

For more information on ‘Putting it back, together’ or to discuss your fundraising ideas contact Acting Reveg Team Manager Monica on 0418 934 870 or email mottplanting@iinet.net.au

Your donations will go towards seed collection, growing seedlings, preparation of planting sites and planting.

Donations can go through Men of the Trees’ Public Environmental Gift Fund to be tax deductible. Individuals can donate as many lots of $1,000 as they like but groups may also like to form syndicates to raise the $1,000 lots.

Trees grown and planted through your support will make a world of difference. These trees will improve the local environment and clean the air for fifty - even one hundred years or more!

In return for your contribution we will send you a thank you package that includes:
- Certificate
- Fact sheet
- Men of the Trees bumper sticker
- Tax deductible donation receipt
- Annual update of progress associated with the planting sites in this program
- Invitation to join us to plant the seedlings.

Post to PO Box 103, Guildford WA 6935, fax 9250 2735 or email contact@menofthetrees.com.au

Yes! I/We want to help Putting it back, together

Name:....................................................................................................
Address:.................................................................................................
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Phone:..................................................................................................
Mobile:.................................................................................................
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Payment method:
- ☐ Cheque  ☐ Credit Card
  Cheques to be made payable to the ‘Men of the Trees Public Environmental Gift Fund’
Type:  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Visa
Number                                          Expiry: ....../........
Name on card:..............................................................
Signature:........................................................................

Enclosed is the amount of $..........................................
as a tax deductible donation for Putting it back, together.