

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER

Number 117 Summer Edition

February 2020



Fighting Back



Editor: Kerry Steller
Armidale Tree Group
80 Mann St, Armidale, 2350
Phone 67711620
www.armidaletreegroup.org

Cover Photo: New England Peppermints recover from November fire near Cathedral Rock NP. Photo: Dave Carr

Editor's note: 2020 Summer Edition

We chose 'Fighting Back' as a theme for our Summer Newsletter after the amazing rains that we never thought would come to replenish our parched land. The amazing regeneration after drought and fires shows us the amazing resilience of our native plants in Australia. We continue to monitor through our drought monitoring using photos of vegetation in specific locations so as to get an accurate record of what is changing in our landscape with our ongoing climate change conditions.

In this edition we have the following articles:

- Photos of our vegetation 'Fighting Back' and Drought Monitoring details
- Helping our Koalas
- Drought Hardy Gems of New England
- Acacia Park Our new Crown Land management area
- Helen Schwarz Memorial Planting at the Pine Forest
- The Urban Forest project
- An update on the Enmore Salisbury Waters TSR planting and planning for our Habitat and Haven planting coming up on 29th March as part of our Environmental Trust Project
- Narelle Clarke's Favourite Tree
- Upcoming Nature Journalling workshop by Dr Paula Peeters

Congratulations to Armidale Regional Council's **Environmental Citizen of the Year – Armidale Urban Rivercare Group**. Led by Bruce Whan, the Armidale Urban Rivercare Group has facilitated hydrology and regeneration works on Dumaresq Creek for about 40 years. What a great job they've done!

Request: A call out to all members to locate possible sites for harvesting native grass seeds to replace losses due to drought. Contact the Tree Group.

Funding for drought monitoring: \$2,200 has come from Macquarie University to help fund our drought monitoring program.

Committee news from our AGM

Our AGM was held on 18th December. Our ATG Committee for 2020: David Steller President, David Carr (Vice President), Garry Slocombe (Treasurer), Narelle Clarke (Secretary), Kerry Steller (Public Officer), Kate Boyd, Chris Nadolny, Angus Adair, Paul McFarland, Helen Webb, John Lemon, Peter Metcalfe.

President's Report to AGM - David Steller

What a difficult year it has been with record-breaking drought conditions greatly impacting on our Community and our natural environment. The landscape is stressed as fauna and flora dies and we are unable to water our gardens. That aside, the Armidale Tree Group, nearing 35 years of operations, is still able to provide valuable services to our community and support the environment. Sure, we have been mean and lean but new opportunities have been pursued and demand for our services outside the region has grown.

We are in a great position for when the drought breaks and demand for replacement trees and planting of the vast quantity of plant stock we have on order can be shipped out the gate and into the ground. I have to thank our valuable and talented staff and volunteers who have shown great initiative and duty in keeping the plant stock alive and preparing new stock for planting when drought breaking rains come. As Alicia will report we have had a successful year sourcing new opportunities and growing our skills and knowledge to provide a broader range of services. Thank you Alicia for your dedication, initiative and support of our valuable and loyal staff and volunteers. To Rob, Paul, Eowyn, Ed and casual staff thanks for your work and effort on developing new ways to assist our long-term survival.

Thanks also to our volunteers, especially our Committee of Management who have kept a close eye on our operations and strategic direction in providing a better environment on the tablelands. Special thanks to Chris, Dave, John and Peter for their technical, botanical, ecological and governance skills in assisting with grant applications opportunities and advice to our customers and community generally. Thanks to Narelle for taking minutes and keeping our recording of important events up to date, Helen as our environmental warrior and Kerry as our education and Public Officer. Thanks also to our new members Paul McFarlane, Jennifer Reinfleish and Will Winter for their valuable contributions and we wish Jenny and Will all the best as they are standing down this year. A very special thanks to Garry Slocombe who stepped up to the Treasurers role when Michael Patterson resigned mid-year. Garry took on a huge workload to rearrange our accounting system and introducing new software to make our operations more efficient and easier to understand and report on. Thanks must also go to Carla for her efforts working out the bugs in the new system and “garrifying” everything. Lastly to Greg who has taken on the role to audit our financials following on from the years of audit services provided by Brian Coggan, who we thanked for his contribution at a special event earlier this year.

Manager's report to AGM – Alicia Cooper

The ongoing drought has impacted us with landholders and gardeners being heavily restricted with what they can plant. In response to the level 5 water restrictions, we modified our irrigation and the nursery is now using the water from our dam in Black Gully. Our drinking water is from our rainwater tank. This year was the furthest we have travelled so far for work; Paul and the Environmental Services crew have carried out planting works for solar farms outside Gulgong and Orange. These farms usually have requirements from DPE to maintain the plantings, so maintenance watering is factored in to ensure survival.

We provided the plants and labour for the vegetation screening of the medicinal marijuana farm in Tamworth. We are continuing to water the screening at Metz Solar farm. We have had higher losses than we would like for this planting, due to the difficulty of the site and delay in approval from the client for additional watering. We also carried out planting works for the UNE solar farm, which required the crew to mulch over 2500 trees. Paul reports there is over 95% success rate so far.

Environmental services has also been undertaking bush restoration works for OEH and NPWS. This is concentrating on sites containing endangered orchids *Pterostylis metcalfei*, *Diuris pendunculata* and *Eucalyptus magnificata*. To meet the demands of our larger project a second-hand trailer was purchased for ES and it has been modified into a larger capacity water trailer.

In anticipation of the ongoing lack of rainfall, production and stock purchasing for the retail department has been scaled back, which helped to significantly decrease our cost of sales while still providing a good selection for those who can pop a few plants in. Emily Wade, our long serving retail casual has moved on to focus on the business she and her friends are starting.

As part of the Every Tree Counts project a community planting day was held at Enmore in March. With the generous help of 40-50 members, 2000 trees and shrubs were planted for habitat at Salisbury Waters TSR. Thanks are owed to Chris, Helen, Dave Steller, Narelle and Peter, who have been volunteering their time to chip weeds and water.

ATG Financial reports from the AGM are available to members on request.

Kerry Steller (editor)

Fighting Back

If you have any great fighting back pictures send them to us and record the progress of the vegetation around your place.



Canopy of drought affected trees at Sunnyside. Photo: Dave Carr



Epicormic shoots on New England Peppermint after Ebor fire. Photo: Dave Carr

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP

CAN YOU HELP US?

**ATG
Drought
Monitoring**

**TAKE PHOTOS OF A PATCH OF BUSH
EVERY MONTH FOR A YEAR**

**RECORD THE EXACT LOCATION AND
NOTE THE DATES**

**We want to have ongoing drought data so we
can see what survives best in this
unprecedented drought**

**WHAT YOU
NEED TO DO**

**TAKE PHOTOS OF THE SAME
AREA OF BUSH EVERY
MONTH.....**

- 1 Sign up with the ATG with your contact details
- 2 Choose a patch of bushland that you would like to monitor and note its exact location using GPS
- 3 Take a photo of this patch of bushland every month and record the date/s of your photographs
- 4 We will contact you to send in the results of your study of this bushland after 12 months.

For more information or to send any results in contact manager@armidaletreegroup.com or phone 67711620

Why?
SO WE CAN SEE WHAT SURVIVES
BEST IN THE DRY CONDITIONS
AND ALSO WHAT COMES BACK
AFTER RAIN

When?
ONCE A MONTH FOR
TWELVE MONTHS

How?
TAKE A PHOTO ONCE A
MONTH AND GIVE DATE AND
LOCATION WITH
COORDINATES

MIKE O'KEEFE WOODLAND
50 5158 151 670987
21/09/2018

MIKE O'KEEFE WOODLAND
50 5158 151 670987
3/07/2019

MIKE O'KEEFE WOODLAND
50 5158 151 670987
03/10/2019

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP

HELPING OUR KOALAS

Donate to help koalas.

The Armidale Tree Group is working with Armidale Regional Council to install and maintain drinking stations for koalas and other wildlife in local areas affected by the drought. You can help us protect koalas by making a tax-deductible donation. \$1000 will buy and maintain a koala drinking station. \$100 will plant and maintain 10 koala food trees.

To make a tax-deductible donation go to <http://armidaletreegroup.org.au/donate-or-volunteer/> or call into the nursery at 80 Mann St.



ATG committee member John Lemon helps set up a Koala drinking station



Drought Hardy Gems

Stand out natives which survived our driest year on record

by Alicia Cooper

While the past two years have been an extremely challenging and disheartening time for many gardeners, it has also been an interesting learning experience. Discovering which of our beloved plants are incredibly drought hardy will help us make more informed choices for future garden plans. Although, we all hope that the conditions we were experiencing will not be a regular occurrence. This is by no means an exhaustive list on all the species to have survived the drought; unfortunately we simply don't have the space in this newsletter! This is merely a selection of those wonderful plants which managed to pull through the atrocious conditions of 2019.

It is important to remember that both plants and gardens are individuals, so certain readers may have lost some of the plants listed below. This could be due to genetic differences in the plant, variable soil types and conditions, a lack (or abundance) of certain nutrients, a difference in the amount of grey water available or a myriad of other reasons. Overall however, the following species represented themselves admirably.

We would like to thank Penelope Sinclair and Gordon McLennan for sharing their gardens with us.

Eremophila maculata x racemosa

2m



Photo by Alicia Cooper

The name “Eremophila” means “desert loving” so it’s perhaps no surprise that this lovely shrub managed to sail through with flying (and very attractive) colours. The yellow buds take on a sunset hue as they form, eventually changing to pink as they open. This creates a striking multi-coloured effect, making it a wonderful feature plant. Personally, I’m quite fond of the common name it’s often sold by in the US, as I think it captures the essence of this colourful shrub - Eremophila ‘Fairy Floss’.

***Swainsona galegifolia* - Smooth Darling Pea**

0.5-1m



This delightful perennial pea comes in a range of flower colours, including mauves, orange and shades of pink. They truly shine when massed together, which creates a green mound with multi-coloured flowers held above the soft foliage. We have small groupings scattered around the ATG, many of which receive no care from us but continue to delight year after year.

Callistemon citrinus 'Endeavour'



Callistemons are a fabulous group in general; their ability to cope with both dry and boggy soils opens up a colourful palette of reds, mauves, pinks, yellow and white for many gardeners to choose from. While some have had mixed results during the last year with their bottlebrushes, in general this hardy cultivar has tolerated the dry remarkably well. The multitude of cherry red brushes are a standout feature, complemented by the pink-tinged new growth. It is naturally very dense, although, as with all Callistemons, pruning after flowering is recommended.

***Melaleuca decussata* - Cross-leaf Honey-myrtle**

3m



There's a lot to love about this versatile shrub. The lilac coloured flowers fade to white as they age, giving a beautiful two-toned effect when it is in bloom. Its compact habit lends excellently to screening or hedging and the stem clasping foliage makes it a wonderful feature plant even when out of bloom. Perhaps one of the best attributes is that there is also a dwarf form, reaching only 1.5m, so even gardeners with small spaces can enjoy this lovely Melaleuca.

***Grevillea* ‘Nancy Otzen’**

2m



A standout example of hardiness, my mature specimen survived the dry, sandy soils of Yarrowyck with only 225mL of rain for 2019. I gave it no extra water, yet it remained green and even managed to bravely put out a few small flowers. It's quite dense and makes a great home for wrens either on its own or as part of a hedge.

Crowea exalata

70cm



The highlight of this small shrub is its near constant display of rose pink, starry flowers. Before they fall, the flowers close again to pink buds, so Croweas avoid the tired and bedraggled end-of-flowering look common to many plants.

Acacia Park

by Alicia Cooper

We have taken on the environmental management of Acacia Park, a Crown Reserve located on the southern side of Armidale. This 27.85-hectare reserve holds a remnant endangered ecological community - White Box - Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland. Areas of this community that contain mature and regenerating trees are important to retain, as they provide current and future breeding and foraging habitat for woodland animals, such as Regent Honeyeaters (*Xanthomyza phrygia*) and Squirrel Gliders (*Petaurus norfolcensis*).

Drifts of blue and gold can be found in the more open areas, where the floriferous native Bluebells (*Wahlenbergia sp.*) and Yellow Buttons (*Crysocephalum apiculatum*) are taking advantage of the recent rains.



The Armidale Tree Group will transform Acacia Park.
Photos: Alicia Cooper, Garry Slocombe



We have a lot of work ahead of us, as the site was being used as a Travelling Stock Reserve and currently contains a large number of woody weeds. These must be controlled in stages, as their dense, thorny growth is providing habitat for small woodland birds. We plan to slowly remove them while planting

out small thickets of Native Blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*).

We will be planting out tree and shrub species that naturally occur in the community, but this will be done in a manner that reflects the woodland community - linear rows of tree trunks marching across the landscape will not be seen! Instead we will aim to plant widely spaced trees and shrubs leaving plenty of room for native grasses and wildflowers.

We are happy to have the enthusiasm and support of the residents and businesses adjoining the reserve and look forward to tackling this project.

Every Tree Counts

Helen Webb reports on our recent volunteer plantings and their maintenance:



Thanks to outstanding efforts of ATG staff during the long hot dry period there was a good supply of healthy plants ready to go when Armidale finally received consistent rain. This enabled three recent plantings on behalf of Armidale Tree Group – the Helen Schwarz Memorial Planting at the Armidale Pine Forest, the Urban Forest north of Dumaresq Creek and west of Cooks Road and the Enmore TSR Every Tree Counts Community Planting.

1. Helen Schwarz Memorial Planting at the Armidale Pine Forest

ATG committed last year to providing plants in memory of Helen Schwarz for her wonderful revegetation efforts in Armidale Pine Forest. It was decided to plant these in an existing planting site on the western bank of Tilbuster Creek south of Rockvale Road. The site was chosen because of:

- Helen's involvement in the original planting
- recent effective blackberry treatment along the bank
- potential for exclusion fencing of cattle
- light brassica weed infestation allowing quick and easy weeding to enable plants to go in before predicted rain
- existing shrubs indicating that the site has been previously planted with partial survival of tea tree, bottlebrush, wattle and lomandra



Volunteers at the planting day at the Pine Forest to remember Helen Schwarz. Photo: Helen Webb

There was a good roll up of volunteers on planting day (Helen Webb, Terry Manley, Ros Bird, Bar Finch, Sara Schmude, Iain McKay, John Kleeman, Garry Slocombe and Maurice Ankar). 120 plants were planted on 01/02/2020 and on two follow up planting days - a mixture of *Leptospermum polygalifolium*, *Callistemon sieberi*, *Acacia rubida*, *Lomandra longifolia*, with a few *Eucalyptus viminalis* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana*. All were consistent with the existing planting. It was encouraging to find (and stake) some self-seeding wattles and native groundcovers growing under the big crop of brassica plants that we weeded out. The site looked much better after our efforts.

Garry and Helen also pulled out about 50 *Datura stramonium* (thornapple), some very large, that had been getting ready to drop seeds all through the area. It was a good thing that the mulch promised by NSW Forestry Corporation had not yet been spread as there was clear evidence when Helen returned to check the site on 16 Feb that the creek banks and planting had been well under water following recent heavy rain. All planted shrubs and trees were intact - some cartons had been washed off but most were found and repositioned. The planting has had a good soak and should do well as long as there is follow up weed management. Is there anyone who would like volunteer to take responsibility for organising this?

2. Urban Forest north of Dumaresq Creek and west of Cooks Road

Despite fairly poor rainfall since it was planted, and last year's severe drought, shrubs and trees in the long rows of the urban forest took off in spring and summer 2019, making good growth in the rich alluvial soil adjacent to the creek. The site got its first really good wetting in January this year which provided an opportunity for replacement of dead plants. There has also been a remarkable regeneration of local groundcover plant species such as *Cullen Tenax*, *Convolvulus angustissimus*, *Chloris truncata* (windmill grass), *Erengrostis leptostachia* (native love grass), *Geranium* sp., *Glycine tabacina*,

Dicondra repens, *Bothriachloa macra* (red grass), *Goodenia* sp., *Wahlenbergia* sp., and *Asperula conferta*.



Urban Forest. Wildflowers have started growing amongst the plantings.
Photo: Helen Webb

It was decided that planting of local wildflowers would be appropriate in bare areas along rows in the more sandy location where naturally occurring native species predominated. Approximately 120 shrubs and trees have been planted in gaps as well as 80 wildflowers. Volunteers have done a considerable amount of weeding along rows and removed or replaced degraded cartons where necessary. This has meant that rows are better defined and council staff are better able to locate rows and mow between. Follow up rain has meant that all the plants are doing well, but are at risk of being overtaken by weeds at some locations. Volunteers willing to undertake follow up weeding would be very much appreciated. Please contact Helen Webb 0432838049.

3. Enmore Salisbury Waters TSR Community Planting

An amazing proportion of the 2000 plants in last Autumn's planted at Enmore TSR have survived considering that drought conditions have prevailed since. Some weed work has been done (thanks to Paul Cahill, Narelle Clarke, Chris Nadolny, Peter Metcalfe, and Helen Webb for some weed maintenance work). Ongoing rain has provided an ideal opportunity to weed and replant shrubs and trees that have died. A lot of native groundcover species and wildflowers have regenerated on the site as well as a plethora of weeds that threaten to overgrow plants unless we are attentive to weed management. Six volunteers (Dave Carr, Helen Webb, Chris Nadolny, Narelle Clarke, Garry Slocombe and Terry Manley) braved intermittent rain at the working bee on 09/02/2020, hoeing weeds such as large plantain and thistles along the rows and removing cartons from dead plants at the south west planting site. 38 *Eucalyptus viminalis* were

planted along with approximately 30 *Callistemon pungens*.



Rain clouds gather over the Enmore planting that 50 volunteers planted last Autumn.
Photo: Helen Webb

Helen followed up with an additional planting of 120 *Callistemon*, *Leptospermum* and *Acacia rubida* hoping to get them in the ground before the forecast rain that afternoon, which turned out to be the best fall we have had so far. Again, more work is needed to follow up at the south-west planting as well as make a start on the south east planting that also needs extensive weed management and replacement planting.



Watering, weed control and infill plantings at Salisbury Waters TSR at Enmore has been ongoing by committed volunteers. Photos: Garry Slocombe



Our next volunteer's day is our Habitat and Haven Community Planting Day on 29th March. (see below for details). Come and join our community planting day.

Habitat & Haven Community Planting Day

The heavens have opened! The fragrance of wet earth and the fresh clothing of green across the landscape is lifting our spirits along with the rivers. The timing could not be better for a great day of planting at Salisbury Waters. This is our first community day as part of our Environmental Trust project - **“Habitat and Haven”**. We will be planting along the riparian zone with a mix of grasses, sedges and shrubs that will eventually provide a haven for frogs, water birds and platypus! One of our team members was lucky enough to spot this shy little local and we’re excited to be helping improve its home.

We’ll also be planting out areas of New England Peppermint woodland; remnants of this once widespread ecological community still occur in the area, although they are now listed as critically endangered.

We’ll start the planting at 2pm and we will finish off the day with a BBQ at 5:30pm.

Volunteers of all ages are welcome. Please email Alicia, manager@armidaletreegroup.org.au or call the nursery on 02 6771 1620 to put



your name on the list. Please also let us know if you would like a vegetarian option, so we can plan catering. We hope to see you there!

When: Sunday, 29th March 2:00pm

Where: Salisbury Waters TSR. Take Dangarsleigh Rd and travel past the turnoff to Dangar’s Falls, past the Dangarsleigh Hall and onto Enmore Rd. The Salisbury Waters TSR is on the left immediately after you cross Salisbury Waters.

Bring: Closed in shoes, hat, water, gloves.

Provided: Portaloo, Sunscreen, First Aid, planting tools, BBQ (meat and vegetarian) and extra water.

My Favourite Native Tree

Narelle Clarke



Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) in Narelle and Greg Clarke's property in the afternoon sun. Photo: Narelle Clarke

This beautiful Sydney Blue Gum – (*Eucalyptus saligna*) has grown from strength to strength despite the drought. I credit its success to its proud heritage as one of the last Sydney Blue Gums propagated by Michael O'Keeffe. It commands a prominent place in our garden and when the sun has almost set after an afternoon shower it glows golden, fiery red and it is hard to believe that the beauty you are seeing is true.

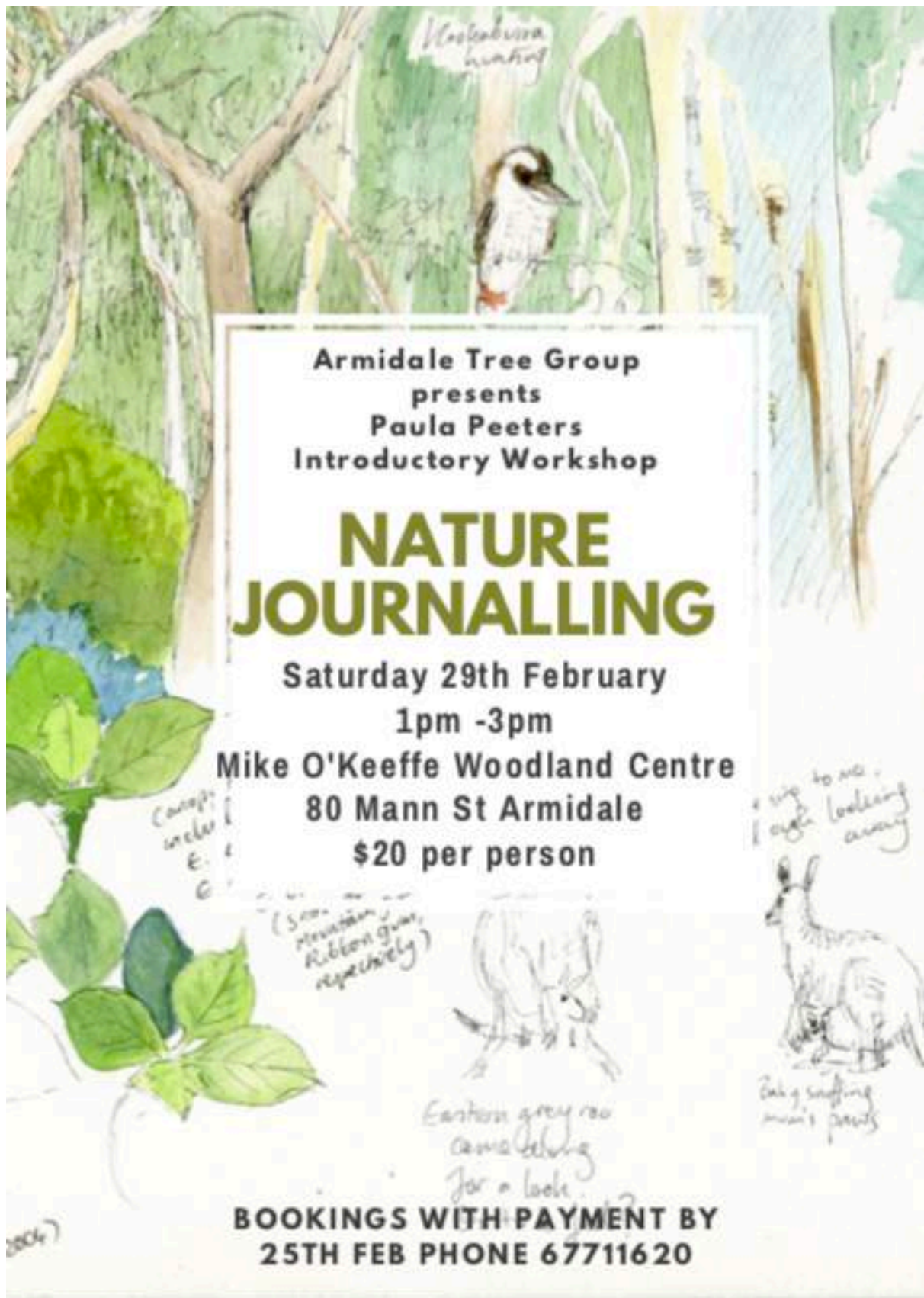
We call it ‘Mike’s Tree’ – It’s just one of a teaming legacy of native trees across New England and beyond but also a joyful reminder of the man. When the light is right I just have to go and admire in wonder and remember. That’s why, among all the glorious possibilities it’s my favourite tree.



Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) in Narelle and Greg Clarke’s property
Photo: Narelle Clarke

Do you have a favourite native tree?

Send a picture and tell us about why you love this particular tree. If you have a poetic bent you may wish to send us a poem about a tree or trees, as well as or instead of a photo.
Send to manager@armidaletreegroup.org.au



Details of what to bring will be provided on booking.



Membership Application/Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

***Email (Required):** _____

Payment method: cash / cheque / credit card / direct credit

Please indicate your membership preference, you will receive an email when membership is due:

- ☐ \$5.00 for 1 year
- ☐ \$10 for 2 years
- ☐ \$25 for 5 years
- ☐ \$50 for 10 years

Donation \$ _____

Please find enclosed my/our cheque* for \$ _____

* Make cheques payable to Armidale Tree Group Inc.

or

Please debit my credit card for \$ _____

Card type: Visa / Mastercard only

Card number: _____

Expiry date: _____

CCV number: _____

Name on card _____

Signature: _____

To pay by Direct Credit Please remit payment to

BSB: 932000 Account No...620682 (please tag payment as 'subs')

accounts@armidaletreegroup.org.au

Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible to The Armidale Tree Group Fund

Date processed: _____

Office use only
