

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER

Number 113 Winter Edition

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Let's Look for Positives During this Drought **John Lemon**



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Cover Photo:

Cover Photo: Field Day at Gunnedah Research Centre 2001

Editor's note: 2018 Winter Edition

This issue has a drought focus, as it is a desperate time for us all. As I write this editorial it is raining steadily and I hope it continues for some time. John Lemon and Peter Metcalfe have provided insightful articles on 'Lets Look for Positives in this Drought ' and 'Lessons from the Drought'.

John Lemon has spent many years working at the Gunnedah Research Centre in Gunnedah. He has undertaken environmental research projects and established habitat sites across the sheep/wheat belt of NSW over the last 25 years. After moving to Armidale in 2014 he joined the Armidale Tree Group Committee and has shown great support in adapting his Slopes and Plains knowledge to the Northern Tablelands. Peter Metcalfe has been a Committee Member since 1996 and he is an ATG Life Member for his contribution to the Environment and Environmental Education.



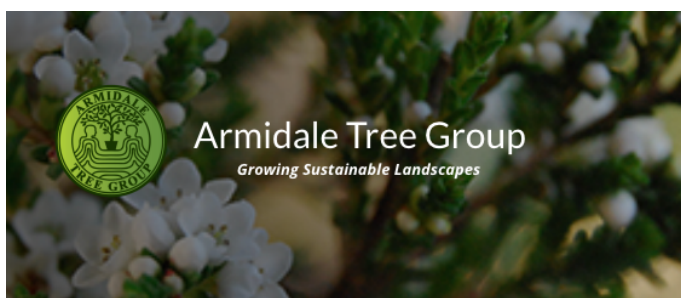
Janeen Robb has continued the work of CWC (Citizen's Wildlife Corridors) in taking over the assessments of Land for Wildlife and tells you about how to become involved in this voluntary scheme.

It is with great sadness that we note the recent death of our dear friend Helen Schwarz, an ATG Life Member and past ATG Committee Secretary whose dedication and enthusiasm in the cause of biodiversity through the restoration of the Pine Forest has been little more than amazing. We will miss her infectious enthusiasm and love of nature.

We have included an update on Every Tree Counts. Thank you to those who have supported this new project of the Armidale Tree Group. More details to come with details of our big community planting at Saumarez creek in Spring.



Thanks to ATG Committee Member Kristal Yee who is developing our new look ATG website "**Growing Sustainable Landscapes**". It is still a work in progress.



Kerry Steller
(editor)

Let's Look for Positives During this Drought

John Lemon

Do you remember that smell when rain falls on parched ground? It has been a while.

In the journal Nature, published on the 7th of March 1964, two CSIRO researchers, Isabel Bear and Richard Thomas first described it in their paper, "Nature of Argillaceous Odour". Petrichor is derived from the Greek "petra" (stone) and "ichor" which in Greek mythology is the ethereal blood of the gods. It's a very interesting story and let us hope that we experience that smell soon.

During droughts, especially on the heavier clay soils but also on other soil types, cracking and subsequent recycling of nutrients and topsoil occurs over a longer period of time.

One of the few opportunities that drought offers is the ability undertake preparation for planting of habitat for native fauna. Such plantings can be structured so they provide the additional benefits of shade and shelter for livestock. Not only are there biodiversity benefits but also primary production

benefits as well. As we all know, the pressure on landholders during extended periods of drought is physically, emotionally and mentally draining. It's difficult to be positive under these circumstances but planning and implementing such a strategy can assist in many ways.

Over time, whether due to compaction by stock or farming machinery, what is called a compaction layer can form. When it is as dry as it is now, the opportunity to shatter that compaction layer occurs. If landholders choose to take this opportunity to prepare a suitable site for habitat establishment then this is one of the few positives that drought offers.

On most properties there are sites that aren't as productive as other parts of the paddocks. Often these are a sensible selection and if they can be linked to existing remnant native vegetation then that is a significant bonus. It is always best to view any such plantings in a whole of landscape perspective.

There are numerous government agencies that can assist regarding funding for on ground works such as the Local Land Services, Landcare groups and the recently formed Biodiversity Conservation Trust. The potential for commercial and private investment for biodiversity offsets and carbon sequestration credits is an avenue also worth investigating.

So, how to get this underway if it works for you?

- Select the site that suits from a landscape perspective but it also has to fit your farm plan
- Deep rip to a depth between 50 to 70cms
- Fence off the area to exclude stock
- When it rains enough to promote weed germination spray out weeds as required
- Harvest rain and build moisture reserves so that there is a full moisture profile
- Depending on your location, the time of planting could vary – seek local advice
- Moisture retention, weed and animal control are crucial

- Tree guards, mulch and spraying weeds are all part of the maintenance schedule
- Trees and shrubs will need to be watered in at establishment, unless it buckets down
- If enough water has been stored generally a few follow up waterings may be necessary – it will obviously depend on the season
- All sites are different and the species mixture will depend on location
- A mixture of over-storey, mid-storey and under-storey plants are desirable and up to twenty different species can be considered – local species and provenance are preferred
- If managed properly, native grasses and ground cover species will re-establish

One of the most satisfying results from such plantings is the positive biodiversity result. The cover photo depicts a worn out, nutrient depleted cropping paddock that had been farmed for more than seventy years. Crop returns barely covered costs.



Gunnedah Research Centre before 1950



Gunnedah Research Centre habitat plantings 2015 (*Photo: John Lemon*)

In 2001 this area was planted to a combination of tube stock and direct seeded native mid-storey and under-storey species. In 2010, as part of spring and autumn small mammal trapping, Common Dunnarts, *Sminthopsis murina*, as well as other native species were caught and released. This was the Eureka moment since I coined the term, habitat reconstruction, to explain what I was trying to achieve. Koalas and other native mammals also use the sites. Some vulnerable and threatened bird species such as Painted Honeyeaters, Speckled Warblers, Glossy Black Cockatoos, Little Lorikeets, Turquoise Parrots, Brown Treecreepers and Dusky Wood Swallows have been observed on this and other adjoining habitat reconstruction sites. To achieve this within a

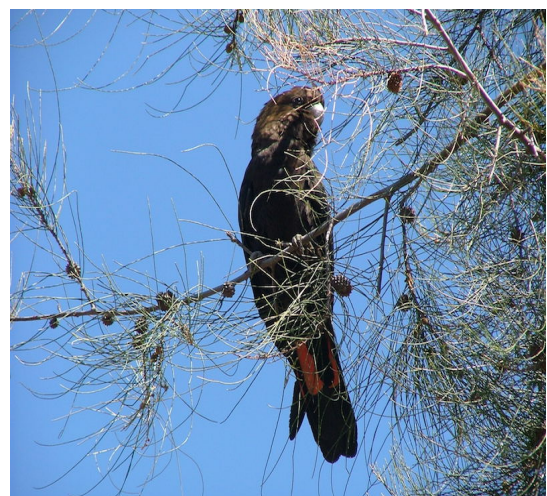
decade is quite uplifting but it also links in with a habitat reconstruction project that commenced in 1991.

It's important to note that the majority of this work was undertaken at the Gunnedah Research Centre on the slopes and plains. The temperatures are much higher as is evapotranspiration whereas the temperatures on the Tablelands are much lower in winter so frost damage is a consideration when planning for planting. However, the planning and planting principles are much the same.

So, in conclusion, if you have the opportunity to undertake such an initiative feel free to contact myself, the Armidale Tree Group or any of the agencies above.



Common dunnart (Photo: John Lemon)



Glossy Black Cockatoo (Photo: John Lemon)



Let us hope that very soon we will experience the smell of steady rain on our parched land, which will give us the opportunity to us, the word, "*petrichor*."

Mother and Joey in River Red Gum (Photo: John Lemon)

Lessons from the Drought

Peter Metcalfe

1. The Bird Bath

The hot dry weather over 2014 and now 2018 made the value of a birdbath very obvious. Species of birds that have not visited before became regular visitors during the drought. One morning an Olive Oriole and an Eastern Shriketit joined the 15 or so regular species. Available drinking water must be one of the limiting factors in the bush when you think of how far it can be from a dry ridge top to the nearest available water down in the creek.

2. Trees in the wrong place

Several Snow Gums, Black Sallies and Peppermints died in 2014 after having survived on the hill for many years. Others have survived because they were planted further down the hill. Three mature Euc macarthurii – Paddy's River Box had died in previous droughts. Possibly they are adapted to cooler and moister conditions on the Southern Tablelands. For contrast, back in a wet year some Yellow Box saplings that had developed at the bottom of the hill died from "wet feet". The extremes of wet and dry are the environmental factors that define areas where particular species grow in New England.

3. The value of mulch

The garden beds that have been mulched thickly with organic mulch from Armidale Regional Council retained their moisture for longer but without deep penetrating rain the mulched beds eventually dry out too. That is the down side of mulch; light rain does not penetrate the mulch and moisten the soil beneath. Other Armidale gardeners prefer sand mulch to the organic mulch.

4. Deep watering

Since light sprinkling of water does not penetrate through the mulch to the root zone it is important to allow water to soak in at the base of the newer plants. The older plants have more expansive root systems, often running along at a shallow depth where the mulch keeps the soil cooler than exposed surfaces.

5. Indicator plants

Some plants such as *Prostanthera lasiantha* are good indicator plants whose leaves droop when the soil gets too dry for them. When they are wilting it is a sign that other species like bottlebrush are suffering even if they are not showing symptoms because they have stiff leaves.

Put your birdbath where you can see it easily so you can enjoy the birds as they come in for a bath or a drink. They like to have a clear view in case of predators but they like nearby shelter where they can dry their feathers and preen.

Birds like fresh water and flock in when the dishes have just been topped up.

In the hot weeks after Christmas we have seen the following birds at the birdbath.



Double-barred finch



Grey Shrike Thrush

Double-barred and Red-browed Finches, Yellow Robins, White-throated Treecreeper, Fuscous Honeyeaters, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, White-plumed Honeyeater Eastern Spinebills, Striated Pardalotes, Blue Wrens, Grey Fantails, Grey Shrike Thrushes, Magpies, Red-rumped Parrots, Striated and Brown Thornbills, Rufous Whistler and the occasional Diamond Firetail Finch. A Rufous Fantail was an unusual but very pretty and graceful visitor earlier in the year.

Various commercial birdbaths are available, usually with a pedestal and a dish on top. These are safer for the birds if there are cats around. Our plastic dishes on the patio do the job for about 20c each. The birds seem to like a terracotta dish. Perhaps it gives the birds a better grip on thick side and the bottom than do the smooth plastic. It could be that the water in the black plastic dish heats up more on sunny days.

Land for Wildlife

Janeen Robb



ATG is now the regional provider of the Land for Wildlife scheme. Most of you would have heard of the wonderful work done by the Citizens' Wildlife Corridors, a local group that evolved out of a young ATG over 30 years ago. Members of this group have worked hard to improve habitat for wildlife in the area. You may not be aware that the CWC was the regional provider for the Land for Wildlife scheme. ATG has recently taken over this role, as the CWC no longer operates as an organisation. The Community Environment Network, who are the state co-ordinator for the scheme, is supporting us in this.

Land for Wildlife is a grassroots scheme that encourages and supports people to include nature conservation as part of their land management strategy. Anyone with at least 0.5ha of land, that they would like to manage with wildlife in mind, can join the scheme for free. It doesn't have to be pristine habitat. In fact you can be working towards providing good habitat through planting, or bush regeneration. Unlike a Conservation Agreement, this is a handshake agreement - the legal status of your property is not altered in any way. It is a perfect way to test the waters if you have been considering a more binding agreement but are unsure how it would affect your property management.

Everyone who joins LFW becomes part of a network of like-minded people who are interested in providing safe habitat for native plants and animals. You will be supported through an initial site assessment (where your existing plants and animals are recorded). You will have access to advice, education and training that will help you manage your land for the benefit of wildlife, along side your other management objectives.



Planting a dense understory of shrubs can increase the habitat potential of treed areas. This not only provides cover and resources for many small birds but also renders the area unviable for noisy minas, which are notorious for driving other birds away. (Photo: Janeen Robb)

As a LFW member you will also be presented with a sign, to show people that you are committed to conserving wildlife on your property.

Having all kinds of wildlife find homes on their land has rewarded people who have become involved in the scheme. Peter and Sue Metcalfe planted many native trees and shrubs trees, and now get visits from appreciative koalas. Peter showed me the scratches in the bark, where koalas had climbed a food tree.



Peter Metcalfe points out Koala scratch marks. (Photo: Janeen Robb)



Peter Metcalfe proudly displays his sign on the front gate, alongside his Master Treegrowers sign. (Photo: Janeen Robb)

Peter spoke about how the more diversity you get in your vegetation, the more habitats you provide for different kinds of animals.

You may not notice some of these, like tiny insects but they are all an important part of the ecosystem. Ultimately, improving the health of ecosystems will increase their productivity, benefitting your property as a whole.

Peter & Sue also get to eat breakfast each morning while watching finches, robins, scrub wrens, thrushes and other charming little birds. Peter said he knows of several members who have gained an interest in birds in particular, as they've witnessed different species find habitat on their properties and return to take up residence.



Some LFW members are wildlife carers, who spend a lot of time and energy looking after orphaned and injured wildlife, like this Bearded Dragon cared for by Julia Rose.

Bearded dragon cared for by Wildlife Carer and ATG member Julia Rose. (Photo: Janeen Robb)

Finding suitable release sites for these animals is vital to their successful return to the wild. The LFW network has a great opportunity to work together with the wildlife carers' network, to help find safe habitat to release these rescued animals into, when their time comes.

In the near future we will host a get-together to allow all the members to meet, discuss options for future training and share ideas about supporting each other. We already have quite a few members (from the CWC days) and are now in a position to invite more people to join the scheme. If you have a patch of bush that you would like to manage for nature conservation, we encourage you to join. You would be contributing to a growing network of privately owned habitat patches that allow wildlife to disperse across the landscape. Patches such as this are really important to conservation, as the state reserve system is based largely on non-agricultural land, with parks and reserves being separated by large tracts of private land. This is something we can do on our own land, to help conserve wildlife. The LFW scheme extends from Tassie to Queensland and across to the NT.



A corridor planted on Peter & Sue Metcalf's property in the early days of the ATG now links two patches of bushland, providing extra habitat and cover for animals to move safely from one patch to the other. (Photo: Janeen Robb)

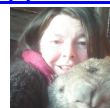
An expression of interest form can be found below, and I am looking forward to hearing from you. If you're interested in finding out more about the Land for Wildlife scheme, click on the links below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1sPKm7wdXc>

<https://www.cen.org.au/projects/land-for-wildlife>

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/cpp/LandForWildlife.htm>

Or you can call Neen on 0409 300 459.





LANDHOLDER EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

A. ESSENTIAL CONTACT DETAILS

(please insert text in grey box & tab to next one)

Owners Names

--

Property Name
& Address

--

Postal Address
(if different)
or extra phone
N^os

--

Telephone

(H)	FAX		
(W)		E-mail	
(mob)			

Site visit
(please click
with mouse on
the appropriate box)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am interested in receiving free on site advice on managing part of my land as habitat for native plants and animals.
--

Mail list

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to be informed of workshops, property open days and other project events, by: <input type="checkbox"/> post / <input type="checkbox"/> email only / <input type="checkbox"/> either <i>(please circle one)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to be included on the mail list for CEN newsletters and other

B. OTHER PROPERTY DETAILS

Not essential - These details help us prepare for your site visit.

Lot and DP
(If available))

Lot or Portion N ^o .	D.P. Number	Parish and County (if known)

The Lot and DP enable us to prepare a base map and vegetation community map to bring to the site visit.

Area of property

	ha
--	----

(1 acre = 0.405ha, 1ha = 10 000m²)

Area of property with native vegetation

--

*(including areas of trees,
native grassland etc.)*

Local council
area

Subcatchment
e.g. Fires Ck, Bunning
Ck

N.B. Involvement in the Conservation on Private Lands Project does not change the legal status of your property. The

information you provide will be used in accordance with the Privacy & Protection of Personal Information Act 1998.

All information that is collected can & will only be used for project administration. It cannot be given to any other party

without your permission. If you are concerned about how this information may be used we will be happy to discuss it with you.

PLEASE COMPLETE PAGE 2



Please fill out form, save, attach and email to lfwnsw@cen.org.au
Or print out form and return to: PO Box 149 Ourimbah 2258 Fax: 4349

C. YOUR INTERESTS

Not essential - These details help us prepare for your site visit..

The Land for Wildlife program aims to help landholders look after natural vegetation on their lands. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. We can assist you by visiting your property, giving you advice on the natural values of your property and how you can manage the natural areas on your land. We can also provide you with advice on incentive programs designed to help landholders and protect vegetation. Other opportunities include workshops, training, networking with other landholders, help with plants, bush regeneration (depending on availability) and advice / help regarding funding opportunities.

1. Conservation Incentives – (please click with mouse on relevant box)

Are you aware of conservation incentive programs for private landholders?
☐ YES ☐ NO
 Are you interested in conservation incentive programs?
☐ YES ☐ NO
 Are you currently involved in a conservation incentive program?
☐ YES ☐ NO
 If yes, which one/s?

2. Reason for Interest:

I would like advice on:

☐ Weed control / weed management
☐ Weed identification
☐ Native plant identification
☐ Providing habitat for wildlife

☐ Habitat assessment of my property
☐ Seed collection and propagation
☐ Supply of locally native plants
☐ Property management advice
☐ Other

What are the main values of your land to you?
 Why do you think your land is valuable as wildlife habitat?

5. Property Sketch
OPTIONAL. If you wish you could print out and draw in this section, scan & attach to email for sending or attach a Google map of your property. Draw/or attach Google map of your property showing:
 • major roads

N

- boundaries /fencing
- buildings / house
- major landuse (cropping, grazing etc)
- areas you to

replant/regenerate

- corridors / proposed corridor
- stock watering points
- areas of native vegetation to protect/restore

If there is any additional information you would like to provide on your land or why you are interested in the program you may attach a separate sheet.

Please fill out form, save, attach and email to manager@armidaletreegroup.org.au

Or print out form and return to: ATG, 80 Mann St, Armidale

STOP PRESSS

Biodiversity Conservation Trust small grants for Land For Wildlife Members is currently Open. See link below for details

<https://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/news-stories/more-ways-benefit-private-land-conservation>

Vale Helen Schwarz (1940-2018)



(Photo courtesy of Ruth Riach)



Biodiversity project 2013
(Photo: Adele Nye)

Helen Schwarz has had a long involvement with the Armidale Tree Group and is one of our Life Members, being awarded this honour at ATG's 30th Birthday Celebrations in 2013. Helen has been a long-term member of the Group and she joined the Committee as Secretary in 2006 and remained in this position until 2014. Helen remained a loyal member until she lost her fight with cancer on April 30th this year. Helen's great passion was in restoring the Pine Forest and she forged great inroads as the driving force behind its restoration.

From the Herbert Park Area committee to the Herbert Park Landcare group to the Pine Forest Committee, Helen was passionate about the environment and her positivity and enthusiasm always inspired others.

Helen was a founding member of the Pine Forest committee in 2009, and remained an active member until 2017. As Secretary of the Herbert Park Landcare group at that time Helen played a very important role in establishing support from this group in the initial establishment of the Pine Forest Committee. Helen is remembered for her work in the early development of the committee and took up the long-term role as the community representative for Biodiversity and Riparian Projects.

One of her contributions to the Armidale Pine forest is immediately evident upon arrival at the picnic area in the forest. A large sign provides an overview of the creek land Biodiversity Project that Helen was the mastermind for this project. She took charge of preparing the funding application with input from

a number of stakeholders and then coordinated its implementation. This involved sourcing the plants, organizing all of the planting and subsequent care of the seedlings.

Always cheery and energised, Helen would organise and encourage community interest and participation in these planting days. She would also, then tend to the plantings on her own or with a few regular supporters.

Helen was also a major contributor to the large project supported by Forest Corp NSW to replant the western portion of the Forest with native species. Helen contributed very actively to all aspects of this project, from helping to plan the planting, coordinating community input through letter drops ahead of working bees and organizing assistance from the Waldorf School.

As part of a project funded by the Dahle Trust the Pine Forest Committee prepared a book with information about the trees and birds. Ruth Tremont was the lead author for this wonderfully informative book. As always, Helen was a great contributor to this initiative with information and photographs.

Helen was always keen to promote the Pine Forest and make sure that people were aware of this great resource so close to town. In 2014 Helen organized a photograph competition for pictures of the Pine Forest and a number of these photos have been used in brochures and notices promoting the Pine Forest.



The native plantings with an information board taken from Ruth Tremont's book and a bench installed as part of the Dahle Trust project. (Photo: Adele Nye)

Our deepest sympathies go out to Helen's husband, Werner, and her four children, Norman, Lachlan, Ilsa and Ruth.

Update on Every Tree Counts



Every Tree Counts is a long-term, self-funded and sponsored project of the Armidale Tree Group. Through working with landholders, Local Land Services and other stakeholders, the Armidale Tree Group plans to create a cross-tablelands wildlife corridor that will connect the western and eastern edges of the Northern Tablelands.

The corridor begins at Saumarez Ponds, following Saumarez Creek to Salisbury Waters then Dangars Falls. It will not be a linear corridor but patches of vegetation like 'jewels on a necklace' where habitat is linked by 'stepping stones' of pre-existing shelterbelts or remnant patches of vegetation.

- After our Every Tree Counts launch at Dangarsleigh Hall (see our Autumn Newsletter No 112) in February we received six Expressions of interest from local landholders and are currently visiting and assessing these sites.
- Andrew Huggett recommended 20 bird species to use as indicators of project success.
- The Enmore TSR has had a site visit with Verbal permission from NTLLS for planting and a draft plan being developed.
- ATG has applied to Australian Ethical Community Grants for \$20,000 for this project

Enmore TSR Spring planting for Every Tree Counts



The Armidale Tree Group is planning to do a public planting for Every Tree Counts on the Enmore TSR in Spring and it would be great to have lots of volunteers come along for a planting day. More details will be provided once planning and preparation is complete. We have some interested community groups joining us for this venture.

Enmore TSR on Salisbury Waters at the end of Saumarez Creek. (Photo courtesy of Alicia Cooper).

Expression of Interest Form for Landholders on Saumarez Creek

Armidale Tree Group Inc.

Expression of Interest Form

Received: _____ (office use)

EOI No. _____ (office use)



Contact Details:

Name:	
Postal Address:	
Email:	
Phone:	Mobile:

Property Details:

Property Name:	
Property Address:	
Lot No.	DP:

See rates notice for Lot No. and DP

Project Description:

Briefly describe the project you would like to undertake. If possible. Please provide information about the ha/km of the proposed revegetation and the ha of remnant vegetation to be protected including relevant existing flora. Attach additional pages if required.

Is the project part of a group application? Y/N If yes, please provide name or names of others in project.

To submit this form, email to manager@armidaletreegroup.org.au or post/deliver to the ATG Manager as per details below.

Armidale Tree Group, 80 Mann St, Armidale, NSW 2350
Phone: 026771 1620 Web: www.armidaletreegroup.org.au ABN: 79 387 075 436

Seen a Koala recently?

We need your help with some important research on koala distribution and health!

If you see a koala in the Armidale to Inverell region, contact Southern New England Landcare on 02 6772 9123 or mail@snelandcare.org.au.

We will send you a researcher who will do a survey, collect scat samples and take photos of any koalas still in the area. Data is then submitted to NSW Wildlife Atlas and the Australian Museum.

Koalas are vulnerable to extinction and have declined in numbers due to habitat loss, predation by dogs, vehicle strike, fire and climate extremes. The Northern Tablelands Koala Tracking Project is run by Stringybark Ecological with funding from the Office of Environment and Heritage's Saving Our Species program. Project partners: Southern New England Landcare, EcoGeoSpatial, JML Environmental Consultants, The Envirofactor, University of New England and Department of Primary Industries. For more information about this project please contact David Carr on 04 1865 1263 or dbcarr@stringybarkecological.com.au. Current from May - September 2011.



Image courtesy of Elizabeth & Ross McRae.

Membership Application/Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

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

Membership is \$5.00 per year

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

