

## Greening and Cooling Benalla report for AGM 2024

The Greening group is currently working on the Plant a Tree Day event planned for this Sunday 26th May. We were successful at gaining a Social Inclusion Grant funded by Benalla Council. This event is free, for Benalla locals, all ages and abilities welcome. There will be Wayap Wuurrk for connection and wellbeing, nature games, and a free barbeque. People will be given a plant to plant around their home to create a shady spot for their household. They will also be provided with information on the importance of shade and how to plant their small tree or shrub. (flyer)

In March we hosted Andie Guerin of the Regent Honeyeater Project to speak at our BSFG General meeting.

Andie shared his extensive knowledge on local plants that would be suitable for planting on our nature strips and in our gardens, and what conditions and pitfalls we need to consider when selecting plants.

The Greening group is concerned about the way we see subdivisions being developed in the Benalla Council area. Specifically, the lack of planning to provide for public open space in new subdivisions, and the mass clearing of all existing, often mature, trees to make way for new subdivisions poses a problem for the future. Fewer shade trees have been planted in and around Benalla over the last 20 years. The problem of reduced and insufficient shade where people live is now widely recognised across Australia with regional towns having some unique blockers to solving this problem.

Climate Change being the driver of increased temperatures around the globe, trees have an important part to play in mitigating its effects, and in protecting the health of communities with a wide variety of benefits as we learnt when Dr Greg Moore spoke in Benalla last year. In Benalla, less shade trees have been planted due to several factors, including overhead power lines, narrow nature strips in newer subdivisions, and a reduced budget for footpaths, curb and channel.

BSFG member Howard Bartley has shared with us a document prepared for the Municipal Association of Victoria titled 'Shaping Regional and Rural Victoria - A Discussion Paper'. It has many point of interest in common with BSFG objectives including:

- Greening of streets and reserves
- Solar farms
- Council Resources
- Affordable appropriate housing

If anyone is interested in a copy, see me or Howard after the meeting. This area is one that the Greening & Cooling Benalla group will be working to address going forward.

We hope we can work with Benalla Council and developers to ensure that Benalla has shade trees in every subdivision and on all vacant Council land, and also encourage home owners to plant shade trees.

Judy Schwarzman