

# BANDICOOTtimes

Winter 2019 | No 73



# Bushcare Roundup



**Sjaan Field**  
Program Officer Bushcare

Autumn's cooler weather has done nothing to dampen the spirits of our Bushcarers, who have been very active over the past few months. We've also seen an influx of new volunteers, with 212 people becoming part of the Bushcare family since January!

In May we bid a fond farewell to Rob Mather, who leaves his position at the City of Hobart after 20 years to take up a new enterprise. We thank Rob for his incredible support and commitment to our bushland reserves and in particular Bushcare.

John Fisher, who brings a wealth of experience managing bushlands and biodiversity in other states, has taken over as Manager Bushland.

Our tracks and trails are improving thanks to Trackcare. Volunteer numbers have swelled this year, with 82 new people coming on board. They've put in solid work on the Missing Link mountain bike tracks project, and have started bringing the popular, informal 'Drops' track up to international standards.

Students from The Friends' School are also helping to improve our mountain bike tracks, with 21 students working on the Slides track over two morning sessions.

In March, the Friends of Wellington Park helped install stepping stones along the South Wellington Track, making it much better for walkers.

## Keep safe, warm and happy all year round

It is important that our volunteers are kept safe, warm and happy throughout the year, but especially during the colder months.

For all Bushcare events volunteers must wear enclosed sturdy shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved top as well as a hat.

### Here's our checklist for Bushcare events:

- Long-sleeved shirt, trousers and a broad-brimmed hat.
- Strong, fully enclosed shoes.
- Drink bottle.
- Warm jacket and a beanie.
- Waterproof jacket.

Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided.

Tools and gloves are supplied (you are welcome to bring your own gardening gloves).



Sturdy shoes provide important protection.



Keep the sun off with a broad-brimmed hat.



Water and a snack will power you through the day.



A waterproof jacket is essential to stay dry.



A warm jacket will keep the chill out.



Keep your head warm with a beanie.

**Cover photo:** Our track builders at work beneath a grove of banksias on the Organ Pipes Track. Photo: Pete Harmsen



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Greg Kidd and Bec Johnson admire some of the beautiful paper created by the artisans at Plane Tree studio.

# Paper studio turns weeds into art

**Serendipity: The occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.**

When the owner of Hobart's niche paper and design studio Plane Tree was put on hold during a rather mundane telephone call to the City of Hobart she, unlike most of us, actually paid attention to the recorded message.

What pricked Di Turner's ear were the words 'red hot pokers', used in reference to the City's fantastic Bushcare program and in particular the work of the Lambert Gully Bushcare group, which has been battling this environmental weed in the wet gullies of Bicentennial Park.

Di has been running Plane Tree for 30 years, making beautiful, handmade paper from all manner of materials, including recycled paper and paper products, and now the leaves of red hot pokers!

'I'm always peering into people's gardens looking for red hot pokers, so when I heard Bushcare was clearing large plots of the plant out of nearby bushland I couldn't resist the chance to get my hands on some,' she said.

'The leaves from red hot pokers are an incredible fibre to work with when creating the sort of hand crafted paper we make at Plane Tree.'

Since that promising phone call, Di has been working with Lambert Gully Bushcare, taking delivery of huge bags of red hot poker leaves and turning them into beautiful handmade paper products.

It's clearly a win-win situation. Once cleared out of bushland gullies the weeds would normally end up in land fill, but Lambert Gully Bushcare carefully sorts out

the leaves from the rest of the plant, so that now very little of the weed is going into green waste.

Red hot pokers have long been a favourite of gardeners in Hobart. They have a striking red and yellow flower that attracts nectar-feeding birds and are extremely hardy.

However, they are a well-known garden escapee, and easily jump fence lines into our bushland reserves, where they clog up gullies, rapidly take over creeks and drainage lines, and choke out native species.

Lambert Gully Bushcare is doing a tremendous job pulling these weeds out of Bicentennial Park, with the added bonus of turning them into art!



Paper making at Plane Tree studio is all done by hand.



Rob Watchorn oversees the fuel reduction burn at Knocklofty Reserve.

## Fighting fire with fire

The City of Hobart kicked off its autumn bushfire fuel reduction program this year by targeting Knocklofty Reserve. The burn was aimed at improving threatened species habitat and reducing the risk of an uncontrolled fire damaging the largest stand of high conservation value old growth trees left in Hobart.

These big old trees, dominated by white peppermint (*Eucalyptus pulchella*), provide habitat for threatened species including the nationally vulnerable Tasmanian masked owl.

The low-intensity burn took months to plan and is the largest ever carried out by the City. It will limit the risks of a bushfire threatening the city and nearby houses as well as the conservation values of Knocklofty Reserve.

Special care was taken to protect a patch of the reserve that is home to an extremely rare land snail, the ammonite snail (*Discocharopa vigens*). Weeding of the area and the creation of a special fire exclusion zone ensured it was protected during the burn. This snail is nationally listed as critically endangered, and found nowhere else in the world.

The fuel reduction burn is part of the City's \$1.9 million annual bushfire mitigation program. Eleven separate burns were planned for autumn, all designed to protect the community, properties and natural environment from bushfire outbreaks.

'Our fuel reduction burns and fuel breaks are the best insurance policy we have for protecting lives and property from bushfires,' says John Fisher, the City's Manager Bushland.

'The fires that burnt across Tasmania last summer were a reminder that we are never far from dangerous fire conditions. As a city surrounded by bushland, Hobart is more vulnerable to bushfire than any other capital city in Australia. Climate change is adding to that risk by increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather.'

Fuel reduction burns reduce the build-up of flammable vegetation on the forest floor and create safer firefighting conditions in the event of a bushfire. They also reduce the rate of spread and impact of high-intensity bushfires, which have the potential to inflict great damage on bushlands and native wildlife.

Burns were carried out across 246 hectares of bushland, including Ridgeway Park, Bicentennial Park, Wellington Park and the Queens Domain.



Knocklofty Reserve is home to the nationally vulnerable Tasmanian masked owl. Photo: JJ Harrison CC BY-SA 3.0

# Fire and biodiversity chief moves into top role

John Fisher has just taken over the challenging role of manager bushland at the City of Hobart after an 18 month stint as the City's chief fire and biodiversity officer.

Taking over the reins from Rob Mather he is now responsible for overseeing management of Hobart's 4700 hectare bushland reserve estate, which includes Knocklofty Reserve, the eastern face of kunanyi/Mt Wellington, Ridgeway Park, Bicentennial Park and the Queens Domain.

The job runs the gamut of bushland management – maintaining the City's extensive walking and mountain bike track network, weed and pest control, bushfire management, Bushcare and Bush Adventures, ensuring critical infrastructure like fire trails are kept in working order and protecting the natural values of Hobart's bushland reserves.

He comes with a background steeped in natural resource management. He was one of the first officers to roll out Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, ground-breaking legislation that for the first time in Australia identified species facing serious threat of extinction and listed them as either extinct, critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable.

The job entailed a return to western Victoria where John grew up and the chance to work on threatened species management for eastern barred bandicoots, southern right whales, red-tailed black



John Fisher.

cockatoos and a range of threatened orchids.

Since then he has carried out similar threatened species work in NSW, where he worked for the state's National Parks and Wildlife Service, and moved into bushfire management.

John started working for the City of Hobart in 2017 and has spent most of that time rolling out and refining the City's bushfire management program, including enacting the Tasmania Fire Service fuel break management guidelines.

'It is a very clear principle that if you want to save houses from bushfire and protect the people that live in them you need to reduce the fuel in close proximity to those houses,' he says.

He ranks bushfire as by far the greatest threat facing Hobart's bushlands and the city itself.

'A catastrophic fire in the foothills of kunanyi/Mt Wellington will have a massive impact on the city and its citizens,' he says.

'You only have to reflect on the devastating impact the 1967 fires had on Hobart. Since then the city's population has doubled in size to 269 000 people, so the impacts of a catastrophic wildfire will be profound.

'Managing the threat of catastrophic wildfire while protecting the health of our bushland reserves and the threatened species they protect is a key challenge for our team.'



The Governor of Tasmania Kate Warner and Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds explore the restored Organ Pipes Track.

# Hobart's Great Short Walk a pinnacle of achievement

Over the past two years something wonderful has been happening on Hobart's mountain – the restoration of the historic Pinnacle and Organ Pipes tracks to their former glory.

Anyone who has walked on kunanyi/Mt Wellington will be familiar with both tracks. The Pinnacle Track starts at The Springs and sidles up the mountain until it meets the Organ Pipes Track, which continues north, skirting that incredible rock formation, the fluted cliffs that form the iconic Organ Pipes.

The earliest written record of the Pinnacle Track dates back to 1903 and indicates that the track itself was created around the turn of the century.

The Organ Pipes Track was built in 1931 as a Depression-era relief scheme. Four hundred men from the ranks of the unemployed worked on the project. The *Mercury* newspaper listed them as 'skilled bushmen, navvies, artisans, clerks and drapers' assistants'.

But time takes its toll on all things, including walking tracks. Over the course of a century sections of track were damaged by boulders and water carved its way through surface gravel, eroding the original track work.

And negotiating the boulder fields on the Organ Pipes Track to get to its magnificent views was really only for the brave and stout hearted.

Then in 2015 former teacher Mick Hawkins approached the City of Hobart with a vision. Mick has walked these tracks his entire life and could see how their condition was deteriorating and denying many people the opportunity to walk beneath the Organ Pipes.

Mick wanted the tracks fixed and accessible for all.

With the completion of the final stage of the Great Short Walk Restoration Project the City of Hobart has fulfilled Mick's vision, restoring these tracks to their former glory and making them accessible to walkers of all abilities.

These tracks, which wind through sub-alpine forest and across huge boulder fields, offer incredible views of Hobart, the Derwent River and out to the Tasman Peninsula.

Close to 100 City of Hobart staff and contractors contributed to the Great Short Walk restoration project and their care and attention to detail has resulted in a track that is part of the landscape.



The views from the Organ Pipes Track are breathtaking.

The project overcame some enormous challenges. Track workers and engineers had to stabilise 65 hazardous rocks, including one giant that would easily outweigh most African elephants, coming in at an estimated 10 tonnes.

The City's track workers racked up 35 000 hours, working in all types of weather, including snow, sleet and rain.

Helicopter airlifts were critical, delivering 900 tonnes of rock and gravel to the mountain side in 1100 separate airlifts.

Landscape architects and heritage officers ensured the restored track respected the heritage values of the original tracks by using the same track building techniques as the original track builders.

This work was also painstakingly documented to ensure that the building techniques used will never be lost.

And of course Hobart's incredible track builders of today played a key role in the restoration of these historic tracks, they really are the skilled artisans of the mountain.

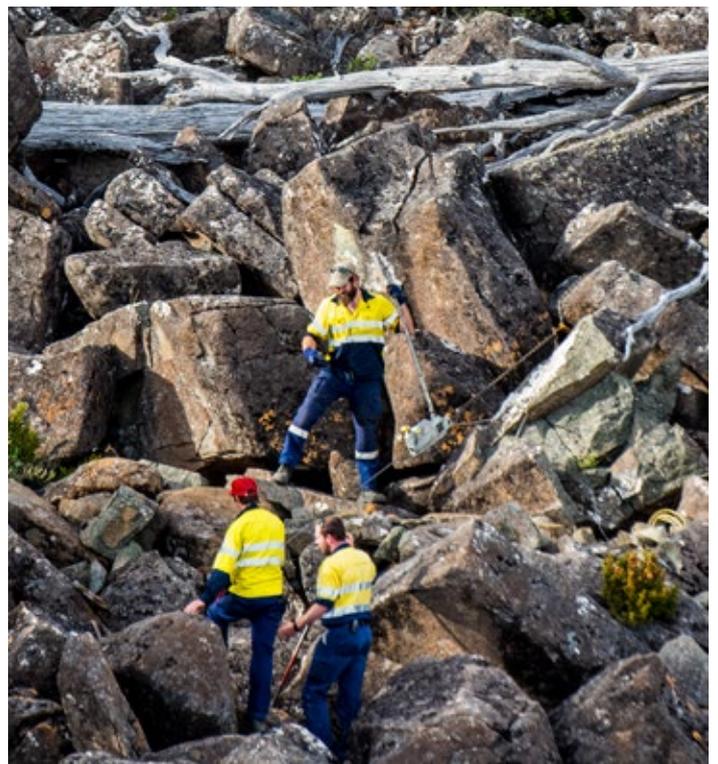
Over two years they worked with rock, stone and gravel to rebuild these tracks an inch at a time.

They spent countless hours fitting every individual rock of the new track into place, some of it visitors will see and it is beautiful. Much of it is now covered with surface gravel, and will never be seen by the hundreds of thousands of people who will walk these tracks over the next 100 years.

The \$2 million Great Short Walk restoration project represents the City of Hobart's largest ever investment in the mountain.

These tracks are now accessible to all while respecting the past. They blend into the natural landscape around them. They look like they have always been there.

Everyone involved in this project has been deeply passionate about bringing Hobart's Great Short Walk, one of Tasmania's 60 Great Short Walks, back to life.



Complicated winch systems were critical to moving large boulders into place.



James Mason takes delivery of rock and gravel moved along the track on an aerial pulley system.

# Rock wizards work their magic



**Al Clark**  
City of Hobart project manager for the Great Short Walk Rejuvenation Project

It took two years for the City of Hobart's track building team to complete the restoration of Hobart's Great Short Walk, which starts at The Springs and edges its way around the eastern flank of kunanyi/Mt Wellington, first along the Pinnacle Track and then the Organ Pipes Track.

Good track building takes time and skill. It is like letter writing: 'Sorry for such a long letter, I didn't have time to write a shorter one'.

Over those two years, behind closed tracks and construction barriers, our 'trackies' worked in a trauma of mud. Sections of track were ruptured open and massive boulders inched into place by winches hanging from trees like giant spider webs as we made the transition from disorder to harmony.

Our work, and the new track, crept forward daily. Rocks carefully levered out of position were placed back, lovingly, lichen side up, mosses and ferns were replanted, and always a finishing sprinkling of leaves and twigs completed the picture.

There have been uneasy compromises. To what extent should the restored tracks replicate the original design? How easy should they be to walk?

Once restoration of the two tracks was finally completed, silence descended and the mountain's wildlife crept cautiously back to reclaim their home from our trackies, those strangely gentle, hairy rock wizards.

We hope the finished tracks sit in, not on, the landscape. We hope we've honoured the craftsmanship of the original track builders while ensuring the new work will last for at least another 100 years.

Do not expect perfection. There will be mud and hazards. Follow the path through a massive boulder fall and remember that life is frail and precious.

Spending so much time on the mountain it was impossible not to compare our environment with the city below. Built into the mountain's paths are deliberate irregularities: respecting the heritage of the original track and the surrounding shapes of nature ruled out the geometric lines that rule Hobart's streets and buildings.

As perhaps Tasmania's oldest Great Short Walk, and as some would have it, the state's greatest short walk, the persistence of these tracks on kunanyi reflect and reform our collective judgement. Paths to help us all climb the mountain.

While travelling these paths you will meet smiling and chatting folk, sitting, resting and photographing folk you never knew shared your interests.

In summer rest awhile in the shade beside a rivulet while contemplating the tinkling of water on pebbles. Bask in sunshine on a rock-warmed boulder field. Go when feasting birds flock to sing praise for the glorious flowers of banksia and waratah.

In winter when sun-shy lichen and mosses reveal their true orange-hued colours lose yourself in mist shrouded views.

Go in the snow, rain or when howling wind gives you the mountain alone. Go many times, but just go.

And if when walking these rejuvenated tracks all you find are irregularities, a dearth of geometric lines and no sign of human intervention, then we have done our job well.

# Great Short Walk routes

Hobart's Great Short Walk, the Organ Pipes Walk, is the ideal starting point for anyone who wants to explore walking tracks on Hobart's iconic mountain, kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

The Organ Pipes Walk encompasses the Pinnacle and Organ Pipes tracks, which wind through sub-alpine forest and across huge boulder fields.

There are several routes that can be taken to experience the walk, ranging from a gentle stroll to half day walks and more challenging options. All of the walks include spectacular views of Hobart, the Derwent River and out to the Tasman Peninsula.

The highlight of each route is the Organ Pipes: huge, fluted columns of dolerite rock that rise above Hobart and attract climbers from around the world.

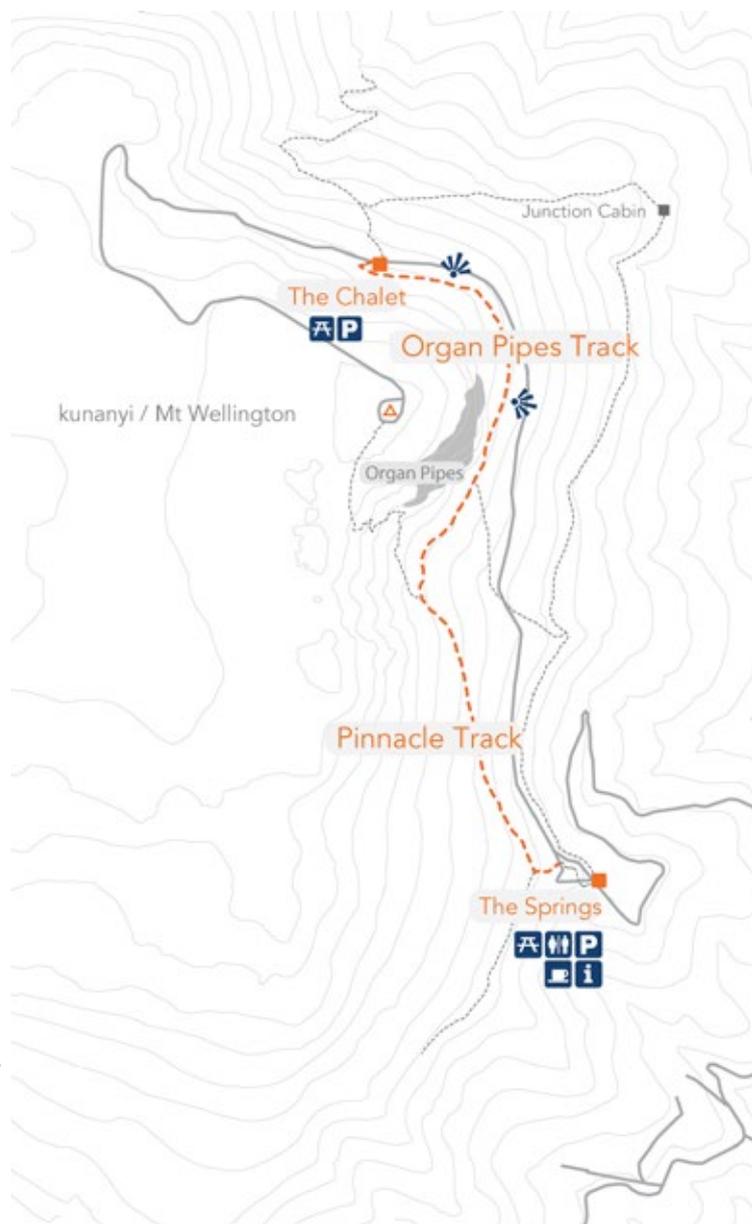
You can enjoy the Great Short Walk from either The Springs or The Chalet, but The Springs offers the best range of walk options, and has parking, toilets and a cafe.

## WALK OPTIONS

**The Chalet Walk (2km return):** The easiest of the Organ Pipes walks is a gentle stroll out and back from The Chalet. Wander along the Organ Pipes Track and enjoy spectacular views of the dolerite columns above and the city below. There is limited parking near The Chalet but this walk is suitable for people of all walking abilities. The new kunanyi/Mt Wellington Explorer Bus stops at The Chalet, and can pick you up from The Springs.

**Short Loop (5km):** For a shorter loop walk that takes in the Organ Pipes, start at The Springs and follow Lenah Valley Track. Visit Sphinx Rock then take Sawmill Track (a rough, steep climb) up across Pinnacle Road, and on to where the track meets the Organ Pipes Track. Return via Pinnacle Track to The Springs.

**Return Walk (8.2km):** Starting from The Springs follow the Pinnacle Track past the turn-off to the Zig Zag Track and along the Organ Pipes Track towards The Chalet. You will pass beneath the Organ Pipes before arriving at The Chalet. Return the same way.



**Organ Pipes Circuit (9.5km):** Starting from The Springs, follow Lenah Valley Track past Sphinx Rock with its large sandstone lookout. Continue on to Junction Cabin before climbing uphill towards The Chalet on the Hunters Track (a rough, steep climb). From The Chalet you'll wander past the base of the spectacular Organ Pipes. The steady downhill path on Pinnacle Track returns you to The Springs.

**Summit Circuit (12.3km):** For a real challenge follow Pinnacle Track from The Springs, then head up the Zig Zag Track to the summit of kunanyi/Mt Wellington. Return back down the Zig Zag Track and on to the Organ Pipes Track. Once you reach The Chalet, take Hunters Track down to Junction Cabin, and return to The Springs along Lenah Valley Track. Be sure to start this circuit early, you'll need a full day to complete it (6hrs).

# Hobart salutes its volunteer champions

Volunteers who give their time for the benefit of others in the Hobart community were thanked with a special ceremony in May.

Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds said the event celebrated National Volunteer Week and was a small way that the City of Hobart could show its appreciation to members of the community who chose to give their time to help others.

'Each year, the City of Hobart recognises the contributions made by volunteers across the city,' she said. 'We have so many generous and passionate people in our community who go above and beyond to help make our city a great place to live.'

'Volunteers give their time for the benefit of others. Whether it is through providing direct support to those who need it, fundraising for a variety of important causes, or simply making Hobart a better place to live, we owe so much to our city's volunteers.'

Across Tasmania, around 160 000 people donate their time to volunteer work, contributing an estimated \$4.9 billion worth of voluntary service every year.

Cr Reynolds presented Volunteer Recognition Certificates to 120 residents from 61 volunteer organisations at a special reception at the Hobart Town Hall.

Vicki Martin and Debbie Chung received an award on behalf of Bushcare. Astrid Wright and Jim Anderson received an award on behalf of the Friends of Knocklofty Reserve.



Mark Corrigan, Co-convenor of the Friends of McAulay Reserve, loves helping the environment.

## Weed Watch



Flax-leaf broom (*Genista linifolia*) is an erect shrub with silvery hairs. Like much of the pea family, it has yellow flowers and a pod that can throw seeds up to 5m. It's an easy weed to target because it's not spiky or toxic, doesn't layer and is easy to cut and paint.

It is a Weed of National Significance and one of the highest priority weeds for eradication in the Hobart area. It's known in only two places: part of the Queens Domain and near Alexandra Battery in Sandy Bay.

Cornelian Bay Bushcarers now have their eye in for this rare weed, and are doing a great job of removing it.

Flax-leaf broom can invade native grassland and woodland, where it competes with native plants and alters habitat. Given climate change, it's even more important to eradicate weeds in their early stages because we can expect more disturbance events, and changes in plant behaviour are difficult to predict.

You can report a possible flax-leaf broom to the City of Hobart or Biosecurity Tasmania at [Biosecurity.Tasmania@dpipwe.tas.gov.au](mailto:Biosecurity.Tasmania@dpipwe.tas.gov.au)



International conservation dog trainer Steve Austin takes Fonzie through his paces.

## Fonzie's on the hawkweed hunt

Tasmania's first orange hawkweed detection dog, Fonzie, recently received guidance from one of the world's leading conservation dog trainers.

Internationally renowned trainer Steve Austin, who has taught dogs to find endangered bird species, foxes, feral cats, cane toads and even cheetah droppings, was in Hobart in April to help Fonzie learn how to help protect some of Tasmania's most sensitive environments from the highly invasive environmental weed.

'I'm taking Fonzie through his paces, teaching him how to find this highly invasive alpine weed so that, by summer, he can be enlisted in the fight to eradicate orange hawkweed from Tasmania,' Mr Austin said.

Orange hawkweed has been found in the Fern Tree area and is the focus of a renewed push by the City of Hobart toward eradication.

Throughout January and February this year, council officers visited more than 340 properties in the target area, engaging with land owners and treating hawkweed infestations on public and private land. Fonzie will join council officers when they return for follow up surveys next summer.

'Fonzie is the only dog in Tasmania trained specifically to detect weeds,' said Elise Jeffery, who works with the City's fire and biodiversity unit.

'He is already out in the field detecting serrated tussock, which is a serious agricultural weed, and his skills will be invaluable in locating infestations of orange hawkweed.'

Fonzie's owner Mel Kelly is one of four dog handlers involved in the training.

'Unlike some detection dogs, Fonzie is happy to work with a range of handlers, but only if they reward him with some play time with his favourite toy, a big orange Kong on a rope,' she said.

Fonzie will be the third Australian dog trained to detect orange hawkweed. Steve Austin trained the nation's first orange hawkweed detection dog, a cocker spaniel named Sally, to target the weed in the Australian Alps four years ago.

The training program is a joint project between the City of Hobart, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment and Natural Resource Management South.

# NATIONAL TREE DAY

SUNDAY 28 JULY 2019 | FARM GATE MARKET

SUNDAY 28 JULY 2019

8.30 AM – 1 PM

AT FARM GATE MARKET Bathurst Street,  
(between Murray and Elizabeth streets), Hobart

To celebrate National Tree Day, the Bushcare team will host a FREE native plant giveaway (one per person) and speak with locals and visitors about the importance of planting trees for our environment and health.

For more information: [hobartcity.com.au/events](http://hobartcity.com.au/events)



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