



Buffering productive paddocks from windswept salt lakes



Project Snapshot

Land Manager Names:	Peter and Karen Dickinson
Property Size:	1500ha
Location:	Corrigin
Annual Rainfall (mm):	320
Enterprise Mix:	Crop, hay, livestock
Soil Types/Vegetation Types:	light to heavy
Local Community Group:	Corrigin Farm Improvement Group

Above: Mixed planting on Dickinson's

Key Messages

- Planting trees improves the aesthetic appearance of salt affected areas.
- Trees belts and blocks buffer farmland from salt blasting.
- Using a mixture of perennials increases the biodiversity of an area.

This project is supported by Wheatbelt NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.

Farming near Lake Kurrenkutten

Peter Dickinson's family farm 'Stoneley' is situated about 12km directly east of Corrigin. The property was opened up in 1908 and has stayed in the family ever since. After leaving school in the late 70's, Peter moved back to the property, showing that a love of farming is in the Dickinson's veins.

This flat landscape is dominated by salt lake systems, some of which run along the southern edge of the Dickinson's property. These salt water systems are situated downstream from the expansive Lake Kurrenkutten which covers approximately 1,200ha at its peak. Having farmed 'Stoneley' for about 35 years, Peter knows the property like 'the back of his hand'. Many times he has sadly observed salt blowing off the salt lakes and across his paddocks. "When we experience strong winds out here, you can see the soil from the salt lakes being blown across the farm. It can be so bad that you only have 30m of visibility due to all the grey dust in the air", Peter explained.

Not wanting his cropping paddocks to be claimed by salinity, Peter actively sought funding through the Soil Conservation Incentives Program. "With the help of the Corrigin Farm Improvement Group I forwarded an Expression of Interest to Wheatbelt NRM for tree seedlings", Peter said. This financial assistance helped him cover the cost of strategically revegetating about 60ha at multiple sites on the edge of the salt lakes with a mix of perennials species. The intention of these belt and block plantings of oil mallee, sandalwood, brushwood and saltbush were to lower groundwater levels and to reduce wind erosion of vulnerable soils.

Using a machine planter, the Dickinson family plant 30,000 oil mallees (*Eucalyptus loxophleba* var. *lissophloia*), 5,000 sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*), 24,000 brushwood, 2,000 River saltbush (*Atriplex amnicola*) and 8,000 Old man saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*) in July 2010. Then in July 2011 they

planted a further 5,000 oil mallees and 5,000 Old man saltbush.

Lessons Learnt

Peter has been very pleased with the results of the revegetation program though over the project he learnt a few things that he in retrospect would do differently. Such as taking more care when spraying out crop for belts to avoid excessive losses, to ensure a good knockdown prior to planting as tumbleweed got the 'better of him' and to possibly plant wider belts to maximise buffering from the salt lakes.

Considering the 2010 season was a dry one, the perennials established tremendously well. Peter said, "I am really happy with how the farm looks since the trees have established. I want to expand the plantings and will endeavour to plant earlier than July in future".



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