

Media Release

The Hon Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Water
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Equality



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DUNG BEETLES DELIVERING HEALTHIER WATERWAYS

Victorian citizen scientists are helping to keep our waterways clean and healthy with an innovative new program using insects to stop nutrient run-off from farms.

Minister for Water Harriet Shing visited a dung beetle nursery in Tonimbuk today to inspect Melbourne Water's dung beetle breeding program.

The breeding program was established 12 months ago and includes a network of 16 dung beetle 'nurseries' on Landcare and farming properties in the Macedon Ranges, Nillumbik Shire, Western Port and the Mornington Peninsula.

The dung beetle monitoring will take place with Landcare citizen scientists gathering and uploading observations and images of dung beetles to the BioCollect project app with Atlas of Living Australia.

Dung beetles are known as 'ecosystem engineers' because they bury dung underground and turn nutrients into a natural fertiliser. This means nutrient runoff is significantly reduced from farms, helping to keep our waterways healthy.

Dung beetles are seasonal and have periods of dormancy. The program run by Melbourne Water will monitor which seasons have low numbers and aim to breed and release suitable species to fill these gaps.

Success will be gauged by the number of dung beetles reared and released from the nurseries, aiming for a fourfold increase. The beetles will be shared with local landholders and to set up future breeding colonies and release onto paddocks.

Historically, many species of dung beetles have been released across Australia, but there has been very little monitoring of success in the region.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Harriet Shing

"Dung beetles are amazing insects, with benefits for water quality and agriculture. This project will help us understand more about them, while farmlands will benefit from the ecosystem service they provide."

"The health of our waterways and land is essential to our native wildlife, and to our way of life today, tomorrow and for generations to come."

Quote attributable to Melbourne Water Acting Managing Director Gavan O'Neill

"Melbourne Water is water and so much more. We are excited to deliver this project in collaboration with Landcare volunteers and recognise its potential to be replicated by other regions."