

Farm revegetation delivers numerous benefits

LOCATION: Flaxman Valley

ANNUAL RAINFALL: 550mm

FARM SIZE: 42ha

ENTERPRISES: Vineyard,
cattle

Over the last 30 years Poonawatta landholder, Andrew Holt has revegetated various areas of his property. This has reduced hill, creek and dam bank erosion, increased water quality and provided valuable shelter for livestock. It has also enhanced biodiversity, encouraging over 100 bird species to the property.

Revegetation journey

Andrew began revegetating Poonawatta in 1994. His motivation for this was to improve the properties sustainability and aesthetics. He initially focussed on revegetating a hillside on the property, followed by the surrounds of a dam and the creek (a tributary of the North Para River) running through Poonawatta.

These areas were fenced off from livestock and gradually planted with a mix of native trees and shrubs to create layered and densely vegetated areas. Since 1994, Andrew has planted many different native species to achieve the right mix of vegetation, but now concentrates on those that have done well and will likely best handle a drying climate.



Andrew Holt (right) at a BIGG workshop showing attendees Poonawatta's revegetated creek line (September 2022).

Some of the key species that have been planted and done well at Poonawatta include:

- River red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*)
- Inland southern blue gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon pruinosa*)
- Drooping sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*)
- Golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*)
- Kangaroo thorn (*Acacia paradoxa*)
- Swamp wattle (*Acacia retinodes*)
- Christmas bush (*Bursaria spinosa*)
- Flinders ranges bottlebrush (*Callistemon teretifolius*)

Revegetation benefits

The ongoing revegetation of Poonawatta has gradually transformed the property. The plantings (and associated fencing) have successfully reduced erosion on the hillsides, creek and dam banks, including improving the quality of the creek/dam water, while providing valuable shelter for livestock and wildlife.

The plantings have also enhanced animal and insect biodiversity. Andrew actively monitors bird species diversity, with there being over 100 species recorded on the property to-date. A particular favourite is the blue wren which is now consistently seen after being first sighted at Poonawatta six years after the revegetation program began. Similarly, the red-bellied black snake hadn't been observed for years but now is sighted in and around the dam.

Revegetation at Poonawatta is ongoing. In 2024, Andrew plans to fence off and revegetate the properties remaining unplanted creek section. Once this is complete, it will provide a vegetated corridor across nearly the whole property.

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