

## NEWS

# Community group doubles East Coast conservation area

**Clancy Balen**

AN EXTRA 54 hectares of Crown Land was incorporated into the Seymour Conservation Area this week after decades of rehabilitation by a local community group.

The tri-partisan decision from state Liberal, Labor and Greens to extend the conservation area to the freshwater marsh came after extensive efforts by the Seymour Community Action Group to tackle a gorse infestation, and restore native flora.

The conservation area has now nearly doubled in size, from 61 hectares to 115 hectares.

Despite countless hours of *pro bono* labour and consistent lobbying to council and government, SCAGI president Quentin Smith said he hoped the achievement would



**CONSERVED:** Seymour Community Action Group Inc. volunteers rehabilitate land that has been newly incorporated into the Seymour Conservation Area.

**Picture: Supplied.**

provide a roadmap for other like-minded grassroots conservation groups.

"This is a small drop in the ocean that shows what people can do," Mr Smith said.

"We've almost moved past the point of conservation - now we need to begin restoring".

Mr Smith said the group, which incorporated as an association in 2016, has worked closely with Break O'Day council, NRM North and Parks and Wildlife to secure grants and funding to complete their rehabilitation efforts, but have often funded the works themselves.

The formerly industrialised area, situated 58 kilometres south of St Helens, has been an area of focus for local conservationists since the 1980s, after fire, overgrazing, and attempts at rutile mining destabilised sand blows over Long Point.

Since then, the group has removed the invasive gorse and restored endemic native

vegetation to the wetland, which is considered a "high conservation value waterbody".

Parks minister Jacquie Petrusma said in a statement this week the group was to be "commended and celebrated" for their conservation efforts.

Ms Petrusma said the decision marked an important milestone for the area that would protect plant species of conservation significance such as the lowland spiral orchid and mossy pennywort, as well as providing protection for Tasmania's green and gold frog, which has been listed as a threatened species.

SCAGI have been nominated for Landcare Australia's National Community Group Award for their work, after receiving the ACM Landcare Tasmania Community Group Award last year.