

Preface

‘When I was a kid in the 1940s, if I had been naughty then dad told us to get outside and chop down a tree. Now it is the opposite – planting trees is important and there’s far more vegetation than there used to be ...’

This quote is from Professor Ross Cunningham, an expert statistician who grew up near Walla Walla in the southern Riverina and whose statistical insights underpin many of the projects that feature in the chapters in this book. This quote highlights the positive changes in psyche, and the corresponding changes in the landscape, in agricultural south-eastern Australia. It also underscores how far we have come in a relatively short time. Much of that journey is a legacy of hard work on the ground by groups like Landcare and staff from regional organisations such as Local Land Services in New South Wales and Catchment Management Authorities in Victoria. At the same time, there has been an array of long-term research studies quantifying the environmental benefits of farm restoration. Much of this book outlines the results of work by our team of researchers and field-based scientists at The Australian National University.

Our sincere hope is that science and on-the-ground management will continue to intersect in positive and productive ways so that the integration of agricultural production and on-farm conservation are seen as the norm for any agri-business or other farming enterprise.

The authors
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