

Jo Caminiti, West Gippsland NRM co-ordinator

A child of Gippsland dairy emigrants to northern Victoria, Jo Caminiti returned to her roots to work with the industry she grew up in.

As partnership coordinator with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA), she works with farmers, industry groups and those who work with farmers to help care for this rich and diverse patch of country that is Gippsland.

With a career spanning two decades in natural resource management, Jo has come to realise that it is people's daily choices, whether as consumers or primary producers, that affects the health of our environment.

And it is people who hold the key to reversing past environmental damage and moving to a more sustainable future.

Jo is inspired by the passion, experience and knowledge of people on the land and working in agriculture.

"There are so many great stories out there of many people making a difference," she said.

Through the *Gippsland Sustainable Agriculture Network*, which Jo established and coordinates, people can get together to share knowledge and align action for sustainable food and fibre production and land management in Gippsland.

She explained: "Everyone is so busy getting on with their lives and earning a living in this complex world, so the Network gives them a chance to share their vision, expertise and ideas which I then develop and nurture into collaborative projects."

The Network has incubated many successful projects including Murray Goulburn Co-operative's FarmC@re which now has 600 suppliers involved; the recent WGCMA *Healthy Soils Sustainable Farms* project that had 620 participants at field days held on eight amazing farms; and Agribusiness Gippsland's *Food, Farming and Health Conference* and the *Gippsland Women Finding Their Voice* Leadership program, which arose from the *Gippsland Future Food & Fibre* project. All these projects rely on the passion of individuals, their willingness to work together, and investment by industry and government.

Jo's satisfaction comes from seeing others take the running with ideas that she has helped develop and grow.

She believes that the way forward is for individuals and industry to take ownership of sustainability and build it into their daily choices and business decisions.

"It is an incredible privilege to work with people in agriculture making a difference in Gippsland. After all, not much is more important than the food and fibre that sustain us and the environment we all depend on," she said.