

Chapter 4 - Establishing A Reliable Water System

Shane So the water system we set up comes off the irrigation bore down the creek which runs off
Joyce: Mains power three phase power. So we set up everything up on that and then a couple of years ago I was observing the electricity bills for pumping stock water and we were consuming something like \$10 a quarter in electricity and paying \$90 service fee to the power company. So I've started thinking there must be a better way than doing this. So then I investigated putting in a solar pump. So we got another bore here. Got a quote for a solar pump and we put a solar pump in. So the solar pump now does all the stock water and I've had the power disconnected from the other one.

But the other one is there. It's just a device that's waiting if we've got a use for it. The pipes we put in when we put the stock water system have the capacity to run an irrigator as well. So we can actually run a hundred and fifty meter long line of sprinklers anywhere on that stock water pipe from the creek up to the top of the hill where we were. So it's just a resource that's sitting there, but I couldn't see the sense in continuing to pay Ergon for electricity when we get actually pump all the water with sun power.

Okay. So while we're here we've been looking at a lot of pretty stuff. I think we should really look at some ugly stuff and in the background over here, you'll see a lot of brown vegetation. That's all actually mature cobbler's pegs or farmers friend. We're standing in the middle of an area that was all kikuyu and not the last summer, the one before my kikuyu had died from what they call pasture dieback. We have this massive recruitment of weeds and I guess that the message in pasture die back for me is invariably in the industry we see it as a problem or disaster. My view of pasture dieback is it's an opportunity. It's probably one of the greatest opportunities I've seen in my lifetime in land management. We just haven't recognized how to work with it and move forward from I think it's a bigger shift, you know, the biggest natural shift I've seen in landscape when you when you see a whole grass pasture to die out all of a sudden and it become weeds. So I really kind of love to bring that stuff in so that everything is not kind of rose-colored glasses, that there is some realities that we need to change the way we view things to how can we how can we work with this opportunity we've been presented with and turn it into something really good and really powerful.

The other thing here is this stuff in the gully here which is Phragmite Australis. So Peter Andrews of natural sequence farming and Tarwin Park fame and Australian story, I think it's probably one of his favorite plants. He says one of the best native filter plants we've got and it's largely become extinct on this farm all the gullies were open to stock grazing 24/7 365 days. This was the only water on the place. Basically there was no water system. So all this stuff was chewed into the ground along with all the other reeds and rushes that were growing in the gullies. It took this stuff 3 years to recover from that grazing but we now have this gully, these gullies two gullies that are the drainage lines on this place and now absolutely choked with a wall of this stuff. So any big flows or any flows we have in these

gullies now is totally - there's no vegetation comes out and there's no soil or nutrients comes out. What comes out is crystal clear water. So we're now feeding crystal clear water into Widebay Creek which is running into the Merry river. We're not contributing anything to the pollution of the river systems, the creek system or the reef.

Helen Disler: “Your probably gaining a bit from your neighbors”

Shane Joyce: Well up further up here I've actually planted vetiver grass on the boundary fence and in the gully because I was inheriting so much runoff from the neighbor's place. He's actually got his place, had his place on the market and I claim to be getting it for free. I'm capturing it as it comes past.

I saw heaps of it when we went to the Soils for Life thing at Albury-Wodonga. But anyway if livestock has good access to it, they pretty much annihilate it.