



## Ray Swartz

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Ray Swartz takes a holistic approach to conservation and considers waterways to be one of the best indicators of overall ecosystem health.

That is why for the past ten years he has been tirelessly working to restore the Margaret River shoreline.

“The entire ecosystem is interconnected and the riparian zone along the Margaret River is an especially unique place,” he said. “There are very few places like it in Australia - or the world - so it’s important we protect it.”



Through a concerted and methodical eradication effort, Ray clears toxic weeds like arum lily and blackberry, and makes way for native species. His philosophy is to think globally and act locally, tackling one bit at a time with dedication and persistence.

On what keeps him so motivated, Ray simply said it was his love of Country.

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“When you look at the broader perspective, the benefits are far-reaching. It questions your whole relationship with the river and the natural world.”

As well as weed control and revegetation, Ray has also been advocating for the river at a local government level. He and fellow conservationist Rick Ensley were instrumental in getting a local law put in place that makes any activity posing a threat to the river a fine-able offence.

“This is great news for the river,” Ray said. “It means anyone undertaking work nearby has to safeguard against erosion, silt run-off and things like that.”



Ray counts this among the biggest recent wins for the river. Another, albeit gradual, win has been a general shift in attitudes towards water quality and the importance of a healthy shoreline.

“There seems to have been a recalibration in the community and within the Shire and people are starting to revisit the way they relate to the waterways,” he said. “There’s also a bigger focus on the cultural value of the river, which is great to see.”

Throughout his time advocating for the Margaret River, Ray has come to recognise how powerful it is when all corners of the community - from individuals and groups through to all levels of Government - come together with a common goal of prioritising the environment. But, like all aspects of life, Ray said it was important to persevere.

“We need to keep working because this is ongoing,” he said. “Eventually we’ll nail it, but we have a long road ahead and it takes everyone working together to create a long-lasting impact.”

