

**Dr Michael Looker**  
**Country Director, Australia Program of The Nature Conservancy**

Since joining The Nature Conservancy in 2005, Michael has assumed leadership roles at both national and international levels. He is helping to identify the Conservancy's worldwide conservation strategies as a member of goal-setting teams for two major habitat types: arid lands and grasslands. Michael is also leading the Conservancy's regional Australasia team in the development of a 3-year operational plan that will outline initiatives for conservation, operations, fundraising and government relations.

Most recently, Michael worked with Greening Australia to coordinate a Conservation Action Planning (CAP) workshop, which brought U.S. conservation planning experts together with staff from Greening Australia's national River Recovery Program. Under Michael's direction, the CAP Workshop shared the Conservancy's Conservation by Design methodology with key, local conservation staff who are working to restore some of the largest river systems in Australia.

Prior to his role with the Conservancy, Michael served as the Director of the Trust for Nature for five years, during which time he spearheaded that organisation's transition to a landscape-scale conservation approach. Under Michael's leadership, the Trust for Nature acquired Ned's Corner Station—securing the largest private conservation purchase in Victoria—which spans 30,000 hectares on the Murray River in the northwest portion of the state. With 35 kilometres of Murray River frontage, this property's protection is critical to the long-term health of the regional catchment. Ned's Corner is also part of the larger 500,000-hectare Barkindji Biosphere project.

A botanist by training, Michael also spent three years studying public open space management at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, and another five years as the Superintendent of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. Michael was a Senior Lecturer in Environmental Horticulture at Burnley College, University of Melbourne, for eight years. His major areas of interest and research have focused on public open space management, especially vegetation management, and Michael is the co-editor of the *Oxford Companion to Australia Gardens*. Michael currently serves on the boards of Conservation Volunteers Australia, The Westernport Seagrass Partnership and Sustainable Gardening Australia.