

Victorian Landcare Program Review **Action Plan**



Victorian
Landcare
Program



VICTORIA
State
Government

Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victorians

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

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November 2016 ISBN 978-1-76047-325-9 (pdf/online)

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Minister's foreword

The review of the Victorian Landcare Program provided an important opportunity to hear your views on Landcare and your feedback and ideas on the support provided to Landcare by the Victorian Government.

Through the review, it was clear that the Landcare community strongly supports and values the government's Victorian Landcare Program. In particular, the Landcare facilitators and Victorian Landcare Grants are the most valued components of the program. A number of recommendations have been made to help shape the Victorian Government's future support for Landcare.

We have listened to these ideas and suggestions and will work with the Landcare community and peak bodies to deliver on the recommendations of the review to strengthen the support provided to Landcare through:

- Increased support for Landcare facilitators including additional Landcare facilitator positions in gap areas across Victoria;
- Enhanced knowledge sharing and information exchange between Landcare groups;
- New approaches to strengthen the network of dedicated local community groups engaged in environment protection across Victoria;
- A refreshed Landcare Gateway website;
- Increased participation by Traditional Owner groups in natural resource management activities through the Victorian Landcare Program.

Improvements to Victoria's natural environment would not be possible without the dedicated activities of local community groups across Victoria. Community participation through Landcare is vital in achieving sustainable land management and a healthy environment. Landcare has made a valuable and lasting contribution over the last 30 years since the movement started and I look forward to continuing this partnership.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this review; your contribution has been vital to shaping future support for Landcare. I encourage you to continue to be involved by helping to deliver the actions outlined in this plan. By working together, we can strengthen and grow Landcare in Victoria.

Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Suburban Development

Introduction

The independent review of the Victorian Landcare Program was undertaken in 2015 by RM Consulting Group for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

The objective of the review was to ensure the best possible long term arrangements for Victorian Government support for Landcare into the future. The review was an opportunity for the Landcare community to provide feedback on the current program of support and ideas for improvements. The review also included an evaluation of the first four years of the Victorian Government's Landcare Facilitator Program.

The review was supported by a stakeholder reference group with representation from:

- Victorian Landcare Council
- Farm Tree and Landcare Association
- Victoria's 10 Catchment Management Authorities

The contribution to the review by the Landcare community is highly valued and DELWP would like to acknowledge the time and effort people made to participate. More than 150 interviews were conducted across Victoria and more than 900 online surveys were completed as part of the extensive consultation with community and key stakeholders.

Survey respondents came from across Victoria and almost two thirds were rural residents. More than three quarters were members of a Landcare group and just over 50 per cent had been involved in Landcare less than ten years. Almost 20 per cent had been involved more than 20 years. The majority (68 per cent) were older than 50 years.

This action plan presents the recommendations of the Victorian Landcare Program Review and outlines the actions the Victorian Government will take to implement these recommendations. The Victorian Government agrees in-principle with all of the recommendations of the review and will work with the Landcare community to implement the actions as outlined in this plan.

The Landcare Community Advisory Group comprising representatives from Victorian Landcare Council (VLC), Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA), Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), and Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources has guided the development of this action plan and will work with DELWP to implement the plan. The work of this advisory group is greatly appreciated by DELWP.

Findings and Recommendations

The review found overall that “the Victorian Landcare Program has been effective in supporting Landcare. The Landcare Facilitators and Victorian Landcare Grants are the most valued components of the program. They are fundamentally important to the viability and operation of many groups and networks across the state. There was remarkable consistency in views on the importance of these two components among interviewees and survey respondents” (RM Consulting Group, 2015).

The review made findings and recommendations on various aspects of the Victorian Landcare Program as outlined in this plan.

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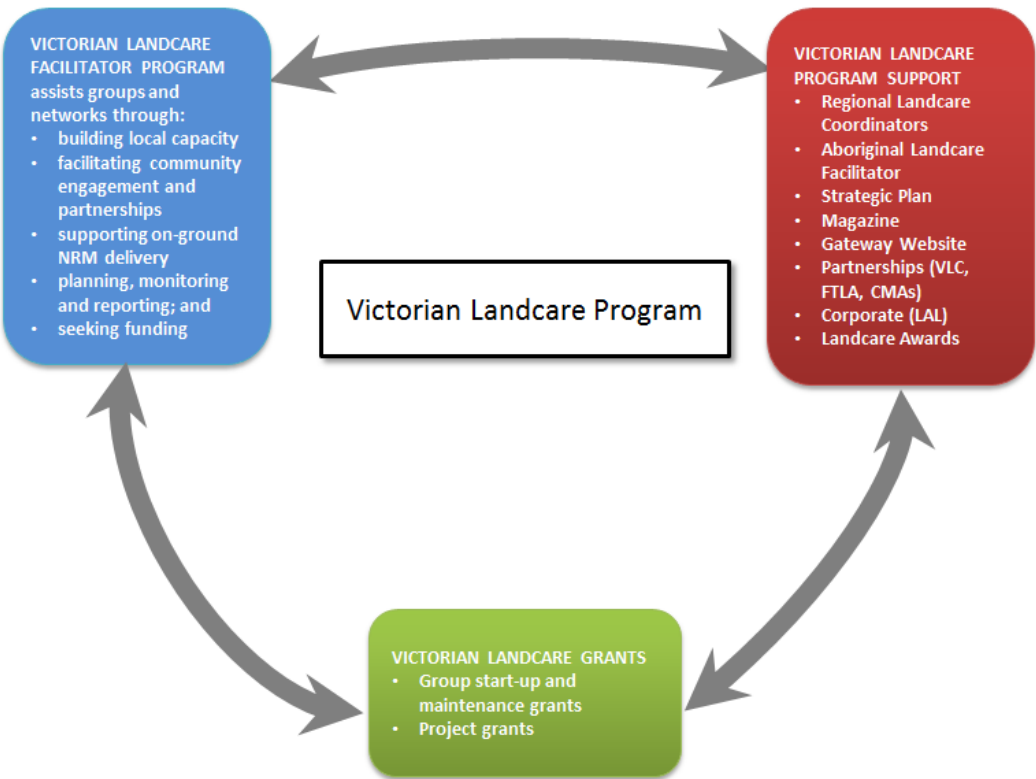


Figure 1. The components of the Victorian Landcare Program include the Victorian Landcare Grants, Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, and the Victorian Landcare Program Support

Landcare Facilitators

Summary Findings (RM Consulting Group 2015):

The Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program has been very positively received and is highly regarded by the Victorian Landcare community. There is a widely held view that without this initiative, many Landcare groups would have folded and enormous energy and momentum would have been lost.

The flexible approach supported by this initiative is highly valued; allowing employment and hosting arrangements to be tailored to suit local conditions. This flexibility also allows facilitators to respond to the evolving Landcare movement including new and non-traditional Landcare groups.

The Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program has provided a major injection of new people into leadership roles in Landcare in Victoria. This has brought new energy and new ideas, including novel approaches to long running challenges. The cohort of 68 facilitators is a significant resource for Landcare in Victoria.

The review found that characteristics of the more successful facilitators include:

**being well connected to the local CMA and Victorian Government staff (in some cases being co-located)*

**having a strong local support network*

**capacity to adaptively manage and capability to operate in a changing environment*

**ability to take advantage of the flexibility of the initiative and tailor the approach to the needs of their local community*

**having an employer organisation with experience and/or capability as an employer*

**having an employer organisation with appropriate governance in place and capacity to provide strategic direction to the position*

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
1	Retain flexible working arrangements for Landcare facilitators.	Work with both Landcare facilitators and group/network executives to strengthen understanding of the capacity building role of Landcare facilitators - incorporate this into the professional development and statewide forums for Landcare facilitators and group executives.	2016	Landcare facilitators Recipient Groups/networks DELWP (Lead)
	Continue to focus on the capacity building role of Landcare facilitators including community engagement, project planning and development and support for establishment of new and 'non-traditional' Landcare groups.	Review Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program documentation to ensure clarity on the role of purpose of Landcare facilitators.		
	Better communicate the role and purpose of Landcare facilitators in program documentation and to recipient organisations.			

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
2	Provide guidance on data collection and reporting to Landcare facilitators.	Improve data collection format and reduce the number of reporting measures by preparing a new Landcare facilitator annual reporting template for 2015-16 to 2018-19.	2016-17	Landcare facilitators Recipient groups/networks DELWP (Lead)
	Implement a quality assurance process to improve confidence in the data collected through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.	Provide annually aggregated data from annual reports to Landcare facilitators and recipient groups/networks .		
	Provide Landcare facilitators and groups/networks with the aggregated data from their reporting.	Align with catchment indicators developed for <i>Our Catchment Our Communities - Integrated Catchment Management in Victoria 2016-19</i> .		
3	Consider whether there continues to be a need to build community knowledge and understanding of natural resource management (NRM) policies, programs and priority setting processes and whether Landcare facilitators are well positioned to achieve this.	Landcare facilitators assist in building community knowledge of regional and state NRM plans, priorities and programs and help link these priorities to group/network strategic/action plans. This is an important role of facilitators and will continue to be supported and emphasised.	Ongoing	Landcare facilitators Recipient groups/networks DELWP (Lead)
		Formalise this as a requirement of the Regional Landcare Coordinator role to be undertaken in regional coordination meetings with Landcare facilitators.		
4	Remove the reference to becoming 'self-sustaining' from the list of main goals for Landcare facilitators in their work Landcare groups and networks and re-focus on building local capacity.	Change terminology to 'sustainable' to better reflect the objective for Landcare facilitators to strengthen and support groups/networks to build capacity and ensure effective group governance processes.	2016-17	Landcare facilitators Recipient groups/networks DELWP (Lead)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
5	Make provision for Landcare facilitators' salaries to have an annual CPI-equivalent increase. An annual CPI increase should be part of the DELWP funding agreement with recipient organisations.	Funding provided in 2016-17 State Budget for 2.5 per cent per annum increase for Landcare facilitators' salaries. Implement in Landcare facilitator funding agreements from 2016-17 to 2018-19.	From July 2016	DELWP
6	Develop a process to manage Landcare facilitator employment issues as they arise, ensuring compliance with any legal contractual requirements. This could be jointly prepared by DELWP (as funding body) and VLC/FTLA (as peak bodies).	Engage an independent third party organisation on retainer to provide employment-related advice directly to Landcare facilitators and recipient/host organisations as issues arise. Provide support to both Landcare facilitators and recipient organisation in resolving employment-related issues.	2016-17	FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead) Third party organisation (To be determined)
7	Ensure that recipient and host organisations clearly understand their obligation to provide professional development for their Landcare facilitators and the risks associated with losing good staff.	Develop a statewide training program for Landcare facilitators and also for group/network executives who are undertaking employer/supervisor role. Include training on governance and employer responsibilities. Ensure Landcare facilitator funding agreements clearly outline employer professional development obligations.	2016-17	Landcare facilitators Recipient groups/networks FTLA/VLC (Lead) DELWP
8	Strengthen innovation and knowledge sharing among Landcare facilitators. For example, DELWP and VLC/FTLA should jointly convene annual gatherings for Landcare facilitators to attend as part of their professional development.	Address this in conjunction with the statewide training program. Maximise opportunities available through existing forums including VLC Forums, FTLA Forum. National Landcare Conference in September 2016 will provide an opportunity. Plan for a statewide gathering in early 2017. Develop a mentoring program to pair new Landcare facilitators with an experienced Landcare facilitator to provide mentoring and support.	2016-17	Landcare facilitators Recipient groups/networks CMAs FTLA/VLC DEDJTR DELWP (Lead)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
9	Continue to monitor annual budgets and variations related to underspend from the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.	Budgets and underspends will continue to be reviewed through the annual reporting process. Develop a business rule to provide clarity and guidance on underspends from Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.	30 June 2016 & Ongoing	Landcare facilitators Recipient groups/networks DELWP (Lead)
10	DELWP, CMAs, Victorian Landcare Council, and Farm Tree and Landcare Association review the existing arrangements for Landcare facilitators and determine where additional positions should be located. Adjustments to existing workloads should also be considered.	<p>Funding provided in 2016-17 State Budget for up to 10 additional 0.5 FTE Landcare facilitator positions for three years (2016-17 to 2018-19).</p> <p>Work with partners to review and prioritise gap areas for Landcare facilitator support and determine best approach for expanding geographic coverage.</p>	2016	FTLA/VLC CMAs Landcare facilitators Groups/networks DELWP (Lead)

Victorian Landcare Grants

Summary Findings (RM Consulting Group 2015):

The Victorian Landcare Grants are greatly valued by the Landcare community. The grants are a reliable source of income that keep groups engaged and provide 'enabler' funding that allows groups to leverage other funding streams such as Federal grants or private investment. The maintenance and start-up grants are particularly important for smaller groups that do not receive large amounts of funding and are sufficient to keep them 'ticking along'.

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
11	Continue to deliver the Victorian Landcare Grants largely in its current form, with CMAs retaining the flexibility to tailor the grants to local circumstances.	No change required.	Ongoing	CMAs Regional Landcare Coordinators DELWP
12	Consider an increase in allocation to the Victorian Landcare Grants (VLG) if additional funding becomes available to the Victorian Landcare Program. Revisit the VLG regional allocations to CMAs to ensure they are commensurate with the particular needs and circumstances of Landcare in each region. Develop a model or rationale for how the VLG funds should be allocated to each region to increase the transparency of the process and help to ensure equity across regions.	Provide information to Landcare groups/networks about other State Government funding opportunities eg. Threatened Species Protection Initiative, Port Phillip Bay Fund. Promote Landcare to investors and other DELWP funding programs. Seek additional funding for the Victorian Landcare Grants. Work with CMAs to review the regional VLG funding allocations.	2016-17	CMAs DELWP (Lead)
13	Make funding available under the Victorian Landcare Grants for multiple-year projects.	Work with CMAs to consider the potential for part of the annual Victorian Landcare Grant funding to be allocated to multi-year projects.	2017-18	CMAs DELWP (Lead)
14	Use the DELWP output delivery standards (and the associated output data standards) for reporting both the NRM and community capacity outputs resulting from the Victorian Landcare Grants.	Implement through funding agreements with the CMAs and through the Victorian Landcare Team 2016-17 workplan.	2016-17	CMAs Regional Landcare Coordinators DELWP (Lead)

Aboriginal Inclusion

Summary Findings:

The Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator role has been effective in increasing understanding of indigenous heritage and approaches to natural resource management. There is an opportunity to increase the outcomes achieved with better awareness of the role. Some stakeholders were not aware of the facilitator position at all; this is unlikely to be a reflection on the facilitator, but rather on the limitations of the role with only one incumbent working statewide.

(RM Consulting Group 2015)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Lead Partners
15	Increase support for, and awareness of, the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator role. Provide clearer strategic direction for the role and more resources to increase promotion of the role and better service the entire state.	Review existing arrangements and level of support provided to optimise aboriginal inclusion in Landcare with consideration of the role of the Regional Landcare Coordinators, Landcare facilitators and the Australian Government funded CMA-based Indigenous facilitators. Consider the direction provided by recent strategies including <i>Munganin – Gadhaba 'Achieve Together' DELWP Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2016-2020</i> , <i>the Aboriginal Participation Guideline for Victorian Catchment Management Authorities 2016</i> and the objectives for aboriginal participation in NRM in agreements such as the <i>Recognition and Settlement Agreement between Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and The State of Victoria</i> .	2016-17	Traditional Owners CMAs – Regional Landcare Coordinators Australian Government FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead)
16	Provide additional support for travel to the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator position.	Funding provided in 2016-17 State Budget for travel by Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator.	2016-17	DELWP

Communications

Summary Findings:

The Gateway website requires significant improvement to be an effective support to the Landcare community. Many Landcare groups and networks are using other websites and social media in preference to the Gateway. The magazine plays a subtle yet important role in connecting the Victorian Landcare community.

(RM Consulting Group 2015)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
17	Develop a communications plan for the Victorian Landcare Program outlining the intended purpose and audience for communication tools such as the website (Victorian Landcare Gateway) and Victorian Landcare magazine. The plan needs to consider integration with communications tools and materials developed by CMAs and other government programs.	Work with the Landcare Community Advisory Group to prepare communications plan that considers all forms of communication tools used by the Victorian Landcare Program.	2016-17	FTLA/VLC CMAs – Regional Landcare Coordinators DELWP (Lead)
18	Improve the Victorian Landcare Gateway website to make it an easier and more useful portal for accessing Landcare information.	Implement with reference to the recommendation to develop a communications plan. Develop new website in collaboration with Landcare Community Advisory Group and the Landcare community.	2016-17	FTLA/VLC CMAs Facilitators Groups/networks DELWP (Lead)
19	Retain the paper version of the Victorian Landcare magazine. However, recipients should be requested to opt-in if they wish to continue to receive a hard copy.	Issue 67 (Spring 2016) - to be available both hard copy and online. Issue 67 includes form for subscribers to opt-in if they want to receive magazine in hard copy. Issue 68 (Summer 2016-17) - hard copy only to those who have opted in.	2016-17	FTLA/VLC CMAs VCMC Landcare community DELWP (Lead)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
20	Develop an electronic version of the Victorian Landcare magazine, with active access provided via an online reader app.	Implement in conjunction with the rebuild of the Victorian Landcare Gateway website and the communications plan.	2016-17	FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead)
21	Simplify the Landcare award nomination process.	The Landcare Awards are part of the national awards process. Work with a sub-committee of the Landcare Community Advisory Group to review the Victorian Landcare Awards and develop an options paper.	2016-17	Landcare Australia Limited (Lead) DELWP (Lead) FTLA/VLC
22	That those in need receive financial support to attend the Victorian Landcare awards.			
23	Support biennial regional Landcare awards.			
24	Landcare awards such as the Young Landcare Leader be only available to volunteers.			
25	That there are fewer Landcare awards and greater prize money.			
26	That the Landcare awards include an award to acknowledge young farmers for sustainable farming practices.			
27	Shift the emphasis of Landcare awards away from 'finding winners' and towards 'acknowledging Landcarers'.			

Regional Landcare Coordination

Summary Findings:

The Regional Landcare Coordinators play a central role in supporting local and regional Landcare; being a conduit between the community and CMAs. The Regional Landcare Coordinators are most effective where they have the ability to bring a sound understanding of the regional Landcare community into discussions and interactions with agencies. This understanding can positively influence the design and delivery of regional programs and projects, leading to greater participation in Landcare activities and improving the cost-effectiveness of delivery. The Regional Landcare Coordinators also need to be adept at communicating with the community about government and CMA policies and programs, and the opportunities these represent for Landcare. (RM Consulting Group 2015)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
28	Encourage Regional Landcare Coordinators to establish and maintain close working relationships with the Landcare community, so they can capitalise on government program funding opportunities and ensure the communities' views are heard and understood by CMAs and state agencies.	<p>Work with Landcare Community Advisory Group, CMAs and Regional Landcare Coordinators to develop strategies to strengthen relationships between Regional Landcare Coordinators, Landcare facilitators and the Landcare community</p> <p>Update the Victorian Landcare Team workplan and Regional Landcare Support Plans as appropriate.</p> <p>Cross reference with recommendation three.</p>	2016-17	CMAs DELWP (Lead)

Statewide Support

Summary Findings:

The Victorian Landcare Program provides a complementary suite of policy tools that have serviced important needs of Landcare. The level of support provided by the Victorian Government to Landcare is significantly greater than that which occurs elsewhere in Australia.

(RM Consulting Group 2015)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
29	Continue to support Landcare networks to build their capacity to meet the needs of their member groups.	Continue support for Landcare networks including establishment of new networks. Work with the regions to support Landcare as it evolves.	Ongoing	CMAs – Regional Landcare Coordinators FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead)
30	Continue to address on-going challenges for Landcare, such as involvement of young people, innovation and knowledge sharing.	Continue to address these challenges and investigate new approaches. Continue to provide support to Regional Landcare Coordinators and Landcare facilitators that enable this.	Ongoing	Landcare community DELWP (Lead)
31	Develop an indicator for environmental outcomes, such as the area of land (ha and %) managed by all landholders involved in Landcare-related activities.	Engage with Regional Landcare Coordinators progress the development of an appropriate indicator. Align with catchment indicators developed for <i>Our Catchment Our Communities - Integrated Catchment Management in Victoria 2016-19</i> Advocate for this recommendation to be addressed in the broader consideration of the environmental indicators being undertaken by DELWP and the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability.	2016-17	CMAs – Regional Landcare Coordinators FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead)

Number	Recommendation	Action	When	Partners
32	Adopt a better measurement of capacity change driven by Landcare such as an indicator on the reach and influence of Landcare on people other than group members.	Engage with Regional Landcare Coordinators. Align with catchment indicators developed for <i>Our Catchment Our Communities - Integrated Catchment Management in Victoria 2016-19</i> .	2016-17	Landcare Facilitators CMAs – Regional Landcare Coordinators FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead)
33	Develop a credible and robust method to measure and report on return on investment in Landcare. This could draw on data currently available on funding leveraged by Landcare groups/networks.	Engage with Regional Landcare Coordinators to review reporting and data collection. Align with national work on measuring health and return on investment in Landcare.	2016-17	CMAs FTLA/VLC DELWP (Lead)

Acronyms used in this document

CMAAs - Catchment Management Authorities

DEDJTR – Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

DELWP – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

FTLA - Farm Tree and Landcare Association

NRM – natural resource management

RLC – Regional Landcare Coordinators

VCMC – Victorian Catchment Management Council

VLC - Victorian Landcare Council

VLG – Victorian Landcare Grants

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those community members, organisations, groups and networks who contributed to the Victorian Landcare Program review and provided input and ideas through interviews and the online survey.

Thank you to the following organisations who supported the review and have worked with DELWP to guide the formation of this action plan:

Catchment Management Authorities

Farm Tree and Landcare Association

Victorian Landcare Council

For more information

For more information on the Victorian Landcare Program and Landcare in your region please visit:

www.landcarevic.org.au

