



NORTH EAST LANDCARE SUPPORT STRATEGY

2004-2009



HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

North East Landcare Support Strategy 2004-2009

PART A

Consultation Outcomes and Aspirational Goals
for Landcare Support in the North East Region

June 2004

Part B includes the 2004-2009 North East Catchment Management Authority Landcare Support Strategy Action Plan, including outcomes, targets and actions to be implemented over the strategy period.

Developed with Landcare Groups & Support Agencies
in North Eastern Victoria
for the North East Catchment Management Authority



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VISION FOR LANDCARE SUPPORT

Diverse communities across North East Victoria working together in trusting partnerships with government and the business sector, to manage for productive, healthy and aesthetically pleasing landscapes.

INTRODUCTION

The North East Landcare Support Strategy is made up of two documents;

- Part A – Consultation Outcomes and Aspirational Goals. (This document)
A summary of the consultation outcomes and aspirational goals for Landcare and Landcare support in the North East Region. The document outlines the four main themes of the strategy including support goals, context and support strategies. The document also includes issues shaping the future directions of Landcare, and significant issues outside the scope of the strategy.
- Part B – 2004-2009 Landcare Support Strategy Action Plan
The Action Plan for the North East CMA to implement Landcare Support. The document lists the goals, outcomes, targets and milestones, performance indicators and evaluation plan for the four main themes of Landcare Support in the region. The document also provides background information on Landcare in the North East, and details the process used to develop the Support Strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this Landcare Support Strategy would not have been possible without input from the Landcare community in the region. We acknowledge the contribution of the Landcare and agency representatives who contributed to the production of this Landcare Support Strategy, through submissions and attendance at workshops. We particularly wish to thank those community and portfolio members who attended the consolidation workshops. Your contributions were invaluable in developing a Landcare Support Strategy for the community.

Development of this Strategy has been supported by Department of Sustainability and Environment to implement the Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare.

LANDCARE PROJECT PRIORITIES

Through this consultation process and through Local Area Plans, Landcare Groups have identified the priorities which they believe will require particular effort and attention over the coming five years, not in priority order:

- Sustainable agriculture including good farm management.
- Pest plants and animals
- Biodiversity
- Soil health, particularly acidity and salinity
- Cultural heritage
- Maintaining the high quality of water in NE Victoria.

MAIN MESSAGE FROM LANDCARE

The main message from the Landcare communities in North East Victoria to Government and support agencies is that issues that need to be considered in Landcare support are:

- Landcare is a community-driven movement which is vital to natural resource management in the region and it is important to consider the need to:
 - recognise community effort and knowledge
 - involve the community in policy-making
 - trust and respect Landcare groups
 - accept diversity in communities and local conditions

It is also important to consider the need to:

- provide specialist expertise and support
- provide paid locally controlled coordinators
- develop regulations wisely and enforce them
- lead by example
- make sure funding programs are flexible, outcome-based and simple to administer
- support the integration of viable, sustainable farming and natural resource management.

SOME ISSUES SHAPING THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF LANDCARE

During the community consultation, people identified the following issues as potentially having an impact on the directions and success of Landcare. Over the coming five years the Landcare community expects the following challenges:

- Environmental management to become more important to the government and communities
- New policy and regulations to be introduced at an increasing pace
- A range of different views on the best ways to manage pest plants, animals, effluent, water & soil quality and other environmental issues
- Increasing urbanisation of traditional rural landscapes
- Continuing decline in the number of farmers with consequent loss of knowledge and skills
- Fewer volunteers for Landcare, with ever-increasing demands on people
- Continuing disintegration of district communities from withdrawal of government and private sector services and industry adjustment
- Some landholders with little or no knowledge of how to manage natural resources
- Rural communities not having the same access to new communications technologies available in large cities
- Important challenges will include water control, weeds, nutrient drain, and management of public land.

And the following opportunities:

- People retiring to rural communities, bringing skills and a new dimension to Landcare
- Advances in technology, some expensive.

CONTEXT OF THE STRATEGY

Landcare is identified as a pivotal resource for delivering outcomes in the North East Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) (Section 9.4). Community land management groups have been involved and acting on natural resource issues in the North East since 1982. These early groups focussed particularly on themes such as trees, soil conservation or rabbit action. Now there are 52 Landcare groups in the region covering almost all private land areas.

These groups deal with many issues, some of which are common to the region and some are specific to individual groups. This makes Landcare both an immense asset and a potentially fragile structure. Landcare groups can be a principal mechanism for community capacity building, and delivering on-ground works. On the other hand, any attempt to coerce groups into adapting to Government organisational pressures and needs can destroy the minimalist and focussed efforts of these valuable community assets. (NE RCS 2004)

Volunteers are an important part of the fabric of communities. Support to Landcare helps Landcare groups in their activities and encourages more people to take part in Landcare.

The Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare provides for a 5-year Regional Landcare Support Strategy as the main strategic planning and investment framework for Landcare support in the CMA regions.

North East Catchment Management Authority has consulted widely in developing this strategy. It has held eight workshops, involving more than 90 people, to identify issues and develop goals and strategies for Landcare support in North Eastern Victoria:

- five public community meetings across the region attended by Landcare Groups and the public
- two meetings with other key stakeholders, including representatives from North East Catchment Management Authority, Landcare support persons, local government, state agencies (DPI, DSE, Parks Victoria)
- Individual discussions with other stakeholders, including CMA staff and Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation.
- two meetings to consolidate and refine the priority concerns of the community and stakeholders, involving representatives from the five public community meetings plus other key stakeholders
- one meeting with CMA and other key stakeholders to finalise the plan.

23 written submissions were also received.

The North East CMA has set the targets for the coming five years, aimed at building the capacity of Landcare and the capability of landholders in natural resource management. These have been described in the relevant sections of this document and will be subject to annual review.

North East CMA is developing an evaluation framework, which will be used to help monitor this strategy.

This document (Part A) sets out the overall aims and aspirations for Landcare support as developed through the consultation process. Part B sets out the outcomes, targets and actions to be implemented and evaluation plan for the North East CMA from 2004-2009.

LANDCARE SUPPORT STRATEGY THEMES

- Sustaining & growing Landcare effort in on-ground works
- Developing & maintaining Landcare-friendly communities
- Building and sharing knowledge & practical skills
- Building positive relationships with Government & business.

SUSTAINING & GROWING LANDCARE EFFORT IN ON-GROUND WORKS

Landcare groups have made a major contribution to sustaining and improving the region's landscapes through on-ground works, involving the contribution of time, effort and materials of landholders and funding support from Governments.

Support Goals

- Improved Landcare outcomes and better use of the goodwill and effort of Landcare volunteers and staff through more accessible funding programs
- Continued support for groups to implement Local Area Plans, including aspects that may not be identified in regional and statewide priorities
- Support groups in implementing their long term visionary goals, including seeking long term funding to achieve these goals
- Increased flexibility in funding programs to meet local needs
- Support Landcare by ensuring all Landcare Groups have access to specialist coordination and administrative support

The context

Funding programs are critical to improving the quality of our water, soil, and native animal and plant populations. Given the enormous contribution of volunteers, Landcare funding programs offer huge returns on investment. However current processes are cumbersome, costly to manage and highly inefficient. They are imposing ever-increasing time and cost-burdens on Landcare applicants with risk of losing members. This is a major concern to Landcare Groups in North Eastern Victoria.

The funding application process and guidelines need to be simple and direct and not deter volunteer Landcare members from applying, nor should worthwhile applications be ruled out on technicalities.

Landcare groups have limited access to ongoing professional coordinator support, and often rely on project-funded assistance. Groups with access to paid support are more likely to thrive. Those without access to professional coordination support are at risk.

There is an ongoing need for a balance between funding provided for Network and Group Coordination and funding for on-ground works.

Support Strategies

- Provide every landcare group with access to paid locally controlled Landcare Coordinators
- Provide every landcare group with assured access to a reasonable level of specialist knowledge and professional administrative and other support (eg base funding)
- Collaborate with and urge funding bodies to revise the process and guidelines for funding applications with a view to streamlining the application and reporting processes with a view to:
 - Clarifying priorities and selection criteria and communicating these to Landcare Groups
 - Emphasising project content and outcomes in selection, rather than the style of presentation of the application
 - Enhancing the monitoring and evaluation processes, focusing on outputs and outcomes rather than inputs
 - Identifying options for longer term projects, e.g., 3 years with annual review
 - Standardising reporting and accountability requirements over time and between funding programs
 - Providing feedback to applicants
- Investigate different models under which Landcare can take part in on-ground works with reduced administrative workload of Landcare groups.

DEVELOPING & MAINTAINING LANDCARE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The success and value of Landcare lies in the strength of its community membership.

Enormous advances in natural resource management and community capacity are made through the combined efforts and goodwill of the people in Landcare.

Support Goals

- Increasing community ownership of regional programs by seeking more and better ways of involving Landcare in regional decision-making, including views expressed in Local Area Plans
- Wider community involvement in Landcare through programs targeting the diverse interests in communities

The context

The membership is ageing, reflecting its current strong base in the farming community. As current members retire, young people need to be encouraged to take part. The larger and more diverse the membership, the greater the impact. Landcare needs to continue to engage and motivate those in the community to sustain momentum.

Landcare arose out of the farming community. However it is at risk of being treated as an agent of government rather than being recognised as the vehicle of community-driven action. Landcare groups need to be in control of their own destiny.

Support Strategies

- Develop and implement specific mechanisms for involving Landcare members in decision-making processes on regional, statewide and national programs.
- Communicate the formal and informal consultation mechanisms to Landcare Groups and the broader community.
- Expand community awareness, education and promotion programs including:
 - Promoting Landcare activities to the general community
 - Creating opportunities for networking across the region
 - Publishing an up-to-date calendar of events, including regional events and those of networks and groups – in newsletters and on the Internet
 - Supporting local and regional newsletters
 - Promoting Landcare achievements in the broader community, including signage of specific works, publishing Landcare stories
 - Using a mix of communication channels to reach all audiences, including newsletters, internet, local media, notices to groups and networks etc
- Provide support for Landcare Groups to be trained in up-to-date techniques and practices, management and administration, leadership skills, group skills, conflict resolution, negotiation skills, submission preparation, media relations and other necessary skills
- Continue to support and expand the current youth program in schools
- Continue to create opportunities for corporate sponsorship of community awareness and training activities.

BUILDING & SHARING KNOWLEDGE & PRACTICAL SKILLS

Landcare Groups, landholders and agencies have developed an enormous amount of practical and theoretical knowledge of natural resource management. We must retain and build on this or risk losing the value of years of effort.

Support Goals

- Continually build and grow the practical and theoretical knowledge relevant to managing our natural resources, and share this knowledge with everyone
- Increased recognition of the value of practical, local knowledge and experience, and develop ways to capture this and disseminate it for the benefit of current and future generations

The context

The practice of passing farms on through generations is disappearing and invaluable experience accumulated through Landcare activities is being lost. Reduced Government services in extension means that new approaches are needed to allow landholders access to knowledge. Researchers need to recognise and use the practical experience of land managers in working out improved ways of managing our natural resources.

New strategies are needed to disseminate information and promote good natural resource management to new landholders who have little or no experience in land management, but who may have other valuable skills and insights to contribute.

Support Strategies

- North East CMA to collaborate with other CMAs, government agencies, Landcare Groups, education providers and other organisations to develop a state-wide strategy for recording, accessing and using the practical and theoretical knowledge relevant to managing our natural resources.
- North East CMA to coordinate or develop within the region:
 - Build a data bank of resources in the community where there is specialist knowledge and experience on specific activities and make available to government field and research staff and Landcare Groups
 - Create a “one-stop shop” for persons seeking information on the practice and theory of natural resource management
 - Design a mechanism for storing and accessing written information, referral lists of local landholder expertise and specialist government resources by subject area, Landcare “stories”, and other land management resources
 - Develop participatory mechanisms to allow researchers to involve Landcare Groups on how new techniques and technologies work in practice, drawing on existing systems and processes to eliminate duplication of effort (eg using the monitoring and evaluation reports of funded projects).
 - Develop and promote programs to help Landcare Groups build capability and share knowledge and experience in ways that are useful, such as through farm walks, field days, newsletters, training courses
 - Design education strategies and programs to help Landcare Groups provide new landholders with easy access to valuable information on land management, inform them of their responsibilities and encourage their involvement in Landcare.

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS

Government agencies need to continue to work with the Landcare groups, building trust and goodwill to achieve the common goals of a healthy environment and communities. Landcare groups and landholders should be consulted in developing workable policy.

Support Goals

- Increased quality relationships and alliances between Landcare, Federal, State and Local Governments and businesses
- Landcare supported to assist community access to and involvement in Government research and extension services
- Increased Landcare involvement in the review and development of policy and regulation relating to natural resource management, including primary industry

The context

Landcare is a significant community-driven vehicle that contributes to practical, on-ground and lasting improvements in our landscapes. Landcare does not work alone. To achieve broad-based change, Landcare, government and business need to work in partnership.

Despite the increasing policy and regulatory emphasis on natural resource management, government resources, critical to the success of NRM, are diminishing in key support areas.

Support Strategies

- North East CMA to foster the development of a whole of government approach and work with Landcare to review the support services required to assist Landcare and landholders to develop partnerships to enable responsible land management.
- North East CMA taking a coordinating role to foster the development of complementary management approaches, involving Government agencies, across the public/private land boundaries to support active Landcare programs..
- Involve Landcare in review and development of regional policies
- Identify ways for Landcare Groups to be kept informed about opportunities for their input into Government policy and regulatory reviews relating to natural resource management, including primary industry
- North East CMA to take a leadership role and work with other government agencies to implement a strategy for providing up-to-date information and training needed to carry out Landcare programs, including requirements relating to:
 - Occupational Health and Safety, Workcover and public liability issues
 - Natural resource management, including primary industry.
- Develop regional and statewide strategies for creating opportunities for partnerships between Landcare and businesses to help support the Landcare effort, to their mutual benefit.

APPENDIX

Issues Outside the Scope of the Regional Landcare Support Strategy

Public Land Management, particularly management of weeds and pest animals, was raised during the community workshops as an issue considered to be significant in its impact upon landholders, Landcare Groups, and their activities.

Good proactive public land management would set an example to landowners, enhance cooperation, and add strength to necessary enforcement action against landowners who do not fulfil their obligations to deal with pest plants and animals.

However, community representatives strongly believed that this issue must be raised, and should be presented to the CMA and relevant authorities as an issue of major community concern, for consideration in other Regional and Statewide strategic planning processes.

Strategies for dealing with the issue, which could be addressed within the scope of the Landcare Support Strategy, have been included in the section on Building Quality Engaged Relationships with Government & Business.

Public Land Management

Communities place a high value on Victoria's parks and bushland and Landcare groups recognise the difficulties in managing these vast areas of land. However, there is a widely held perception that uncontrolled pest plants and animals tend to spread outwards from public land in parks and along roadsides, riverbanks, railways and other areas.

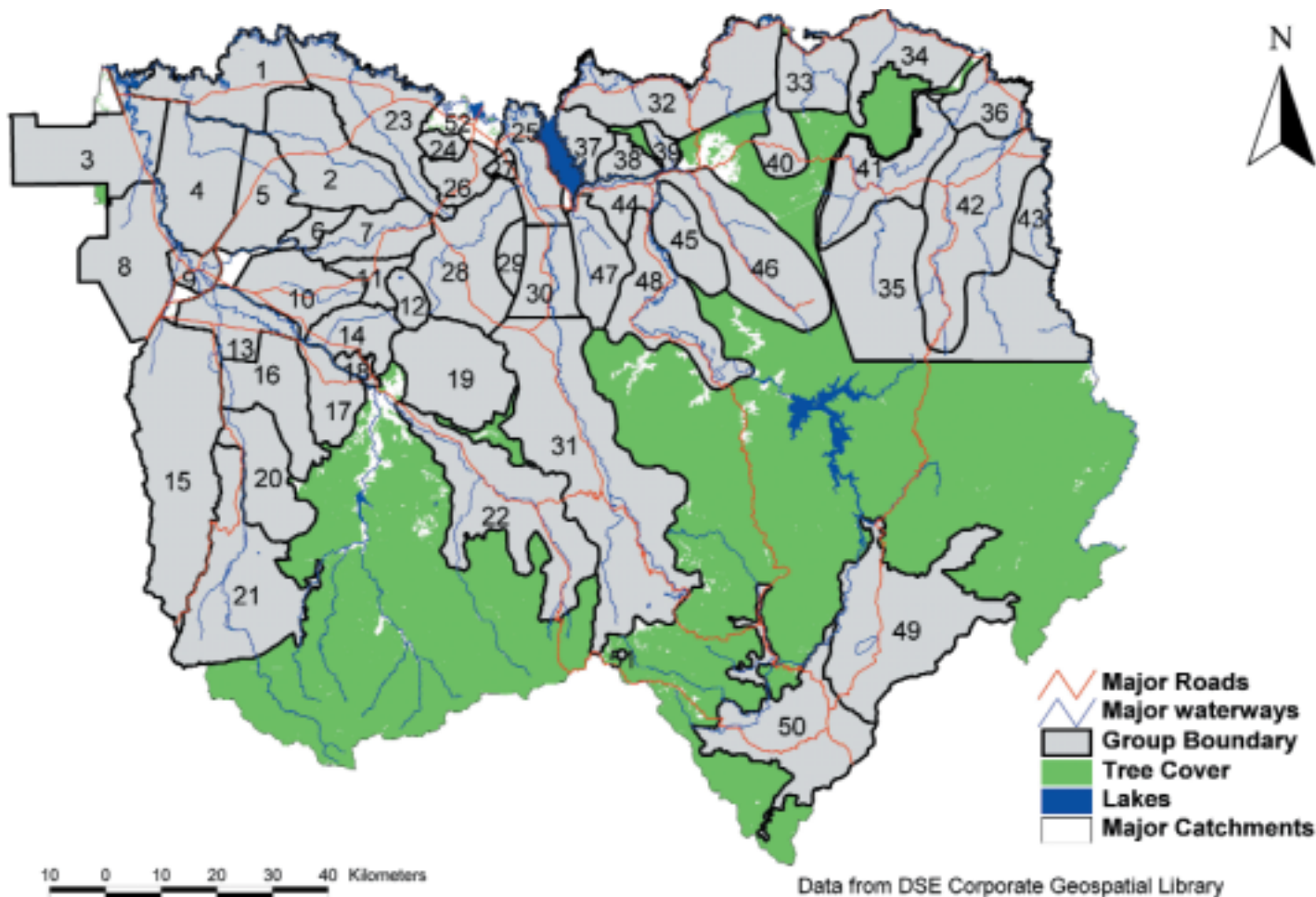
The context

Approximately 55% of the total area of the North East Region is public land. This means that a significant number of landholders have boundaries adjacent to public land.

There is huge opportunity to better align the management of public land to the standards demanded by Government of private landholders.

Efforts of Landcare Groups to encourage and Government officers to enforce landholders to be responsible land managers are diminished when the Government does not lead by example on public land.

Resources available to public land managers limit their ability to undertake pest control activities to the level expected by the Landcare community.



| Group Name | No. |
|--|-----|
| Rutherglen Landcare Group | 1 |
| Chiltern Landcare Group | 2 |
| Peechelba, Boomahnoomoonah, Wilby Landcare Group | 3 |
| Boorhaman Landcare Group | 4 |
| Springhurst Byawatha Hills Landcare Group | 5 |
| Friends of Chiltern Forest. | 6 |
| Wooragee Landcare Group | 7 |
| Warby Ranges Landcare & Rabbit Action Group | 8 |
| Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group | 9 |
| Hodgsons & Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Group | 10 |
| Beechworth Landcare Group | 11 |
| Stanley Landcare Group | 12 |
| Milawa Markwood Oxley Landcare Group. | 13 |
| Burgoigee Creek Landcare Group. | 14 |
| Greta Valley Landcare Group. | 15 |
| Carboor Bobinawarra Landcare Group | 16 |
| Whorouly Landcare Group | 17 |
| Gapstead Landcare Group | 18 |
| Mudgegonga & District Landcare Group | 19 |
| Edi Black Range Landcare Group | 20 |
| King Basin Landcare Group | 21 |
| Upper Ovens Landcare Group | 22 |
| Indigo Valley Landcare Group | 23 |
| Huon Creek Landcare Group. | 24 |
| Kiewa Bonegilla Landcare Group | 25 |
| Lenewa & Castle Creek Landcare Group | 26 |
| Baranduda Landcare Group | 27 |
| Yackandandah Landcare Group | 28 |

| Group Name | No. |
|---|-----|
| Gap Flat Landcare Group. | 29 |
| Kergunyah Landcare Group. | 30 |
| Upper Kiewa Landcare Group | 31 |
| Talgarno Wises Creek Landcare Group | 32 |
| Burrowye Guys Forest Landcare Group. | 33 |
| Walwa Landcare Group. | 34 |
| Upper Murray Catchment Farm Tree Group. | 35 |
| Tintaldra Landcare Group | 36 |
| Bethanga Landcare Group | 37 |
| Jarvis Creek Landcare Group | 38 |
| Georges Creek Landcare Group. | 39 |
| Koetong Landcare Group | 40 |
| Cudgewa Landcare Group | 41 |
| Nariel Thougla Landcare Group | 42 |
| Upper Murray Catchment Landcare Group | 43 |
| Bryants Gap Landcare Group | 44 |
| Honeysuckle Spring Creek Landcare Group | 45 |
| Tallangatta Valley Landcare Group | 46 |
| Sandy Creek Landcare Group | 47 |
| Mitta Valley Landcare Group | 48 |
| Benambra Landcare Group | 49 |
| Omeo Landcare Group | 50 |
| Mt Hotham Alpine Care | 51 |
| Parklands Albury Wodonga. | 52 |
| Ovens Landcare Network. | - |
| Mid Ovens Landcare Groups. | - |
| Kiewa Catchment Landcare. | - |
| Upper Murray Landcare Network | - |