

LANDCARE COMMUNITIES – AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

A policy roadmap for Landcare in Australia

THE LANDCARE ORGANISATIONS, POLICY STATEMENT 2019



LANDCARE COMMUNITIES – AUSTRALIA’S FUTURE, SEEKS AN ONGOING COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY LANDCARE MOVEMENT, PROVIDING RELIABLE FUNDING THAT SUPPORTS A FOUNDATION OF LOCAL ACTION UNDERTAKEN WITH REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL SUPPORT.



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COMMUNITY LANDCARE IS
A FOUNDATION OF STRONG
COMMUNITIES, WITH TENS OF
THOUSANDS OF LANDCARERS
ACTING TOGETHER TO RESTORE
LAND, WATER AND COASTAL
LANDSCAPES ACROSS ALL
BOUNDARIES.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Collectively, the Landcare Organisations^a together represent community Landcare nationally. Community Landcare is a foundation of strong communities, with tens of thousands of Landcarers acting together to restore land, water and coastal landscapes across all boundaries. This approach builds resilience in communities, towns, on farms and in the outback, improving human and environmental health and wellbeing. Investment will empower the movement.

Landcare Communities – Australia’s Future, seeks an ongoing commitment to the community Landcare movement, providing reliable funding that supports a foundation of local action undertaken with regional, state and national support.

The **key principles** to underpin a renewed strategic investment in community Landcare in Australia are:

- A clear philosophical approach to support a grass-roots movement and volunteerism
- Funding delivered at the most local level possible – to support action on ground with paid local coordinators/facilitators
- Landcare Network Hubs leverage state and territory funding, staffed by federally funded but locally directed community Landcare networkers
- Modest core funding to support Landcare Organisations provides impact at scale, government relations, a unified voice and wider connections
- Measure and amplify local successes at regional, state and national scales.

Outcomes will meet local, regional and national commitments with a six-fold return on investment to:

- Empower local communities to act
- Address downward trends in land, water and coastal degradation, species loss and climate change
- Build overall resilience in communities and nature
- Increase carbon capture in soil and vegetation
- Deliver on local, regional, national and international commitments efficiently and effectively, maximizing co-benefits
- Empower Traditional Owners land management and decision making, recognising them as leaders in Landcare
- Provide children and youth a lifelong connection to place, community and food systems, bridge the city-country divide, and nurture a new generation of Landcarers
- Increase our knowledge base and capacity to learn, linking local knowledge and observations to national research, monitoring and evaluation systems.

^a National Landcare Network, Landcare Australia and the State and Territory Landcare Organisations

LANDCARE COMMUNITIES – AUSTRALIA’S FUTURE

The Landcare Organisations jointly propose a new investment model, to support a Landcare movement that is community driven at all scales and successfully weaves local solutions into meeting regional, national and international priorities.

A new national approach should encompass:

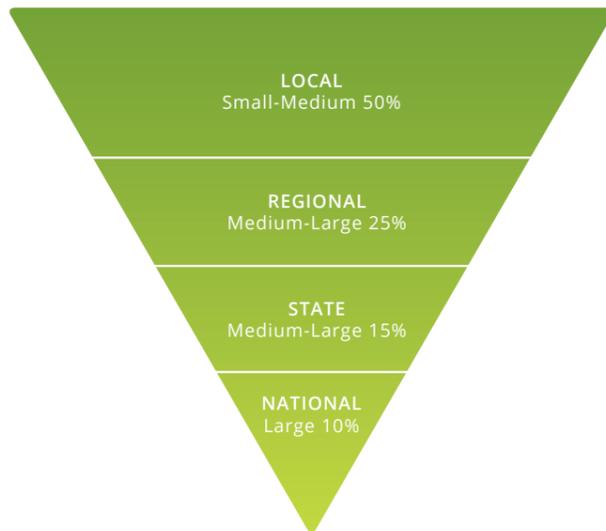


Figure 1: Proposed allocation of funding investment for the new Landcare model

1. Local responses to local problems coming together to support regional, national and international goals
2. Locally driven, nationally supported collaborations and networks
3. Reliable and consistent core funding
4. Building local capacity and volunteer engagement
5. Simplified processes, reflecting the community nature of Landcare groups
6. Demonstrated success, across multiple sectors and scales, and learning from the past
7. Increased funding, to reflect the scale and urgency of the problem, and the community's demonstrated capacity to act.

The best of Landcare relies on key stakeholders networking and collaborating to set regional priorities, engagement of volunteers and private investment, and allocating funds at the most local delivery routes possible.



A NEW NATIONAL INVESTMENT IN LANDCARE COMMUNITIES – AUSTRALIA’S FUTURE

The Landcare Organisations and six thousand Landcare groups around Australia recommend the next Australian Government support the following core policy initiatives.

ACTION ON GROUND \$120M PER YEAR ONGOING

In simple, accessible community grants to support the interconnected challenges of conservation, sustainable regenerative agriculture and climate change mitigation. Delivered by State and Territory Organisations as Local, Regional and Collaborative Grants.

LOCAL LANDCARE COORDINATORS/ FACILITATORS \$56M PER YEAR ONGOING

Local Landcare coordinators employed by local groups to leverage the time-investment of volunteers and weave their efforts into regional, national and international priorities. Landcare coordinators create more confident, efficient and effective Landcare groups.

LANDCARE NETWORK HUBS \$35M PER YEAR ONGOING

To leverage state and regional partnerships programs, improve coordination of local efforts addressing regional and cross regional project partnerships with community and state governments.

COMMUNITY LANDCARE NETWORKERS \$18M PER YEAR ONGOING

Funding for Regional Landcare Networkers based in Landcare Network Hubs.

ONE VOICE FOR LANDCARE \$4M PER YEAR ONGOING

Consolidated funding for the National Landcare Network, Landcare Australia and State and Territory Organisations to support enhanced member services and ensure the collective Landcare voice reaches government, community and business.

NATIONAL LANDCARE/NRM ROUNDTABLE REVIEW \$1M

To support Landcare stakeholders participate in Government convened National Landcare/ Natural Resource Management roundtable review, research and reporting. Including a revision of the current approach to Tenders and how this includes established regional organisations.

LINK LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE \$1M PER YEAR ONGOING

To integrate local and cultural knowledge with science, research, monitoring and evaluation, delivered by 60 scientist-supported citizen-science events across Australia.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS WORKING ON COUNTRY \$42M PER YEAR ONGOING

In addition to existing Aboriginal Ranger Program funding, provide a simple, accessible grants program to support Traditional Owner groups to: work on their traditional lands, particularly on agricultural land and in regions where ranger programs do not already operate; network and build capacity.

ENGAGING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS \$2M

To redevelop, distribute and support the use of Junior Landcare materials and resources based on the National Curriculum.

AND \$6M PER YEAR ONGOING

To support young people to form a lifelong connection to place, nature and food production through Junior Landcare, Intrepid Landcare and youth programs such as Kids in Nature, the Millenium Kids and EcoXplore.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE CORRIDOR PLAN \$10M PER YEAR ONGOING

Revise and implement the 2012 Wildlife Corridor Plan through a mix of core funding for key initiatives and strengthening habitat connectivity as a major priority across funding programs. Direct assistance for local groups to combine their efforts to connect patches of biodiversity across landscapes connecting communities, increasing ecological function and strengthening landscape resilience.

In addition, the following initiatives are strongly endorsed by the Landcare community as integral to management of natural assets:

LANDCARE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME \$40M PER YEAR ONGOING

Launch a Landcare Stewardship Scheme integrated with other programs to support farmers implement Landcare practices to be resilient and sustainable in the face of climate change.

LINKING FARMERS AND CONSUMERS \$4M PER YEAR ONGOING

Development of certification scheme/s for sustainably produced goods; develop a 'consumer and producer, city to country connection' program alongside the farm assurance scheme.

RESTORATION TOURISM \$1M PER YEAR FOR FOUR YEARS

To develop habitat restoration tourism with Coastcare, Landcare and coastal community groups in partnership with local businesses.

FORESTS FOR LIVING

Increase knowledge and capacity for farmers and communities to restore vegetation across landscapes for multiple benefits:

- **150% tax deductions for bio-diverse, integrated agroforestry, climate mitigation and adaptation plantings:** Includes high value timber and other non-wood products, biodiversity restoration, increased carbon sequestration and permanent carbon storage. Biodiversity plantings to be guided by Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia standards (SERA).
- **Carbon incentives:** Simplified assessment procedures to encourage farming families and local communities to restore degraded forests and woodland. Revegetation and regeneration in areas likely to produce long term climate and ecological benefits, overseen and supported by relevant independent, not for profit organisations.
- **Incentives to progressively and carefully convert forestry plantations not viable for production purposes:** Low risk, more resilient, biodiverse, long-term forests for carbon sequestration and catchment protection. Credit avoided harvest emissions and the lower risk, additional carbon sequestration achieved from unharvested forests.

LANDCARE CORPS PROGRAM \$90M OVER TWO YEARS TO ESTABLISH, AND \$120M PA OUT-YEARS

Local Landcare groups are leading the way to engage young people to be lifelong Landcarers and should be supported to grow. Landcare proposes support for the following:

- **Australian Landcare Corps** – program development with the state and territory Landcare organisations to provide an opportunity for young people to work together to repair and care for their coasts, towns and country. Building on the learnings from previous programs like the Green Army, this would be an opportunity to create links with the Indigenous Ranger Program.
- **Landcare Traineeships** – have been piloted in some states and proven to be very effective in skills training for future employment, keeping young people working and living in rural areas. We recommend support for an investigation of Landcare traineeship opportunities across Australia in conjunction with state and territory governments.

Landcare would like to work more extensively and effectively in partnership with the Australian Government. We want to support the government to meet local needs, national challenges and international obligations, while building resilience in our communities and the environment. Communities and individuals must be actively engaged in local, grass-roots action across Australia if land, water, and coastal degradation, species loss and climate change are to be seriously addressed. The National Landcare Program should leverage the investment to date by providing the Landcare community a long term, reliable commitment in the form of the Landcare Communities – Australia's Future proposed here.

Critical to its success is a strategic and inclusive approach to the funding model with the community Landcare movement central for on-ground action and outcomes. The Landcare community is looking for a whole of government response and long term commitment to Landcare Communities for Australia's Future.

OF ALL RISKS, IT IS IN RELATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT THAT THE WORLD IS MOST CLEARLY SLEEPWALKING INTO CATASTROPHE.

LANDCARE 30-YEAR LEGACY – AT A GLANCE

AUSTRALIA IS BEAUTIFUL, BIODIVERSE AND PRODUCTIVE. OUR LAND, WATER AND BIODIVERSITY ARE INTEGRAL PARTS OF OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY, OUR ECONOMY AND UNIVERSAL LIFE. THEY PROVIDE ABUNDANTLY FOR OUR AGRICULTURAL, TOURISM AND RESOURCE INDUSTRIES, RECREATION, THE CLEAN AIR WE BREATHE AND THE WATER WE DRINK. THEY ARE OUR NATURAL SYSTEMS AND THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.

Globally, these natural systems are under extreme pressure and represent an existential threat to people. The World Economic Forum's 2019 Global Risks Report is dominated by environmental threats for the third year in a row - both in terms of impact and likelihood. "Of all risks, it is in relation to the environment that the world is most clearly sleepwalking into catastrophe," the report warns.

In Australia these risks are already here. Water crisis, placed in the top five global risks in terms of impact each year for the last 7 years¹, pose a threat to the future of communities in the Murray Darling Basin right now; extreme weather events have become the norm, reducing resilience at an individual, community and system level; and the overall status of biodiversity in Australia is poor and worsening. At the national level, 81 ecosystems, 511 terrestrial and aquatic animal species and 1,355 plant species are listed as threatened². Soil and water quality are in decline and invasive species are impacting across landscapes, degrading our farms and bushland alike³. The most recent national State of Environment Report released by the Australian Government demonstrates that our natural environment is in serious and rapid decline.

The Landcare community - tens of thousands of farmers, Traditional Owners, retirees, kids, and other passionate individuals from all walks of life and backgrounds - is directly addressing these challenges. For thirty years they have volunteered their time and committed their own resources to restore resilience and help us meet international obligations for our coasts, rivers, farms, rangelands, bush, parks and suburban green spaces. Landcarers are as diverse as Australia but all share a desire and motivation to improve the condition of their local patch - farmers, pastoralists and Traditional Owners increasing sustainability and caring for country, urban and country groups cleaning up and restoring rivers, reserves and coasts. They have become a movement for change that is enduring, nimble and effective with the most extensive social support network and rapid response capability of any in Australia⁴. Recent conservative analyses shows up to a six-fold return⁵ on investment in Landcare. Landcare's contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals have been mapped against 12 of the 17 Goals showing the significance of Landcare's contributions⁶. Our model is so successful, twenty other countries have adopted it and look to Australia for leadership.



The Landcare community also understands the critical importance of longer term planning with stable funding at multiple scales to maintain progress and community participation.

“OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES, WE HAVE LEARNT THAT LAND RESTORATION DEMANDS LONG-TERM APPROACHES, DURABLE POLICY SETTINGS AND CONTINUITY OF RESOURCING, OF BOTH SOCIAL AND BIOPHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS CAPABLE OF USING A FULL SUITE OF POLICY INSTRUMENTS – EDUCATIVE, INFORMATIVE, INCENTIVE, MARKET AND REGULATORY”.⁶

Successive Government investments, however, have moved away from the local, ground-up focus towards a regionally centralised investment with, in the current model, targeted top-down investment. This top-down approach compromises the community intent of Landcare and excludes, disenfranchises and disempowers local communities and initiatives, ultimately reducing the efficacy of investments.

MAJOR CHANGE IN MODELS OF LANDCARE DELIVERY

	FIRST WAVE 1989-1999	SECOND WAVE 1997-2013	THIRD WAVE 2014-2023	FOURTH WAVE ONGOING
DEPARTMENTAL INITIATIVES	Bottom-up local-scale Landcare groups The Decade of Landcare 1989-1999 \$32M pa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A commitment to the Decade of Landcare A clear philosophical approach to engage the community and their motivations to care for land and water assets across Australia Successfully built the Landcare movement, and mobilised tens of thousands of community volunteers to meet government targets for land and water assets Did not meet ambitious goals to arrest and repair soil, land, water and biodiversity degradation. 	Regional/catchment organisations National Heritage Trust 1997-2008 approx \$270M pa (and additional \$175M for water) and Caring for our Country 2008-2013 \$450M pa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed long-term statutory CMAs and NRM regional bodies to meet and monitor Federal government policy directives Developed regional strategies and some good regional projects Centralised decision making, disenfranchising many local groups Introduced reporting requirements onerous for many volunteer community groups Outcomes that could have been achieved through regional strategies and projects were weakened by disenfranchised and less engaged community An additional \$175M pa allocated to address the national issue of salinity in priority regions. 	Targeted investment The National Landcare Programme phase 1 and 2 2014-2023 approx. \$225M pa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on specific large targets, including endangered species and iconic areas (Murray Darling Basin and the Great Barrier Reef) and in meeting international obligations Core funding diverted to specific programs such as Green Corps/Green Army, and iconic assets Ongoing rationalization and budget cuts at State and Territory levels, with cost shifting to the Federal Government Increased disenfranchisement of local groups. 	Landcare - Community driven at all scales Landcare Communities - Australia's Future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear philosophical approach to support a bottom-up movement Funding reflects this, with largest portion directed to community level – to support action on ground and core operational support Landcare Network Hubs, with federally funded but locally guided Regional Coordinators, leverage state and territory funding Impact at multiple scales, supports continued growth of Landcare to address local and cross-regional issues, with benefits for international commitments A unified voice, with wider network of partnership connections.
	EFFECTIVE	LESS EFFECTIVE	LESS EFFECTIVE	MOST EFFECTIVE

Figure 2: Waves of major change in models of Landcare delivery 1980s to 2019 (after Campbell et al. 2017)

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT FARMERS ARE REWARDED FOR CHANGES THAT LEAD TO RESILIENCE AND LANDCARE STEWARDSHIP IN THE FACE OF DROUGHT, FLOODS AND TRADE FLUCTUATIONS.

The next Australian government needs a new national approach to Landcare investment that draws on the strengths of the movement to support a whole of community response to the protection and restoration of our land, water, wildlife and the communities who love and depend on them.

Adverse policy changes have been combined with an overall reduction of federal investment to levels lower than in 2002⁷. In addition to reduced annual funding, National Landcare Program funds do not preference local action and are often diverted to extreme events, iconic program priorities or projects that are primarily focused on farming business as usual. It is important that farmers are rewarded for changes that lead to resilience and Landcare stewardship in the face of drought, floods and trade fluctuations.

The previous Landcare approaches are all valid. However, they have been substantially implemented in sequence, not in parallel, with each displacing or undermining the previous approach, rather than building on it. We see the different models as complementary, not alternative approaches. The fourth wave of Landcare needs to be based on a model that supports local community as the foundation for driving local, regional and wider Landcare efforts. It needs regional facilitator/networkers guided by local communities located in diverse community Landcare Network Hubs to ensure landscape level changes are achieved. International and national obligations will best be met when the full engagement of local communities and all levels of government and other partners results in the collaboration needed for large scale challenges. Governments rely on communities to act and communities rely on government to provide appropriate and consistent support.

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THIS IS OUR COUNTRY, OUR FUTURE. I GIVE MY COMMITMENT
TO YOU, KIDS, THAT MY GENERATION WILL HAND ON TO YOU
A BETTER COUNTRY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

THE HON. BOB HAWKE AC
LAUNCH OF THE DECADE OF LANDCARE
JULY 20, 1989, WENTWORTH NSW



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