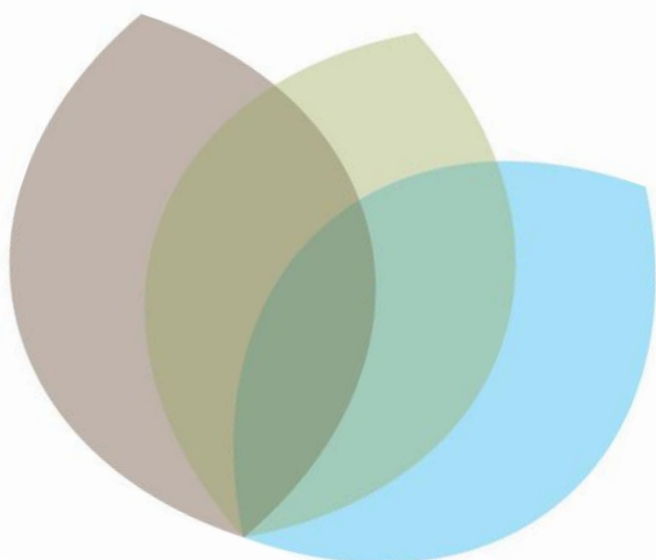


# LANDCARE COMMUNITIES – AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

A policy roadmap for Landcare in Australia

NATIONAL LANDCARE NETWORK  
**BACKGROUND PAPER, 2019**



## Foreword

*All Australians want a healthy environment populated by strong, well connected and happy human communities; where city and country people appreciate each other and work together; a future that can sustain our ecological systems - whilst ensuring productive agricultural systems providing quality food for Australians and for export.*

*We see a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners play an active role in leading the planning and caring for country across Australia.*

*We see urban and rural communities enjoying their local environments, leading to healthier people and local communities.*

*We see resilient human communities better resourced and able to act and adapt to the very real impacts of climate and other global changes, in turn leading to resilient landscapes.*

*To accomplish these ambitions, community Landcare needs continued and improved support to meet global challenges, supported by sound science that enables monitoring and evaluation of progress.*

*In achieving these ambitions, we see all Australians working together, across urban and rural environments, to sustain healthy, productive, human communities and landscapes.*

*I commend you to Landcare Communities – Australia's Future, our policy roadmap for continuing to build and strengthen the fourth wave of community Landcare in Australia.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Bridgewater'.

**Peter Bridgewater**

Chair

National Landcare Network Board

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# SECTION ONE – A NEW NATIONAL INVESTMENT IN LANDCARE

Landcare Communities – Australia’s Future, is the policy statement of the National Landcare Network, the State and Territory Landcare Organisations and Landcare Australia together seeking an ongoing commitment to the community Landcare movement, providing reliable funding that supports a foundation of local action and agency with regional, state and National support.

The National Landcare Network, the State and Territory Landcare Organisations represent community Landcare nationally. Community Landcare is a foundation of strong communities, tens of thousands of people at the forefront of building resilience to meet our collective environmental challenges. Landcarers act 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.

Community Landcare is people on country working for country.

It is communities working together to look after their coasts, wetlands, waterways, plants and animals, land, and landscapes. Its cornerstone is people.... people “on country”, there for the long haul, committed to their patch, working together to sustain the green infrastructure – the land, waters, coasts and vegetation of Australia – and their communities reliant on them.

Landcare has proved to be a movement for change that is enduring, nimble and effective. While the community strength of the movement has been downplayed by successive governments in recent years, and financial support reduced, the Landcare movement pressed forward and adapted itself to the changing conditions. In recent years major shifts have been occurring in the movement, and we see a new community Landcare emerging characterised by:

1. Building on Landcare’s strong agricultural origins to now embrace a wide range of concerns and actions, from the local to the global, agricultural to the ecological, the city to the country, coasts to the outback, from biosecurity to recycling, water security to renewable energy.
2. Becoming a global movement – with more than 20 countries participating <sup>1</sup>.
3. Local Landcare successes driving progress towards global targets such as the Paris Agreement, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biodiversity.
4. Being even more inclusive, and particularly excited by the growth in First Nations’ led programs across the country.
5. Embracing generational change, with young Landcare programs and networks operating across the country.
6. Better appreciation that repairing the environment and building community resilience go hand in hand and Landcare does both very well. Landcare is inclusive, supporting those in need of assistance and responding to times of crisis. Landcare is a motivating force for people who not only care, but want to act.
7. Clear leadership of community Landcare in Australia which has now emerged to coordinate the movement at the state, territory and national levels.

Community Landcare was born in Australia and is now a mature international movement. Community landcare has moved well beyond its origins building on its strong basis in sustainable farming to encompass the whole community.

Landcare is a community catalyst helping our government to meet its global UN Sustainable Development Goals, its commitments under the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biodiversity and other international obligations.

The Landcare movement includes more than 6,000 community-based groups and district, regional and national networks spread across Australia. Community Landcare now provides the most extensive social support network and rapid response capability of any movement in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

Successive Australian Government have invested in developing the landcare movement; so too have countless individuals and communities. For Governments in Australia to respect the efforts of these individuals and capitalise on the public investment in community Landcare, it is critical that landcare continues to build capacity.

Australia has 10% of the world's biodiversity with more than 500,000 species many of them unique to local areas. However, trends in species loss and degradation continue to be recorded.

*"The overall status of biodiversity is poor and worsening. At the national level, 81 ecosystems, 511 terrestrial and aquatic animal species and 1,355 plant species are listed as threatened."*<sup>3</sup>

It is our task to stop these trends. Community Landcare is a call for all Australians to take charge of the way we live to *"create communities sustaining healthy productive landscapes for future generations."*<sup>4</sup>

Our land, oceans and water need people, and people need community, and that's what community Landcare is about. Whether it is in the local park, the beach and its dunes or a stretch of river or creek, catchments, rangelands or whole landscapes, it is local people driving action because we care. Community Landcare connects people to sustain healthy productive landscapes and communities.

Working together and sharing skills is essential to meeting the big challenges communities face, whether in the cities, the towns, on farms or in the outback.

It is essential that specific funding allocations are set aside for iconic national assets including the Murray Darling Basin and the Great Barrier Reef, national biosecurity and for provision of natural emergencies. Funding for these national priorities needs to be adequate and not taken from general community Landcare funding which needs to be consistent and engage the whole community in ongoing efforts. Long term, local, paid landcare coordinators are essential in creating community confidence to continue to engage and invest their own time and money.

This new wave of community Landcare is learning from Australia's First Nations peoples, the first landcarers, together with the dedicated and innovative landcare community, researchers and planners so that we have healthy environments for all Australians now and in the future.

Our farmers are some of the most resourceful, resilient and productive in the world, however they must be supported in the cities and in their local communities if they are to remain on the land and be sustainable. They must be supported to continue with sustainable farming and environmental conservation stewardship practices and be acknowledged by consumers. Who stands to benefit from community Landcare on-farm, on coast and on country? Individual landholders can capture some benefits from time and money invested, but the community at large are the beneficiaries of clean air, clean water, clean food, clean oceans, intact biodiversity, carbon sequestration, landscape amenity, health and community resilience. These multiple benefits provide a strong rationale for substantial government support.

Empowering community Landcare is how we can care for the health of the Australian community, economy and environment together.

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

- Empower local communities to act with support directed through and by them
- 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
- Deliver funding primarily to local hands-on, cost effective landcare, with community based groups able to leverage the generosity of the Australian community to dig deep and make a difference.
- Empower Traditional Owners land management and decision making, recognising them as leaders in Landcare
- Provide children and youth a lifelong connection to place bridging between the city to the outback to nurture a new generation of Landcarers
- Empower community Landcare hubs to assist with cross catchment and cross region priorities monitored directly by community groups.
- Streamline and focus the government grant process for Landcare.
- Increase our knowledge base and capacity to learn, linking local knowledge and observations to national research, monitoring and evaluation systems.

## INVESTMENT AREA 1 – BUILDING THE BREADTH OF COMMUNITY ENDEAVOUR

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### **Actions on Ground for halting degradation and species loss, meeting climate change challenges, building community and environmental resilience.**

Australia has a significant opportunity to improve the condition of our soil, forests, woodlands, shrublands and oceans. This impacts global climate change including enabling massive amounts of carbon to be pulled from the atmosphere and stored safely. The same actions address the resilience of our landscapes and their ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Done well, they also improve the ability of local communities to develop and implement local responses to the impacts of climate change.

The OECD reported that ‘*Australia needs to intensify efforts to reach its Paris Agreement goal*’ as it is unlikely to meet obligations in 2030 on current trends<sup>4</sup>. The government needs the support of community Landcare to meet and exceed its targets.

We need:

- Explicit commitments to build resilience across landscapes and communities to meet climate change and other challenges.
- Standards to be developed and applied through which funding needs to demonstrate its dual benefits of addressing environmental challenges and climate change with building community resilience.
- Carbon trading that returns funds to landscape and community resilience.

‘Nature conservation’ and sustainable, regenerative agriculture and climate change mitigation are not separate endeavours requiring separate budgets. Each supports the other. The need to build resilience across landscapes and communities, to halt land degradation and species loss, effectively tackle climate change, are all integral components of all the following initiatives:

- Community Grant Program – Action on Ground
- New Era for Farming
- Meeting climate change through building resilience across landscapes and communities
- Connecting people to places and city to the country and outback
- Living waterways for a healthy environment
- Coast and marine care
- Forests for Living
- Integrating cultural knowledge, citizen science and research

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### **1.1 Community Grant Program – Action on Ground**

**Small** community grants \$5,000 – \$50,000 per landholder or community project;

**Medium** sized and cross sites/regional projects \$50,000 – \$300,000 per Landcare/community group

**Regional** and cross regional programs over \$300,000 administered by local landcare coordinators working collaboratively with regional facilitators and community Landcare hubs to contribute to regionally identified priorities. Programs funded through community action on ground grants should include the following elements:

**Community Grant Program  
\$120M per year ongoing.**

- Support ‘New Era for Farming’
  - Meet climate change through building resilience across landscapes and communities.
  - Projects building resilience and sustainable agriculture.
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- Revise and fund the National Wildlife Corridor Plan
  - Connect people to places and city to the country and outback.
  - Include urban/peri-urban specific grant component supporting urban waterways, corridors and sustainability.
  - Support living waterways for healthy environment projects.
  - Expand Coastal and marine care specific grants.
  - Build cultural/citizen science capability for long term monitoring.
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## 1.2 New Era for Farming

Many agricultural practices have proven to be harsh on the ancient Australian soils, as well as requiring increasingly expensive inputs of fertilizer, lime and other additives. Erosion, acidification, compaction and salinization continue in many areas.

The role of farmers is critical to improving future environmental conditions. It is essential that farmers are fully engaged in stewardship practices that make sense to their businesses and achieve positive outcomes recognised by consumers and government. It is important that sustainable farmers practicing landcare stewardship are recognized as they require less support in time of stress. This is more effective than supporting less resilient farmers impacted more heavily by climate variability.

A Landcare Stewardship Scheme consistent with regional landcare and NRM strategies for sustainable farmers active in local and/or regional groups is proposed. Community Landcare hubs would advertise the pilot program and assess applications for payment against agreed consistent criteria. Such a scheme must be complementary and linked to other landcare programs.

Regenerative agriculture is a key part of reducing the extent of damaged soils and landscapes, and building resilience against drought and other adverse conditions. Soils are the basis of healthy and sustainable farms and therefore food security in the face of a changing climate. The resurgence of understanding and action required to build sustainable, microbe rich and high carbon storing soils is a key building block in this fourth wave of landcare.

Regenerative/sustainable agriculture is about addressing the loss of two thirds of Australia's soil carbon since European settlement.<sup>6</sup>

### Landcare Stewardship Scheme \$10M per year

Investigate the most appropriate and effective scheme integrated with landcare programs that rewards farmers implementing landcare actions that builds resilience such as drought proofing, biodiversity plantings, protection remnant vegetation and waterways, soil health, perennial pastures, regenerative agriculture etc. helping address land and water degradation, species loss and climate change.

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## 1.3 Meeting climate change through building resilience across landscapes and communities

Australia needs to step up its efforts to meet global climate change, biodiversity and sustainability responsibilities. Underpinning land, coastal and vegetation programs with the landcare approach, will both accelerate and provide ongoing management for many efforts.<sup>7</sup>

Leading farmers are already positively engaged in reducing climate change. The National Farmers Federation Roadmap 2030 has five pillars; Pillar 2 is Growing Sustainably. The vision is that '*Australian agriculture is trending towards carbon neutrality by 2030*'.<sup>8</sup>

Support development of innovative Landcare initiatives and programs:

- Make greater start-up support available for market-driven approaches that increase private investment in sustainable land management.
  - Encouraging local and regional scaled renewable generation.
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Farmers, pastoralists, graziers and rangeland managers are looking for support to put in place long term solutions in the face of climate change.

*"We need to have a bigger focus on resilience so that when it gets drier and eventually ends up in drought — which inevitably it always does in Australia — they [farmers] are better prepared,"* (Fiona Simson president of National Farmers Federation [abc news](#))

Australian farmers are pressing for Australia to agree on climate policy that triggers ventures to help farmers and other businesses get on board.

*"Climate change is already impacting the viability of regional areas across Australia, while the encroachment of fossil fuel extraction threatens prime agricultural land from the pristine wilderness of the Kimberley, to the fertile black soils of the Liverpool Plains. As custodians of the land, committed to intergenerational equity, farmers are on the front line"* Lucinda Corrigan Chair, Farmers for Climate Action.<sup>9</sup>

Climate change is impact on jobs. Improving the ability of farmers to thrive in the face of climate changes means greater security for local and regional businesses, and healthier communities.

*"Large regional businesses are warning that work is drying up, meaning staff will be let go and apprenticeships will not be offered, as states move further into drought"* (ABC New England Kelly Fuller 30 Aug 2018).

The scale of climate change requires whole of landscape responses. Climate change is a multiplier of existing stresses – across all landscapes making it even more critical that we tackle the causes not the symptoms of decline.

Australian landscapes and communities, that are already under a range of stresses, become more resilient when connectivity conservation techniques address the loss of ecosystem integrity. For instance, strategically restoring the connections between fragmented habitats rather the focusing on rare species. Habitat restoration and improved agricultural techniques for the sequestration of carbon are now understood to be a critical complement to the transition to renewable energy in the mitigation of climate change.

Direct assistance for local groups to combine their efforts to connect patches of biodiversity across landscapes including urban and peri-urban landscapes will connect communities and increase ecological function to increase landscape resilience. This should include demonstrations of revegetation of what to plant that will survive climate change scenarios with a functioning system. Localised work needs to be guided by large landscape initiatives where possible to lead to more significant collective outcomes.

To protect Australia's biodiversity values and ecological richness we need to implement an ambitious Wildlife Corridor Plan, building on current work being done by cross landscape projects in Australia and learnings from overseas reconnection projects.

Energy and carbon storage are becoming commercial products of our landscapes. Encouraging local and regional scaled renewable generation including solar and wind installations and simplifying entry into the carbon market will improve farming enterprises and create local and regional jobs. Support for not- for-profit regional brokers can help aggregate small players to reduce unequal market

### **Wildlife Corridor Plan \$10 M 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.

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information and transaction costs. Community landcare is well placed to facilitate place-based/pilot solutions.

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#### **1.4 Connecting people to places – from the city to the country and outback**

The number of coastcare, bushcare and landcare groups, friends of reserves and other groups involved in caring for their patch has been a success story of landcare over the past decade. The drive by Australians to increase sustainability brings the landcare ethos into homes, schools and communities.

Landcare builds a sense of common purpose between urban and rural communities. With 85% of Australians living in urban centers mostly near our coastlines support to continue the growth of urban groups will provide better access to local environments, help strengthen both a sense of place and social cohesion; this ultimately improves the health of individuals and communities. Cities have specific challenges including city heat effects, storm water management, waste management and distance from nature that can be addressed by urban landcare. Building greater resilience into current reserves and parklands by creating urban corridors across all suburbs will also bring every home and every Australian, child and adult, into closer contact with nature.

Australians want to know that what they eat is healthy and sustainably produced. With most Australians living in towns and cities it is important to support initiatives that link producers and consumers so that more Australians support sustainable farming and improved land management. Voluntary and compulsory certification of products is common in Europe and UK with some further big potential for Australia. E.g. LEAF <https://leafuk.org/>

There is a strong place for landcare and restoration tourism in helping tourists enjoy and appreciate while contributing to protection and restoration of natural areas.

#### **Certification Schemes \$4M per year ongoing.**

Investigation and development of certification scheme/s for sustainably produced goods and run a consumer and producer, city to country connection program alongside farm assurance scheme e.g. LEAF UK <https://leafuk.org/>.

#### **Restoration Tourism \$1M per year for 3 years**

Develop restoration tourism with coastal and landcare groups and local businesses.

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#### **1.5 Living waterways for a healthy environment (rivers, wetlands and estuaries)**

Water is the basis for life for everyone and everything. The imperative to manage water has become increasingly urgent as climate change amplifies extremes across Australia, the driest inhabited continent on earth.

Rivers, wetlands and estuaries are a key source of cultural and social connection to place, are desired places to live, work and play and provide essential resources for our communities and economy. Rivers, wetlands and estuaries underpin the health of ecosystems upon which our communities rely. They are also a window to landscape and ecosystem health that can provide warning signs for systems under stress.

Communities across Australia want to be engaged and consulted about water monitoring, planning, management and use. The community is looking for transparency about the health of waterways, water resource levels, how water is allocated and clarity on who bears

Ensure specific waterway funding in landcare grant programs both in urban and rural areas.

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the risks of reductions in water availability in terms of the environment and communities.

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## 1.6 Coast and Marine Care

Australians love their coasts, and in some areas, are in danger of loving them into degradation. Proper coastal planning in the face of climate impacts may require changes to planning schemes, building codes, protection in some areas or retreat of infrastructure and buildings in other coastal areas.

We are only just starting to understand Australia's marine treasures and the steps necessary to protect them. Our coasts and oceans are close to Australians' hearts and many are ready to become more engaged in caring for them. They need guidance on how best to contribute.

Restoration tourism is one very relevant response in coastal areas which are under some of the most intense tourism pressures. Restoration tourism takes standard tourism a step further by engaging visitors to learn more to protect local coastal environments and helping local groups to restore beaches, shorelines and marine areas.

- Increase specific coastal and marine project funding in landcare grants.
- \$1M/year for 3 years to develop restoration tourism with coastal landcare groups and local businesses (see above).

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## 1.7 Forests for Living

Trees and wood perennials for multiple purposes are an important part of Australia meeting emission reduction obligations, meeting Australia's growing demand for wood and perennials as sustainable building materials, fodder, and energy, creating regional jobs and improving sustainability on farms and country.

Incentives for farmers and investors to grow trees and shrubs in appropriate sites that add to the complexity and resilience of landscapes has been successful in other countries and in parts of Australia. It is essential that a renewed drive for trees and shrubs across landscapes retain native vegetation and does not result in monoculture plantations. This can best be achieved by engaging the farming community and landholders directly to meet their interests and aspirations.

There is a role for commercial timber production in supporting agricultural productivity; protecting farm assets from extreme events (drought, heavy rainfall, strong winds, plagues etc.); and diversifying farm family income through the production of tree products and services as well as servicing the conservation and farm tourism/education sector (nurseries, seed production, employment etc.).

- 150% tax deductions for integrated agroforestry plantings for high value timber and other productive woody species and biodiversity (not plantations). Biodiversity plantings to be guided by Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia standards.
  - Carbon incentives for farming families and not just plantations. This requires a better price for carbon and for simplified 'regional broker' arrangements, so that landholders and local groups can be the principal beneficiaries.
  - Incentives to keep plantations not viable for production purposes for carbon sequestration and catchment protection. E.g. New methodology covering such tree plantings.
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### **1.8 Integrating cultural knowledge, citizen science and research**

It is important to use the full range of knowledge sources to best understand local environments and to monitor environmental conditions and the impact of work on the ground in the long term. Using and integrating cultural and local knowledge, citizen science and research has been proven to provide excellent results. Recognition of the important trend where citizens are engaged in science is vital.

Building the capacity of citizen, community based science will help local communities collaborate with traditional owners and landcare groups contribute their knowledge in ongoing monitoring. For example, the Warru recovery team; Ngadju weed and fire management; E-DNA monitoring of waterways; coastal monitoring and the use of drone technology.

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### **Citizen Science Program \$1M per year ongoing.**

Run 90 scientist-supported citizen science events across Australia integrating cultural knowledge and citizen science with research. Using available support e.g. CSIRO Atlas of Living Australia.

## INVESTMENT AREA 2 – GROWING LANDCARE CHAMPIONS

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The success and longevity of Community Landcare rests on a range of Landcare champions to work on their own patches and work together in strong respectful, resource sharing partnerships to positively impact on communities across all coasts and landscapes. We are looking for:

- Consistent funding for national representation of community Landcare to steer policy and action.
- Facilitate increase stronger links between Community Landcare and the Indigenous led programs for multiple benefits.
- Support for local landcare facilitators to leverage private funding and resources.
- Regional facilitator/networkers to steer partnerships to achieve regional and cross regional resource condition improvement and help meet international obligations.
- Community Landcare hubs that meet the needs of different communities.
- Programs that engage young Australia appropriate to age and location.

Community landcarers are looking to their parliamentary representatives to be directly engaged. Establishing a Federal Parliamentary Friends of Landcare will help identify parliamentary champions who can speak as champions of landcare. Several states have already taken this step with strong outcomes.

Landcare champions need consistent support at different levels and for different demographics:

- The National Voice for Community Landcare
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Caring for Country
  - Local Landcare Coordinators
  - Community Landcare hubs and Networkers
  - Engaging young Australians
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### 2.1 The National Voice for Community Landcare

The National Landcare Network and Landcare Australia together are steering the future of landcare across Australia through peak bodies in each State and Territory on behalf of members of over 6,000 community groups.

#### **Landcare Network Funding \$4M per year ongoing**

Consolidated funding stream for Landcare networks delivered annually and administered through the NLN/LAL.

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### 2.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Caring for Country

New landcare is learning from the oldest landcarers in the world, First Nations people. Indigenous Ranger programs are now providing much of the conservation management for huge areas of Australia that would otherwise have little or no funding. Indigenous Ranger programs and Landcare are two of the most successful long-term community building initiatives in Australia. Stronger, more collaborative links will give multiple benefits.

Initiatives such as Healthy Country Planning, Indigenous Ranger teams, Indigenous fire management and the Aboriginal Carbon Farming initiative should be further supported. These initiatives generate real jobs that care for country and set up enterprises that last. Caring for Country is central to Aboriginal traditional responsibilities. Their knowledge is increasingly helping to direct critical areas such as fire management for landcare in general.

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#### **First Nations Support \$42M per year ongoing**

Simple, accessible program to provide resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working on country and networking between them and with other landcare groups.



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Indigenous “caring for country” has been associated with better nutrition, more frequent physical activity, and fewer chronic disease risk factors and diagnoses.<sup>10</sup> Being able to practice cultural responsibilities can also promote the spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of indigenous health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

Indigenous groups are developing initiatives to suit their own communities and country and this diversity and collaboration between northern and southern and eastern and western Indigenous initiatives is supported. We support the increases in funding for ranger and other landcare related programs currently being requested by Indigenous groups, and the addition of specific components to support:

- greater participation by Traditional Owners in land management in the agricultural areas, by engagement with landcare groups
  - assistance for networking and information transfer between Traditional land managers and landcare organisations
  - a rapid increase in Ranger programs in southern Australia, including in areas where Native Title is not yet clear.
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## 2.3 Local Landcare Coordinators

Consistent support for paid regional coordinators to fund local Landcare will see the benefits more than double with buy-in from landholders and communities.

Commitment to funding community Landcare coordinators will leverage the capacity that already exists within the movement to improve the sustainability of our natural and agricultural lands, and the wellbeing of communities. It is important that these positions are embedded within local Landcare networks, not seated within government entities or regional bodies.

NSW and Victorian governments already currently provide \$15m and \$12m respectively over a four-year period. The NSW government is pledging \$22.4m to expand local coordinators going forward.

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### **Local Landcare Coordinators \$56M per year ongoing**

Paid local coordinators. Use as leverage for state governments to contribute to positions.

## 2.4 Community Landcare hubs and facilitator/networkers

Support for Community Landcare hubs to support diverse community groups ready to contribute to landcare.

Landcare needs regional organisations that are neutral facilitators.<sup>12</sup> The current arrangements for core Commonwealth funding are not suited to fulfilling this need. There is an urgent need for Government to fund and convene a National Landcare/ NRM roundtable review. Terms of Reference to focus on maximizing the efficiencies and multiple benefits of local actions supported by regional facilitators/networkers, rather than regional organisations funded to compete with local landcare efforts, and a commitment to open and transparent funding processes.

The Natural Resource Management organisations (NRMs) were established in the early 2000s and there is now an urgent need to review and revise NRM and its structures. The 2018 switch to funding by tender arrangements, for example, is largely viewed as exacerbating the least effective features of the regional approach. This includes the increased competition with the very local groups we

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### **State/Regional Partnership Grants \$35M per year ongoing.**

State/Regional Partnership grant program (administered in partnership with community Landcare hubs, community and the state government); promoting improved integration across local efforts; addressing regional and cross regional priorities on coasts, in cities and towns and in rural and remote regions.

believe the regional NRM organisations were established to support and lead cross region integration.

In some jurisdictions NRM's have operated effectively and worked in partnership with community Landcare and other stakeholders to plan and implement projects. The regional Landcare hubs that are formed are a win for the government and for community and other stakeholders and create an opportunity for regional communities to be primed to respond to whatever opportunities or threats eventuate. An example is the Desert Channels Queensland that networks across vast areas for common landcare interests <https://dcq.org.au/>. These successful arrangements, and the subsequent relationships, must be fostered and encouraged as models for a nationwide regional engagement approach.

An inclusive approach to enable a wider range of organisations needs to be reviewed so that groups can participate on a 'level playing field'. (For example, not funding one set of organisations to prepare 'Tenders' while that funding is not available to other organisations). Any funding contracts and arrangements should be publically available.

Local landcare networks and community Landcare hubs have formed themselves in many parts of Australia, both urban and rural. They directly represent and work for the interests of their landcare group members. This provides landcare groups with more effective support than previously, and can be built upon to deliver more efficient allocation of grant funding.

Connecting networks with each other to facilitate the setting of regional priorities, linking groups to funding and to good information at the right time are ingredients for getting work done on the ground with effective use of resources. This requires coordination through local facilitator/networkers.

Landcare groups working together building on successful community Landcare hubs to reduce program overheads and support the community, will see landcare grow and achieve results. It will also be more cost efficient and release considerable funding from what is currently used as core funds for regional organisations.

Community Landcare hubs need to be regional dependent as one size does not fit all. They may operate through a range of structures. Critical to their success, they need to be made up of local groups and not in competition for funds with their local landcare groups.

The challenges we face need these regional collectives working with multiagency representatives to establish relationships in times of plenty so that we can respond together to challenges and opportunities.

In Victoria, for example, Regional Development Victoria oversees Regional Forums which bring key stakeholders together at a regional level. This is a successful format that would benefit landcare across Australia if Landcare is seated at the table.

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### **National Landcare/NRM Review \$1M one off**

Government to fund and convene National Landcare/ NRM roundtable review research and report including stakeholder support to participate – to enable wider range of organisations to participate in NLP contracted funds.

### **Regional Landcare Facilitators/Networkers \$18M per year ongoing**

Funding for Regional Landcare Facilitator/networkers housed in Community Landcare hubs.

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## **2.5 Engaging young Australians**

Young Australians are caretakers of the future. Kindergartens and schools are where children learn about caring for our land, water, coasts and habitats. In an increasingly urban Australia, city based kids



may have very little access to nature. Junior Landcare, an initiative of NLN/LAL, links activities with the Australian Curriculum meeting the needs of three development stages: from early childhood, young teens to older teenagers. Junior Landcare aims to create awareness of landcare through activities that empower young people to make a difference. Other valuable initiatives are run by a number of local landcare groups and other organisations such as the Australian Association for Environmental Education, Kids in Nature, the Millennium Kids, and EcoXplore. These initiatives are leading the way to engaging young people to be lifelong landcarers.

Young people in transition from school to work are in a good position to make a significant contribution in the community while building their own skills. Programs that focus on these transition years contribute significantly to good mental health, emotional resilience, and physical health outcomes at a vulnerable age.

Initiatives such as Intrepid landcare that attract young people to the adventure and pleasure of contributing to coastal, water and land repair and protection are at the core of this fourth wave of Landcare and should continue to be supported to grow.

An Australia Landcare Corps will provide the chance for young people to work together to repair and care for their coasts, towns and country. Past programs took money from vital parts of the Landcare budget and did not always involve local landcare groups in the selection of team leaders and participants. These shortfalls can be remedied by learning from experience. Funding should come from across a number of departments in recognition of the benefits to the health and wellbeing and training outcomes for the young people and the environmental, social and economic benefits of the landcare work they can achieve. Building on the learnings from the Green Army and previous programs, a trial program should be developed and rolled out through the State and Territory Landcare organisations. This would be an opportunity to create links between the Landcare Corps and the Indigenous Ranger Program.

Contributions from the Departments of Defence, Education and Training, Agriculture and Water Resources, and Environment and Energy should be considered. Programs of this kind contribute to rural workforces, build resilience in young people, the environment and the communities they live in. Landcare Corps teams must be linked to existing community programs and landcare groups so that long term ownership is embedded and work is relevant and effective. We must learn from previous programs of this kind to make this initiative really work. One learning is to stop contracting programs out to large organisations often without any landcare experience, commitment and lack resources to undertake the on-ground work. A diverse range of volunteer participants is encouraged in particular those in transition and with mental health incidents encouraged to participate.

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. Support for an investigation of landcare traineeship opportunities across Australia in conjunction with State and Territory governments is recommended.

### **Junior Landcare \$1M one-off project**

Further develop and distribute/support Landcare materials and resources based on National Curriculum for schools through NLN/LAL.

### **School Landcare Program Delivery \$6M per year ongoing**

Drive uptake of National Curriculum Landcare for schools and funding for landcare youth programs including Junior Landcare, Kids in Nature, the Millennium Kids, EcoXplore and Intrepid Landcare.

### **Landcare Corps \$30M year 1 trial**

Landcare Corps from cross department funding. Year 2 – \$60m. Out years \$120m per year.

## INVESTMENT AREA 3 – LANDCARE FUTURES: MEETING INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Federal Partnership grant program (administered by the Commonwealth directly in consultation with Peak State and Territory Landcare Organisations and the local Landcare groups and other stakeholders where work is anticipated) will also be needed to address national priorities. These will be determined by the Federal Government.

Federal Partnership grant program (administered by the Commonwealth) addressing national priorities.

Local Landcare groups and regional bodies have good knowledge of national and international priorities through regional and catchment strategies. The integration of Federally directed programs with local efforts will minimise duplication and maximise collaboration and effectiveness of actions.

### INVESTMENT AREA NOTES

- Some elements of the Policy Statement are not specifically or separately funded as they are regarded as outcomes of program design which would be captured within the funding criteria of the small grants program and the Landcare Corps Program. These include the Trees for Life policy, the focus on climate change, the focus on Community resilience, and on biosecurity.*
- Funding needs for iconic assets, biosecurity and disaster relief funding have not been estimated or included in the community Landcare initiatives summarized in the above table.*
- Meeting International Obligations is met throughout the programs in all sections as well as being separately addressed.*

### Footnotes

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## SECTION TWO – WHY INVEST MORE IN COMMUNITY LANDCARE?

### Summary

Community Landcare has a strong track record and capacity to mobilise and deliver a sustainable Australia.

- Landcare provides community engagement with over 6,000 groups, thousands of volunteer members and the community government partnership necessary to tackle land, water and coastal challenges. This approach builds resilience in communities, farming and the environment, improving the health of all.
- Through the Landcare network there is direct access to people with the knowledge and skills to act now to address key environmental sustainability issues.
- The State and Territory networks – the members of the National Landcare Network – working with Landcare Australia Limited, have created a formidable landcare voice and force to facilitate delivery of government and local priorities across Australia.
- The continued encouragement via government funded programs is critical to leveraging cash and in-kind from individuals and groups involved in Landcare well beyond funds provided.
- The ‘driven by locals working together’ philosophy behind Landcare means the movement has great diversity in groups and individuals who are responding to local conditions, needs and resources. One size does not fit all.
- Funding paid local facilitators provides impressive multipliers and is fundamental to successful Landcare into the future.
- Funding for regional network facilitators guided by local groups is key to developing regional Landcare and Coastal Plans and facilitating planning for regional and cross regional action between groups.

### CASE STUDY:

#### Warru Recovery in the SA desert

*The recovery of the endangered Warru, black-footed rock-wallaby, was started in 1999 by the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) rangers in the far north-west of SA.*

*The Warru recovery team– formed in 2007– of Indigenous Rangers, local communities, government agencies and scientists, have combined the knowledge and skills of the traditional owners with western science and ground-breaking species recovery activities. They have worked to protect and increase habitat for the species, control feral pests, change fire management and at the same time translocated animals for breeding and re-release. In addition, a 100 hectare predator-proof Warru enclosure was built to support the reintroduction of captive Warru. This has now successfully taken place.*

*Importantly, the project led to employment for some of Australia’s most remote people. The project employed 33 casual rangers in 2015–16, and nine indigenous rangers on a permanent part-time basis.*

*The numbers of Warru are showing improvement; the success is good for the Warru and good for the community.<sup>1</sup>*

### Extensive network Australia wide

Community Landcare is an Australia wide grassroots movement attracting volunteers ranging from the coast to the cities and the country to the outback. Members include First Nations peoples, multinational communities, kids to retirees, farmers to surfers and CEOs to students – they are ordinary, everyday people in our community. Landcare has played a leading role in changing Australia’s approach to agricultural practices, natural resource management, environmental protection and biodiversity conservation for long term sustainable goals that benefit everyone. Landcare works across landscapes, human boundaries and political lines.

Landcare is a community government partnership underpinned by funding that uses grassroots processes to build ownership of issues and solutions, unlock the volunteer and leverage investment of participants. Community Landcare is Australia wide with over 6000 groups and thousands of members ready to deliver Federal and State government programs

to tackle land, water and coastal challenges matched to local priorities. This approach builds resilience in communities, farming and the environment, improving the health of all.

## Nationally represented

The National Landcare Network, whose membership is from each State and Territory network, provides a voice for community Landcare at the national level. Landcare Australia Limited is the private not for profit company charged with raising awareness within the general public about the Landcare ethic and also brokering national corporate partnerships to support Landcare projects. Landcare Australia Ltd is the legal owner of the Landcare, Junior Landcare and Coastcare trademarks.

Working together, the National Landcare Network and Landcare Australia are a formidable force educating, facilitating, encouraging, promoting and supporting on the ground action across Australia and development of appropriate policy to support action.

## Based on people and their enduring commitment

The success of community Landcare rests largely on its bottom up, 'driven by locals' approach. The collaborative philosophy, the inspiring contributions made by the passionate individuals make up Australia's Landcare movement. The diversity of the movement across Australia as groups and individuals respond to local conditions, needs and resources. One size does not fit all, any government program will benefit from engaging in local and regional groups in an adaptive way.

Their sense of stewardship, enduring commitment and deep appreciation for our natural environment is why Landcare continues to thrive today and is poised to grow even further.

Its people and their commitment, persistence and innovation are its greatest asset driving significant change. For example, in Victoria the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group has implemented activities to improve river health along the 339 km of waterways across the catchment. These waterways and a myriad of local drainages are directly connected to Lake Corangamite, a RAMSAR listed wetland. A 2013 review of activities over a nine year period (2004 – 2013) demonstrated clear improvements in the condition of waterways across the 120,000 Ha catchment. More than half the sites sampled had improved condition with a further 15% of sites remaining stable.<sup>2</sup>

Landcare groups work in partnership with a wide range of key stakeholders and researchers to set their own agenda and encourage individuals to do the same, they undertake work on project sites that have been determined as priorities in a locally set timeframe. Groups have long experience in applying for funding from a variety of different sources to support their work including local, state, federal government and philanthropy.

## Paid facilitation catalysts leveraging private resources

Local, paid landcare coordinators are essential in harnessing local volunteers, facilitating priority actions, arranging meetings and providing management guidance. When working with communities, this creates confidence for people to continue being engaged and investing their own time and money. For example, a recent survey of over 5,000 farming customers conducted by the National Australia Bank identified that 74% had made changes to their businesses as a result of natural resource sustainability in the past two to three

The **National Landcare Network Ltd** is the national, representative not for profit organisation for community Landcare in Australia formed in 2011. It has filled a gap to provide a forum for State and Territory peak Landcare organisations to speak with one voice. Representation is achieved through membership from each State and Territory on the Board. Through representation on the Members Council, there is sharing knowledge, canvassing issues of national concern and recommendations on strategic aims to benefit the community Landcare movement.

**Landcare Australia Ltd** was formed in 1992 during the Decade of Landcare. It was established with a business model to support the Landcare movement by promoting Landcare and building awareness in the community, marketing the Landcare brand and attracting corporate and philanthropic support. It holds the Landcare logo and other intellectual property associated with Landcare, organises the National Conferences and Awards, funds State and Territory conferences and awards and has run major projects primarily for the federal government.

years.<sup>3</sup> Soil health, water scarcity, biodiversity and run-off were all recognised as key business concerns.

Confidence in ongoing support also leads to increases in investment from outside sources often for a range of social, economic, wellbeing and environmental outcomes.

Whilst maintaining their autonomy, landcare groups are increasingly joining forces to create community Landcare networks to link with all levels of government and industry for financial support, information and most importantly, coordination of effort. Networks are taking a regional approach to environmental issues and coordinating activities to achieve catchment wide and cross regional outcomes. Networks can help inform policy development at the State and Territory level.

## **Community Landcare hubs and landcare facilitator/networkers led by local communities**

Funding for regional facilitator/networkers, is an important part of Landcare developing regional NRM and Coastal Plans, coordinating action between groups on a regional and cross regional scale. Landcare organisations, CMAs, Regional NRM groups or other networking groups that have emerged in response to local networking/prioritisation needs) linking groups with each other.

However, it is critical that funding to community Landcare hubs and their paid staff does not result in a concentration of resources and power in those bodies and a disenfranchising of local groups and their agency and resourcing.<sup>4</sup>

There are some long standing CMAs that have carried out networking and strategic planning roles with local landcare groups and continue to be supported by their community in this role. In some jurisdictions NRM's have operated effectively and worked under the guidance of community Landcare and other stakeholders to plan and implement projects. An example is the Desert Channels Queensland that networks across vast areas for common landcare interests <https://dcq.org.au/> and the Landcare hubs under NSW Landcare such as Murrumbidgee Landcare. The regional Landcare hubs that are formed are a win for the government and for community and other stakeholders and create an opportunity for regional communities to be primed to respond to whatever opportunities or threats eventuate. These successful arrangements, and the subsequent relationships, must be fostered and encouraged as models for a nationwide regional engagement approach.

However, due to policy directives influencing the model and mechanisms for support, regional NRM bodies, in cases across Australia, have been reported to have expanded to the detriment of local landcare groups who have been disenfranchised by the concentration of regional resources with reductions in funding and autonomy. The danger is that, in attempting to secure their own corporate structure, these organisations can, and some have, lost sight of the broader goal and become competitors in the funding bids rather than independent brokers! Even worse, some have exhibited a form of “conservation imperialism” mining local initiatives and goodwill without crediting the primary community investors.<sup>5</sup> This leads to adverse and diminished outcomes for community Landcare.

Strategic appointment of regional facilitator/networkers guided by local groups is imperative to Landcare regional planning and implementation of effective action on ground. A key task is the coordination of regional planning that addresses local aspirations together with state, national and global imperatives. It is essential that the aspirations and motivations of local landcarers are prominent in regional planning and action documents as they are prime movers in implementation of action and monitoring results.

Where all stakeholders sit around the table on an equal footing – local landcare groups, first nations people, leading landholders, all levels of government, researchers, businesses and other interested parties – to share information, to plan together and to share resources to act most effectively, then landcare is working at its best.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Gavin, John. 2017 Draft NLP Value proposition for national investment in natural resource management: Case Studies.

- <sup>2</sup> Victorian local landcare facilitator initiative. (2013). *Trends in waterway condition in the Woady Yaloak Catchment (2004 to 2013)*. Victorian Government. Department of Sustainability and Environment. in Gavin, John. 2017 *Draft NLP Value proposition for national investment in natural resource management*.
- <sup>3</sup> NAB. (2016, October 8). *Natural Value*. Retrieved from NAB: <http://www.nab.com.au/about-us/corporate-responsibility/responsibility-management-of-our-business/environment/natural-value> in Gavin, John. 2017 *Draft NLP Value proposition for national investment in natural resource management*.
- <sup>4</sup> Michael Lockwood, Julie Davidson, Allan Curtis, Elaine Stratford & Rod Griffith (2009) Multi-level Environmental Governance: lessons from Australian natural resource management, *Australian Geographer*, 40:2, 169–186.
- <sup>5</sup> Curtin, Charles G. 2015. *The Science of Open Spaces. Theory and Practice for Conserving Large, Complex Systems*. Island Press. p: 92.



## SECTION THREE – LANDCARE’S 30-YEAR LEGACY AND THE NEXT WAVE

### Summary

The National Landcare Network is proposing that a fourth wave of Landcare be developed incorporating the best from previous models. The new model emphasizes community Landcare as the primary focus of delivery that looks for the most local routes possible for action to increase effectiveness and ownership.

This approach recognized that communities and individuals must be actively engaged across Australia if land, water, and coastal degradation, species loss and climate change are to be seriously addressed. Landcare outcomes can be demonstrated across multiple sectors and meet international obligations; the National Landcare Network is, therefore, looking for a whole of government response.

The National Landcare Program needs to be a long term, reliable commitment for achieving changes in overall environment condition targets through community landcare. Specific funds for extreme event response and iconic program priorities need to be set aside from other sources, not drawn from NLP funds to the detriment of already agreed priorities.

A commitment is sought from Federal government to provide simpler, shorter and more effective application and reporting forms to reduce transaction costs for groups and government. We are seeking more thorough stakeholder consultation processes for input into design of future National Landcare programs. Adequate timeframes between notification of program design and request for feedback is also necessary.

Boosted funding to the National Landcare Network, its State and Territory members and Landcare Australia will see the continued growth of this effective network and the community Landcare movement across Australia.

### Community Landcare across sectors and helping meet international obligations

The National Landcare Network is looking for a whole of government response and commitment to landcare as outcomes are across multiple sectors and scales. Landcare addresses state of the environment issues and international obligations; the economic viability of agriculture and its capacity to meet Australian and overseas product demand; the economic and social resilience of local communities; the engagement of all Australians at all ages in stewardship of their local and larger environments; education and training to appreciate and manage our natural resources; direct engagement with First Nations peoples in caring for coast and country with multiple social, environment and economic outcomes.

Landcare is a community catalyst helping our government meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Landcare’s contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals have been mapped against 12 of the 17 Goals showing the significance of Landcare’s contributions.<sup>1</sup>

### Learning from past models of Landcare – the Fourth Wave

National Landcare Network propose that the fourth wave of Landcare is delivered through a model that incorporates the best from previous models of delivery. The program outlined in this document is designed to deliver this new community Landcare model at a local level and recognizes other structures may be required to achieve large scale landscape change, repair and protection of Australia’s fragile environment. The program will also meet our internal and international obligations.

In 2010 the Australian Landcare Council Secretariat described Landcare as having three elements:

- The Landcare ethic – a philosophy, influencing the way people live in the landscape while caring for the land

- The Landcare movement founded on stewardship and volunteers – local community action putting the philosophy into practice
- The Landcare model – a range of knowledge generation, sharing and support mechanisms including groups, networks from district to national levels, facilitators and coordinators, government and non-government programs and partnerships.<sup>2</sup>

The Landcare ethic across Australia is strong and has grown since Landcare's inception. This ethic is held both by the Landcare movement and by many in the general community. The Landcare movement has expanded despite decreasing levels of government support and recognition, and is now ready to accelerate its efforts.

It is the new Landcare model that the National Landcare Network is focusing on in this document. The landcare model determines how government support is envisaged, prioritised and provided. Past waves of Landcare have been driven by significantly different policies and models that have taken away rather than building on previous efforts.

The distinction needs to be clear between the outcomes of Landcare and the processes to achieve those outcomes. It does make a difference how funding is distributed and who manages it. Funding through the community Landcare movement supports long term production, environmental and social outcomes. It is funding those who live long-term in their communities and who are committed to their own patch and their regions in terms of community and environmental health and wellbeing long term.

Before the Decade of Landcare, 1990 – 2000, natural resource management was primarily a state responsibility, with differing degrees to which the state agencies worked with their local communities. Nationally, the first wave of landcare was launched with a commitment to the Decade of Landcare. There was a clear philosophical approach to engage the community and their motivations to care for land and water assets across Australia. While the goals to arrest and repair soil, land, water and biodiversity degradation were unrealistic, its success in building the landcare movement, active community engagement and awareness of the need for such a movement is indisputable.

The development and funding of the local landcare model during the Decade of Landcare from 1990 was replaced by the regional approach of the late 1990s and then in the early 2000s expanded considerably with the concentration of funding through regional bodies. This second wave of landcare was primarily supported through the sale of government assets with the model of implementation and structures established not fully using current landcare groups and networks where funds could more effectively hit the ground.

Long term statutory CMAs and more recently formed NRM regional bodies were required to meet federal government policy directives to increase their role in delivering and monitoring federal government programs. These policy settings caused negative impacts with centralising and bureaucratising of decision making, control of the majority of federal funding by regional bodies and onerous reporting requirements. Many local groups felt disenfranchised from decision making about priorities and direct access to funds. Regional strategies were developed and some good regional projects arose from them, these outcomes were patchy.

During this period, some state governments accelerated the process of reducing their staff commitments and the funds provided to local coordinators and projects.

More recently the model has focused on specific large targets including endangered species and iconic areas, such as the Murray Darling Basin and the Great Barrier Reef, and in meeting international obligations. This third wave of targeted investment landcare, from the mid 2000's to the present, has further undermined the community Landcare movement.

*Contrary to expectations that Caring for our Country, established in 2008, would build on the foundations established by the Natural Heritage Trust, it has adopted a narrower agenda, increased central government control, and compromised buy-in by state and territory governments.... Commitment to local community natural resource management movements like Landcare has been inconsistent, and largely unsuccessful. (Robins, 2011: 1)<sup>3</sup>*



2012 onwards saw a decrease in overall funding, and channeling of NLP funding to iconic assets and additional programs including the Green Corps/Green Army rather than these initiatives being funded from new money. Ongoing public sector rationalisation and budget cuts at State and Territory levels, with cost shifting to the Federal Government.

The previous landcare approaches described above and summarized in Figure 1 below 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. The National Landcare Network 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 basis for driving local and regional landcare efforts. It needs regional facilitator/networkers guided by local communities located in diverse community Landcare 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.

DEPARTMENTAL INITIATIVES	FIRST WAVE	SECOND WAVE	THIRD WAVE	FOURTH WAVE
	1989-1999	1997-2013	2014-2023	ONGOING
	1989-1999	1997-2013	2014-2023	ONGOING
	<b>Bottom-up local-scale Landcare groups</b>  The Decade of Landcare 1989-1999 \$32M pa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A commitment to the Decade of Landcare</li> <li>A clear philosophical approach to engage the community and their motivations to care for land and water assets across Australia</li> <li>Successfully built the Landcare movement, and mobilised tens of thousands of community volunteers to meet government targets for land and water assets</li> <li>Did not meet ambitious goals to arrest and repair soil, land, water and biodiversity degradation.</li> </ul>	<b>Regional/catchment organisations</b>  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"> <li>Formed long-term statutory CMAs and NRM regional bodies to meet and monitor Federal government policy directives</li> <li>Developed regional strategies and some good regional projects</li> <li>Centralised decision making, disenfranchising many local groups</li> <li>Introduced reporting requirements onerous for many volunteer community groups</li> <li>Outcomes that could have been achieved through regional strategies and projects were weakened by disenfranchised and less engaged community</li> <li>An additional \$175M pa allocated to address the national issue of salinity in priority regions.</li> </ul>	<b>Targeted investment</b>  The National Landcare Programme phase 1 and 2 2014-2023 approx. \$225M pa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on specific large targets, including endangered species and iconic areas (Murray Darling Basin and the Great Barrier Reef) and in meeting international obligations</li> <li>Core funding diverted to specific programs such as Green Corps/Green Army, and iconic assets</li> <li>Ongoing rationalization and budget cuts at State and Territory levels, with cost shifting to the Federal Government</li> <li>Increased disenfranchisement of local groups.</li> </ul>	<b>Landcare - Community driven at all scales</b>  Landcare Powerful Community Fund – approx. \$427M pa ongoing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear philosophical approach to support a bottom-up movement</li> <li>Funding reflects this, with largest portion directed to community level – to support action on ground and core operational support</li> <li>Landcare Network Hubs, with federally funded but locally guided Regional Coordinators, leverage state and territory funding</li> <li>Impact at multiple scales, supports continued growth of Landcare to address local and cross-regional issues, with benefits for international commitments</li> <li>A unified voice, with wider network of partnership connections.</li> </ul>
	EFFECTIVE	LESS EFFECTIVE	LESS EFFECTIVE	MOST EFFECTIVE

Figure 1: Waves of major change in models of Landcare delivery 1980s to 2019 (after Campbell *et. al.* 2017)<sup>4</sup>

## A model increasing community ownership and engagement in change

This proposal is seeking changes in the model for supporting Landcare. The new model is based on increasing the proportion of project funding directed at the local level to better meet demand and reduce (see NLN/LAL 'The Ask').

An example of the level of interest and buy in to landcare funds offered is the current NLP2 'Smart Farms' small grants program. It shows that the community is demanding greater support to help the government protect and restore the environment. Current funding is greatly oversubscribed. NLP2 'Smart Farms' funds are limited to only \$5 million pa and funded only 77 projects nationally in the first round, that is, less than two per NRM region or less than eight per State / Territory. Round one of the current program attracted some 780 applications, an indication of the demand and the issues that need to be addressed. It is also a very costly administrative process for both applicants and the Commonwealth. The Landcare movement through State and Territory peak bodies was asked for feedback on the NLP2 program first round of delivery. The input from the community Landcare movement forms the basis of this NLN/LAL proposal asking for:

- Funding directly through local groups meeting local, regional and national outcomes.
- More opportunities for local priorities to be met (not just restrictive federal priorities) and a shift from procurement of services decided federally to more of a grants system with priorities determined locally or at least through dialogue between local, state and federal stakeholders.
- A devolved grants program administered by regional or State and Territory Landcare bodies for local group delivery. Select projects that meet Regional plans agreed by local landcare groups and prioritising local issues that maintain and enhance the social resilience of communities as well as managing natural resources. The suggested breakdown of project funding would consist of:
  - Small projects Up to \$50,000 per project
  - Medium projects \$50,000 – \$300,000 per project
  - Large projects over \$300,000 per project
- Reductions in core funding for regional NRM groups to increase funding for local landcare groups directly while ensuring funding of experienced networking facilitators at community Landcare hubs.
- Reduce restrictions on eligibility for federal grants for community Landcare groups.
- Funding of local landcare facilitators.
- Funding of diverse, locally developed regional First Nations peoples' landcare initiatives.
- Funding of landscape level biodiversity connectivity programs delivered through appropriate 'backbone' organisations.
- Expanded funding for coastal and urban landcare initiatives.
- Provide regular ongoing grant rounds throughout a program period.

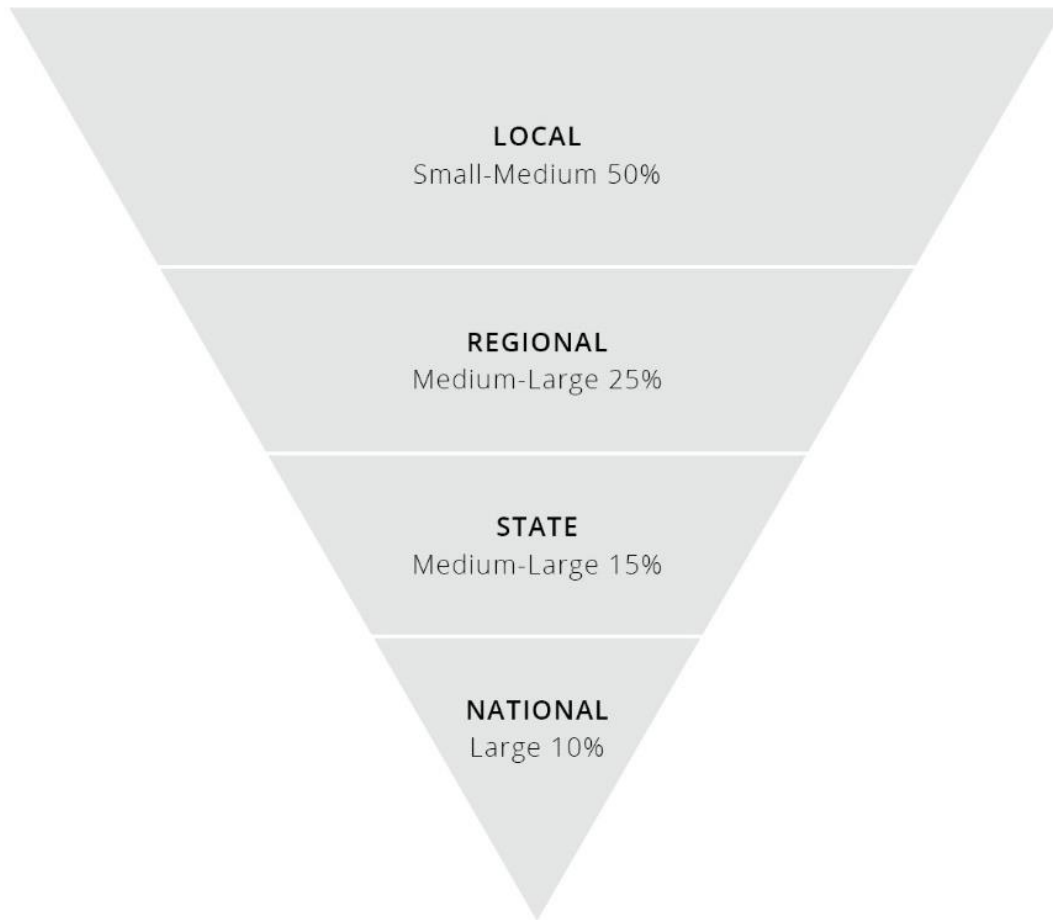


Figure 2: Proposed allocation of funding investment for the new Landcare model

## Regional Partnerships

Regional partnerships are key elements of effective action on the ground. Structures to date have not delivered the results sought by government or the community.<sup>5</sup> The following changes are recommended:

- Remove competitive, confidential, service delivery and tender based approach and replace with a collaborative 'bottom up' approach. Regional bodies support community groups and local design and delivery of landcare programs through provision of administrative and regional strategic planning, capacity building and support services. Review past successful programs in design, for example, NHT1.
- Design and implement multi- partnerships and joint funding programs between federal, state and local government bodies (including revision of past trilateral programs).
- Increase community group funding components to 75% where local delivery can be implemented. Where local delivery capacity is low, provide training and support to build capability.
- Develop and support a network of regional and local landcare facilitators across Australia, expanding the focus from regional agricultural sector.

## Transition to more sustainable models

The best of Landcare relies on key stakeholders networking and collaborating to set regional priorities and to allocate funds through the most local delivery routes possible. This is not currently the case as indicated by the estimated allocation of funds via NLP Phase 2 shown in Figure 3 below. The Environment small grants are the only allocation going directly to

local groups. The NLN/LAL do not favour expansion of the tender based, service delivery funding models.

Where larger landscape cross regional projects are needed local communities, agencies and other stakeholders need to agree together on the best delivery. Simple network agreements have worked in the past to clearly outline roles and responsibilities, goals and targets. Some local groups may need further development of capacity to deliver projects particularly as they emerge from a period of being defunded. When the government funds local community services they are building local resilience, capacity and longevity of engagement in landcare. It is essential to provide opportunities for consultation, training and capacity building to assist the community Landcare movement to be able to engage effectively. Landcare needs these characteristics to thrive. The tender based approach used in the National Landcare Program has not met these needs.

The level of funding currently distributed directly to community Landcare is low, as indicated in Figure 3 below. There are one-off Environment small grants, up to a nominal 20% of the Regional Land Partnership program available on a tender basis, and some potential in the Smart Farm program which, as described above, has been both greatly oversubscribed and has limited relationship with community Landcare. This proposal for investment suggests a significant increase in direct funding to community Landcare groups and for devolved grants distributed through community Landcare hubs being guided by partnerships of local landcare groups.

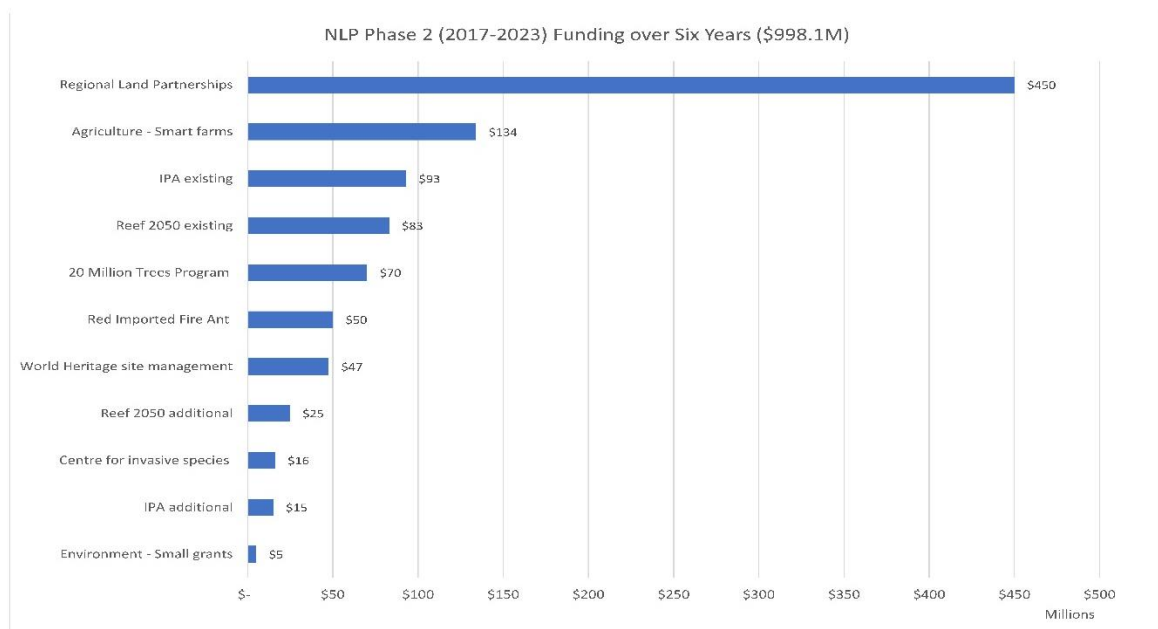


Figure 3. NLP Phase 2 allocation of funding (\$Millions)<sup>6</sup>

## A reliable program that builds resilience long term

It is important that the National Landcare Program is a long term reliable commitment for achieving changes in overall environmental condition targets. This is very difficult when funding levels are inconsistent and programs that require long term effort and support receive inadequate and inconsistent funds as federal government priorities shift.

Funding has fluctuated and is now at a lower annual level than funding allocated in 1997 (see Figure 4 below).

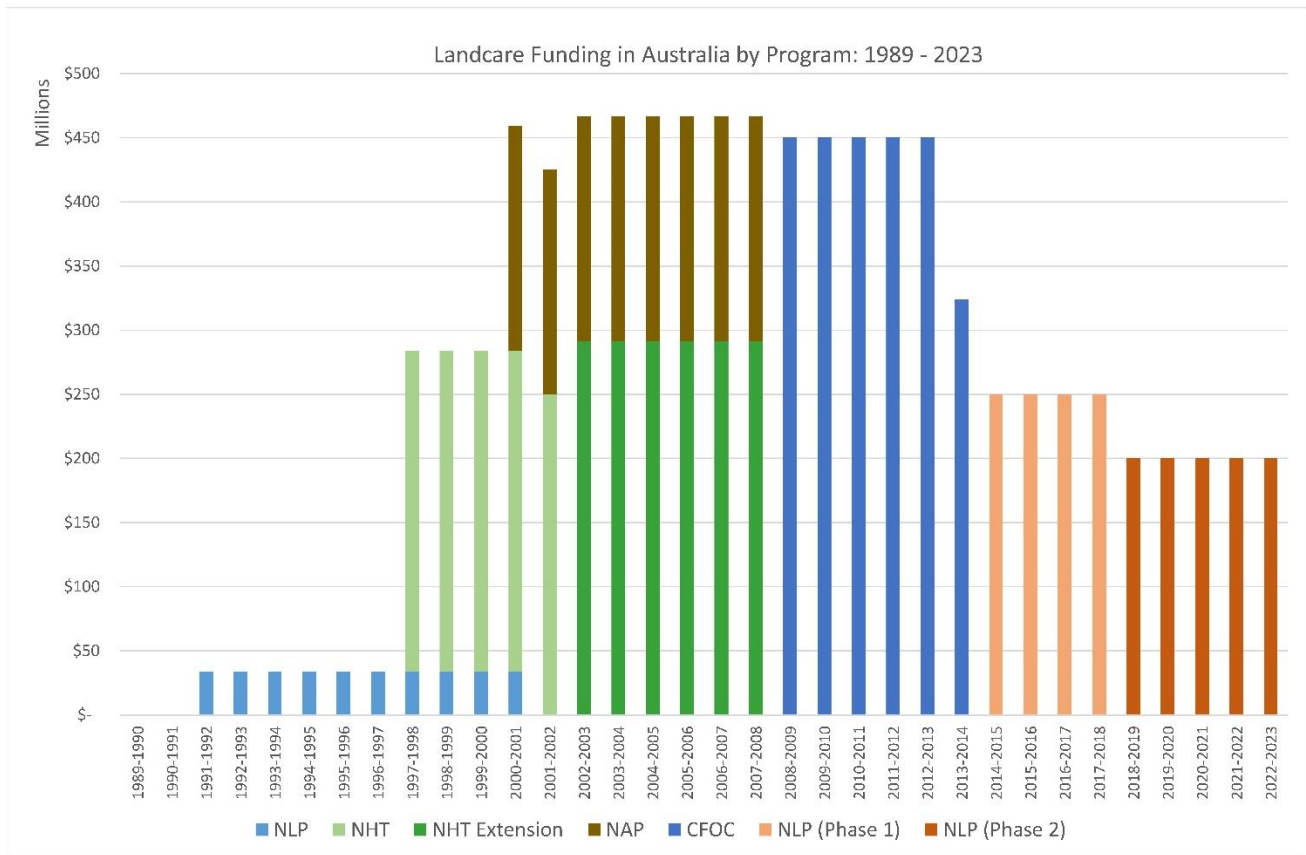


Figure 4. Landcare Funding in Australia by Program<sup>7,8,9</sup>

National Landcare Program funds are also 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 diminishing support and changes in priorities take away from community landcare effectiveness and represent failure in policy.

*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.<sup>10</sup>*

Specific purpose funding should be separated from funding for ongoing community Landcare support. Recent droughts and floods have shown the value of the Landcare network of local groups who are ready to respond to local extreme events. A resilient community with well-connected people can work together to function in the face of stress and trauma. A resilient community can adapt to change and can be self-sufficient, if external assistance is limited or delayed. It has the social capacity to face challenges and respond to change in a positive way.

It is essential that dedicated funding is allocated for specific locational extreme events such as droughts, floods and fire. It is important that such funding is allocated in consultation with the Landcare movement to achieve greatest long-term impact and to avoid duplication of effort. The challenges we face need local landcare groups working with multiagency people to establish relationships in times of plenty so that can we can respond together to challenges and opportunities.

Specific funding can to be expanded to address the needs of iconic programs such as assistance for the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray Darling River Basin, but it is essential

that this funding is allocated in consultation with the Landcare movement to achieve greatest long-term impact and to align with other landcare efforts. This will require a substantial increase in the National Landcare Program so that community Landcare efforts as well as specific program areas for iconic assets, biosecurity and natural emergencies are budgeted for.

## Simplified processes

Experience has shown that grant application processes can be simplified to ensure Landcare and local community groups are competing on an equitable basis against larger groups and agencies that are more adequately resourced without compromising accountability.

Over complicated application processes create transaction costs for both local groups and the government that are expensive in both cash and time. Smart indicators have been used for reporting that need to be generalised to assist in simplifying processes.

A commitment is sought from Federal government to provide:

- Simpler shorter and more effective application and reporting forms to reduce transaction costs for groups and government. Remove onerous regional reporting requirements and replace with practical, relevant and useful MERIT process and system, inclusive of all landcare projects and stakeholders.
- More informed, open, streamlined and clear channels of communication and facilitation for grant and program support and enquiries, preferably through local landcare facilitators able to act as ‘case managers’.
- Stakeholder consultation processes for input into design of future National Landcare programs, with feedback considered and implemented.
- Adequate timeframes between notification of program design and request for feedback, that is, 12 months.

## National Landcare representative bodies supported

The National Landcare Network and its State and Territory member organisations, working with Landcare Australia, represent the legitimate voice, and the arms and legs of community Landcare across Australia. Boosted funding to the Network and its members will see the continued growth of this effective network and the community Landcare movement.

Landcare – the fourth wave is a call for all Australians to take responsibility for the way we live to create “*communities sustaining healthy productive landscapes for future generations*”. It is our responsibility to care for our natural resources, stop trends in species loss, repair degradation, and continue developing community solutions to address these challenges that includes learning from our First Nations peoples, the first landcarers.

We farm is some of the world’s toughest conditions and we have some of the most intact and unique biodiversity in the world with 10% of the world’s biodiversity and more than 500,000 species many of them unique to local areas. Water is a critical resource in Australia and globally with the World Economic Forum placing water in the top 5 global risks in terms of impact each year for the last 7 years.<sup>11</sup> Trends in land and water degradation and species loss continue to be recorded.

*“The overall status of biodiversity is poor and worsening. At the national level, 81 ecosystems, 511 terrestrial and aquatic animal species and 1,355 plant species are listed as threatened.”<sup>12</sup>*

Community Landcarers want to work more extensively and effectively in partnership with government to support the National Landcare Program, to meet local needs, national challenges and international obligations, while building resilience in our communities and the environment. Critical for success is a strategic approach to funding for the community Landcare movement for on-ground action, supported by the NLN and LAL and all levels of government.



## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Robins, L. 2019 in prep. "Chapter 6: What might Australia's 'Landcare' contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2019: A local self-reliance approach to global sustainability." In: Seigel, M. and Dale, A.P. (eds.). *The Role of Landcare in fostering global self-reliance*.
- <sup>2</sup> Australian Framework for Landcare Reference Group. 2010. *Australian Framework for Landcare*. The Australian Landcare Council Secretariat, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra. At: [www.agriculture.gov.au/.../natural.../land.../framework/framework-for-landcare.pdf](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/.../natural.../land.../framework/framework-for-landcare.pdf) accessed 14 February 2019.
- <sup>3</sup> Robins L. & Kanowski P. 2011. 'Crying for our Country': eight ways in which 'Caring for our Country' has undermined Australia's regional model for natural resource management. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* Vol. 18, No. 2, June.
- <sup>4</sup> Campbell Andrew, Jason Alexandra and David Curtis. 2017. Reflections on four decades of land restoration in Australia. *The Rangeland Journal Review*. CSIRO Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1071/RJ17056>
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Lockwood, Julie Davidson, Allan Curtis, Elaine Stratford & Rod Griffith. 2009. Multi-level Environmental Governance: lessons from Australian natural resource management, *Australian Geographer*, 40:2, 169–186.
- <sup>6</sup> Sept 2017 announcement. The graph is a compilation of government sourced information and does not cover the total funding of \$1.1 billion currently committed through the NLP 2. <https://terrain.org.au/news-resources/regional-land-partnerships/> [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au)
- <sup>7</sup> Robins, L. 2019 in prep. "Chapter 6: What might Australia's 'Landcare' contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2019: A local self-reliance approach to global sustainability." In: Seigel, M. and Dale, A.P. (eds.). *The Role of Landcare in fostering global self-reliance*.
- <sup>8</sup> McCormick, B. 2014. Budget Review 2014/15: [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/Environment](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/Environment) accessed 3 April 2019.
- <sup>9</sup> Toyne, P & Farley, R. 2000. The Decade of Landcare Looking Backward – Looking Forward. The Australian Institute. Discussion Paper Number 30, July.
- <sup>10</sup> Campbell Andrew, Jason Alexandra and David Curtis. 2017. Reflections on four decades of land restoration in Australia. *The Rangeland Journal Review*. CSIRO Publishing. Page F.
- <sup>11</sup> World Economic Forum. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2018/files/2018/01/II.-Risks-evolution-table-mid.png>
- <sup>12</sup> OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Australia 2019 <http://oe.cd/epr-australia> accessed 14 February 2019.