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Victorian Landcare Program Review

Final Report

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

rmcg.com.au

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List of abbreviations

ALF	Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
FTLA	Farm Tree and Landcare Association
LAL	Landcare Australia Limited
LFE	Land, Fire and Environment group (of DELWP)
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RLC	Regional Landcare Coordinator
RLF	Regional Landcare Facilitator
VLC	Victorian Landcare Council
VLG	Victorian Landcare Grants
VLLFI	Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative
VLP	Victorian Landcare Program
VLPS	Victorian Landcare Program Support (a component of the VLP)

Executive Summary

Landcare in Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government through the Victorian Landcare Program (VLP) within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

An independent review of the VLP has been undertaken that involved extensive input from the community. The primary objective of the review was to provide an opportunity for the Landcare community and other key stakeholders to provide feedback on the VLP and suggestions for improvement to future program design, delivery and participation. A comprehensive engagement process was designed and implemented which achieved over 160 targeted interviews and over 900 respondents to an online survey.

The review received advice from a Stakeholder Reference Group comprising representatives from the Victorian Landcare Council (VLC), the Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) and the Victorian Catchment Management Authorities (CMA).

The review has found overall that the Victorian Landcare Program, which provides a complementary suite of policy tools, has been effective in supporting Landcare.

It is clear that the Victorian Landcare Facilitators and the Victorian Landcare Grants are the most valued components of the VLP. They are fundamentally important to the viability and operation of many groups and networks across the state. There was remarkable consistency in views on the importance of these two components among interviewees and survey respondents.

The facilitators have had a dramatic impact on Landcare in Victoria. Respected leaders within Landcare have reported that the facilitator initiative has revived Landcare from a precarious state four years ago. Despite some concerns with the early implementation of the initiative, the Victorian Government has been applauded for funding 68 facilitators initially and for committing to a further four years.

A separate evaluation of the Victorian Facilitator Initiative, conducted in parallel with the review of the VLP, identified a suite of recommendations which have been drawn on in this report. To strengthen facilitator arrangements to support Landcare, it is recommended that an additional 6-10 positions be funded. With these additional positions, along with an adjustment of some of the existing workloads of facilitators, a more complete and justifiable level of support to Landcare in Victoria can be achieved.

The cohort of 68 facilitators is a significant resource for Landcare in this state, and there is an opportunity for the VLP to investigate how to ensure the value and impact of the facilitators is best achieved over the next three years. Increased networking and connections offer a way to realise their collective potential and capitalise on the innovative approaches and knowledge of the facilitators.

A number of recommendations are made in relation to building on the strengths of the program, such as retaining the community-led employment arrangements and the focus on building capacity of groups and networks.

This review has heard that in recent years government investment in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture has become harder to access by Landcare and the amounts available are less than what it has been previously. Against this backdrop, the Victorian Landcare Grants have been the lifeblood for many groups. The grants have enabled these groups to design and implement projects which have helped give them a purpose without which, many groups may have gone into recess or closed down altogether.

The current allocation of VLG funds to each region is based on historic levels. However Landcare in each region differs in size, activity and health, and so there is an opportunity to revisit the regional allocations to ensure they are commensurate with the particular needs and circumstances of Landcare in each region. A model or rationale for how the VLG funds should be allocated should be developed to increase the transparency of the process and help to ensure equity across regions.

The VLG is oversubscribed. If additional funding became available to the VLP, increasing the allocation to the VLG should be considered given how highly the VLG is valued by the Landcare community.

It is recommended that the VLG continue to be delivered through the VLP, largely in its current form, and maintain the flexibility given to CMAs to tailor its implementation to local circumstances.

Assessment of the value for money from VLG is difficult due to the variability in regional reporting on VLG outputs. It is recommended that regions use DELWP's output delivery standards (and the associated output data standards) for reporting both the natural resource management (NRM) and community capacity outputs resulting from VLG.

Furthermore, it is likely that the environmental benefits from the VLG would be enhanced if multiple-year projects could be funded – it is recommended this opportunity should be examined.

The Regional Landcare Coordinators continue to play a necessary linking role between the community and CMAs. It has been reported that the Regional Landcare Coordinators are most effective where they have the ability to bring a sound understanding of the regional Landcare community into discussions and interactions with agencies like the CMAs and state government. When drawn upon, this understanding can positively influence the design and delivery of regional programs and projects and lead to greater participation by Landcare and improve the cost-effectiveness of delivery. Similarly, the RLCs need to be adept at communicating with the community about government and CMA policies and programs, and the opportunities these represent for Landcare.

The statewide Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator seeks to work in response to requests for assistance and in collaboration with the regional indigenous facilitators located in CMAs. The review has found that where the Facilitator has been active the role has been effective in increasing understanding of indigenous heritage and approaches to natural resource management. There is an opportunity to increase the outcomes achieved from the role if there was better awareness of the role.

The VLP has two communications components – the Gateway website and the Landcare magazine. Improvements to the website and magazine should be considered as part of a broader communications plan for the VLP. A communications plan should identify the objective of providing communication tools, audiences to be reached and appropriate mechanisms to reach those audiences with consideration given to the availability of other communication tools and materials developed by CMAs and other government programs.

With Landcare networks being increasingly important in many parts of the state, it is recommended that the VLP continues to support networks to build their capacity to meet the needs of their member groups.

To continue to stimulate Landcare and address on-going challenges such as involvement of young people, it is recommended that the VLP examine how it can strengthen innovation and greater knowledge sharing between groups, particularly in areas where local populations are stable or declining.

Other recommendations are made in relation to the Victorian Landcare Awards and performance indicators to measure the success of the VLP.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and objectives of review

Landcare in Victoria has been supported by the Victorian Government for many years. At present, that support is provided via the Victorian Landcare Program (VLP) and is in the order of a \$7M investment per annum. This review has been conducted to inform and shape the government's future support for Landcare. It provides a sound evidence base for its recommendations for improving the VLP.

The review has gauged the effectiveness of the VLP support to Landcare. It has been undertaken with a sound appreciation of the context of Landcare and its history and its relationship with the VLP.

A primary objective of the review was to provide an opportunity for the Landcare community and other key stakeholders to provide feedback on and suggest improvements to the VLP.

The review has taken a comprehensive and inclusive engagement process where reasonable efforts were made to include all of those with a stake in the VLP. Potential barriers to their participation were identified and removed wherever possible.

Consequently, the engagement process was tailored to accommodate Landcare community members and stakeholders with different levels of knowledge and capacity, geographic locations and activity levels. Also, 'consultation fatigue' is a real issue for some and was factored into the design of the engagement approaches used in this project.

This report presents the results of the consultation process and the subsequent outcomes and recommendations for improving the VLP.

1.2 Background to the VLP

Landcare has a long history working at a community level to improve local environments. In 1986, the Victorian Government's *LandCare* program was established as a joint initiative of Joan Kirner (then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands) and Heather Mitchell (then President of the Victorian Farmers Federation). The program was developed on the principles of community-based learning and action, tackling a range of integrated land protection issues with local groups involved in planning and implementing activities¹.

These principles have continued to guide Landcare in its evolution from a small group of farmers focusing on soil conservation in St Arnaud, western Victoria, to a highly successful and diverse movement of community-led action. Currently there are over 600 active Landcare groups and 67 Landcare networks throughout Victoria, as well as around 500 other community-based NRM groups such as Coastcare and Friends Of groups. Combined these groups have a membership of more than 60,000 and cover 60% of all land in Victoria, including 79% of private land².

Over nearly 30 years, the Landcare community has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution to improving the natural environment, increasing sustainable agriculture practices and

¹ Love, C. (date n/a) *Evolution of Landcare in Australia: In the context of Australian Government natural resource management policy and programs*. Report prepared for the Australian Landcare Council.

² Taken from the project brief

contributing to community well-being. The Victorian Government recognises this contribution and delivers the VLP as the main program of support to assist Landcare groups and networks.

Purpose of the VLP

The VLP sits within the Land, Fire and Environment (LFE) group of the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP). The following high level objectives guide the VLP:

- Supporting Victoria's natural and built environment to ensure economic growth and liveable, sustainable and inclusive communities (DELWP mandate)
- A healthy, resilient and biodiverse environment (LFE objective)³.

The VLP aims to provide a practical and efficient program of support to partner organisations and the community who contribute to the achievement of the above objectives.

Components of the VLP

There are three main components of the VLP:

1. Victorian Landcare Program Support
2. Victorian Landcare Grants
3. Victorian Landcare Facilitators (the subject of a separate evaluation).

Figure 1-1 provides an overview of the structure of the VLP. The three components of the VLP are now described.

1. Victorian Landcare Program Support

As Figure 1-1 shows, the Victorian Landcare Program Support (VLPS) includes several sub-components summarised in Table 1-1. Annually the Victorian Government invests \$2.4 million in the VLPS.

Table 1-1 Sub-components of the VLPS.

VLPS sub-component	Description
Statewide and Regional coordination	There are 10 RLCs based in the Catchment Management Authorities across Victoria.
Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator	There is one Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator based at the North East Catchment Management Authority.
Victorian Landcare Gateway website	A central website resource for Landcare in Victoria. Allows community groups to display contact details and access resources.
Victorian Landcare & Catchment Magazine	Production and circulation of three editions per annum, with 26,000 printed copies per edition.
Victorian Landcare Awards	Held every two years at Government House organised by Landcare Australia Limited.

The VLPS also includes other components such as VLP Support Staff (of which there are four centrally based in DELWP in Melbourne), the VLP Strategic Plan and partnerships with peak bodies such as the Victorian Landcare Council (VLC), Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) and Landcare Australia Limited (LAL).

³ DELWP Strategic Planning Framework DRAFT (February 2015) – extracted from project brief



Figure 1-1 Victorian Landcare Program Structure⁴

2. Victorian Landcare Grants

The Victorian Landcare Grants (VLG) provides an important source of funding to groups and networks for on-ground projects and for group/network start-up, maintenance and support. Approximately \$2.2 million is available annually for groups and networks to access through the VLG. In 2014/15, for example, the VLG funded 136 projects across Victoria with an 18-month implementation timeframe to December 2015.

The grants are allocated through a competitive application process, which is delivered regionally through the 10 CMAs. The CMAs manage the expression of interest process and the assessment of applications.

⁴ Source: DELWP project brief.

3. Victorian Landcare Facilitators

The four year Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI) commenced in 2011/12 and funded 68 part-time local Landcare facilitators to support groups and networks. The VLLFI has a strong local focus, with facilitators being locally based in groups, networks or other local hosting organisations such as CMAs or local Councils. Approximately \$3.4 million was invested in the VLLFI each year.

The facilitators perform an important role in building community capacity, assisting communities to deliver local on-ground action, facilitate effective participation in Landcare activities and enable groups to become more self-supporting.

In 2015, the Minister announced the continuation of the 68 facilitator positions for another four years, commencing 1 July 2015 as the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program.

1.3 The focus of this review

This review focuses predominantly on the first two sub-components of the VLP:

1. Victorian Landcare Program Support (and the various sub-components described in Table 1-1)
2. Victorian Landcare Grants.

The third component, the Victorian Landcare Facilitators, has been included in this review but is considered in more detail in a separate evaluation of the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative, which has also been prepared by RMCG concurrently to the VLP Review.

2 Method

This section describes the methodology and approach to the review.

2.1 Summary

The engagement approach to this review was comprehensive and thorough achieving full coverage of both stakeholder types within the Landcare community and regions across the state. We provided a range of opportunities for the Landcare community to participate in the review and advertised these opportunities through multiple channels. The response rates achieved reflect that this approach was successful.

A total of 164⁵ targeted interviews were conducted across the state representing the full spectrum of Landcare community stakeholders, including:

- Representatives from 51 Landcare Networks comprising of 592 groups (406 Landcare Groups and 186 other community groups e.g. Friends of) with a total membership of 22,744⁶
- An additional 24 Landcare representatives (nominated by the Stakeholder Reference Group, i.e. FTLA, VLC and CMA CEOs)
- Ten Regional Landcare Coordinators and the statewide Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator
- Nine Regional Landcare Facilitators (one position was vacant during the consultation phase)
- Ten Catchment Management Authority CEOs
- A sample of 30 VLLFI Facilitators
- A total of nine Landcare groups/ networks that did not have access to a VLLFI Facilitator
- A sample of eight inactive Landcare groups (groups in recess)
- A total of seven representatives from peak bodies (e.g. FTLA, VLC, LAL)
- The seven Landcare team members at DELWP
- A sample of seven interstate Landcare representatives.

In addition to the targeted interviews, an online survey open to all members of the Landcare community received 919 responses. This is considered an excellent response rate compared to similar online surveys we have undertaken for previous reviews of NRM-related programs.

A list of stakeholders consulted during this review is provided in Appendix 1. Further detail of the review approach is provided in the following sections.

⁵ This represents a single respondent, in some cases the respondent is represented across more than one stakeholder group.

⁶ Data sourced from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning - aggregated reporting on Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data, the fluid nature of group membership and structure means that these figures may fluctuate within a small range from time to time.

2.2 Data collection

Consultation framework

A consultation framework was developed to guide the data collection approach (Table 2-1). The framework was created around the stakeholder types to be consulted and designed to ensure there was an opportunity for a wide spectrum of the Landcare community to participate. The framework includes both the VLP review and VLLFI evaluation; this was done to maximise efficiency and alignment between the two projects. Multiple methods of data collection were used:

- Meetings/workshops
- Targeted interviews (phone and face-to-face)
- Online survey.

Meetings/Workshops

Victorian Landcare Team

An initial workshop was held members of the Victorian Landcare team in late July prior to undertaking targeted interviews and opening the online survey. The purpose of this meeting was to collect general feedback about the current state of Landcare across Victoria and to finalise the scope of the project.

The second workshop held in late August included representation from the ten CMA Regional Landcare Coordinators and the statewide Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator. This meeting was used to generate regional perspectives on key challenges and opportunities within Landcare and to further inform the focus of targeted interviews within each region.

Stakeholder Reference Group

A Stakeholder Reference Group was established by DELWP. The group comprised a representative from the Victorian Landcare Council, the Farm Tree and Landcare Association and the CMA CEOs. The first meeting with the Stakeholder Reference Group was held in mid-August and was undertaken to seek feedback about the consultation approach and to advise on the range of stakeholders to be consulted.

The second meeting held in mid-September provided an opportunity to present the preliminary findings of both the VLP review and VLLFI evaluation to the group prior to development of the draft report. This allowed for testing and further consolidation of the findings.

A third meeting with the Stakeholder Reference Group was held in late October/ early November providing an opportunity to discuss and present the draft recommendations for both the VLP review and VLLFI evaluation. Feedback from this meeting was used to further refine the findings and recommendations to be included in the final reports.

Targeted interviews

A combination of phone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with a minimum of two VLLFI Facilitators per CMA region, the ten Regional Landcare Coordinators; nine of the federally funded Regional Landcare Facilitators (one position was vacant at the time of consultation); the ten CMA Chief Executive Officers; nine Landcare groups that were unsuccessful in securing a VLLFI facilitator; and eight inactive Landcare groups.

Landcare representatives including volunteers, Landcare staff and executives were provided with the opportunity to participate in a face-to-face or phone interview. This group included representatives from Landcare networks across the state. A total of 51 interviews were completed for this group. In addition, we were invited to and attended two network chairs meetings.

In addition, another 24 Landcare representatives were interviewed by phone. This sample included respected Landcare members, industry representatives and groups not covered by networks. The Stakeholder Reference Group nominated representatives for this stakeholder group.

A set of interview templates were developed by stakeholder type to provide a consistent structure to data collection and ensure the full suite of VLP components relevant to the review were covered.

Online survey

The online survey was developed in conjunction with the interview guides. The survey questions are provided in Appendix 2. The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey® and was open for a period of five weeks from mid-August to mid-September 2015.

A link to the online survey was uploaded on the Landcare Gateway website and also distributed via email to networks and groups through various sources including the VLC, FTLA and Regional Landcare Coordinators.

A total of 919 responses were received by the survey closing date on 15 September 2015.

Literature review

DELWP provided a comprehensive library of documentation pertaining to all components of the VLP. This material was analysed and provided a valuable resource with respect to context for the VLP, processes and data on various aspects of the program and previous evaluations.

Table 2-1 Consultation Framework.

Stakeholder group	Data collection method	Details
All Landcare members (and the broader Landcare community)	Online survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative and quantitative questions to address both the VLP Review and VLLFI Evaluation. Was available on the Landcare Gateway for five weeks. Optional phone and hard copies of the survey were available upon request.
Landcare representatives (incl. volunteers, Landcare staff and executives)	Tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one interviews, conducted in-person (or via telephone), offered to all 67 Networks, plus an additional 30 Landcare representatives comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Respected Landcare people and ii) Groups not covered by Networks. Includes specific questions for at least 10 networks that host a Facilitator to address VLLFI evaluation questions. Online survey was also available to this stakeholder group.
VLLFI Facilitators	Tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VLLFI evaluation questionnaire conducted via telephone with a target of 15 Facilitators. Online survey was also available to this stakeholder group.
RLCs	Telephone: tailored interviews Meeting (x1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questionnaire was conducted via telephone with all RLCs to cover both VLP review and VLLFI evaluation questions. Meeting with VLP team, RLCs and Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator at the start of the consultation phase to provide regional insight.
RLFs	Telephone: tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questionnaire was conducted via telephone with all RLFs to cover both VLP review and VLLFI evaluation questions.
Peak bodies	Tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A semi-structured questionnaire to cover both VLP review and VLLFI evaluation questions delivered in-person.
Victorian Landcare team, state Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator and RLCs	Meeting (x2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting at the DELWP Melbourne office to provide input to both the VLP review and VLLFI evaluation questions. Meeting with Victorian Landcare team, RLCs and Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator at the start of the consultation phase to provide regional insight.
CMA CEOs	Tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A semi-structured questionnaire to cover both VLP review and VLLFI evaluation questions conducted via telephone.
Unsuccessful groups (i.e. groups that did not receive VLLFI funding)	Telephone: tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VLLFI evaluation questionnaire conducted via telephone with a target of 12 questionnaires to be completed.
Inactive groups	Telephone: tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VLP review questionnaire conducted via telephone with a target of 12 questionnaires to be completed.
Stakeholder Reference Group	Workshop (x3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop with Stakeholder Reference Group pre-consultation to ensure comprehensive coverage (both geographic and stakeholder type). Workshop with Stakeholder Reference Group post-consultation to seek feedback on draft findings. Workshop with the Stakeholder Reference Group to seek feedback on the draft recommendations.
Interstate Landcare representatives	Telephone: tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured questionnaire delivered via telephone to review alternative models of Landcare support.

2.3 Data analysis and report

The quantitative survey results were analysed for the whole sample as well as for segments within the sample. These are outlined in Table 2-2. Three segments were chosen: stakeholder type, land use zone and access to facilitator support (or not).

Respondents to the on-line survey were provided with several opportunities to offer their own opinions on a wide range of aspects of the VLP. A large proportion of respondents took this opportunity and this data was analysed and synthesised into themes and has been summarised in the following results section of the review. Some quotes have been included with the results to illustrate predominant views and opinions. Outlier opinions have not been included.

Similarly the main findings from the targeted interviews were also synthesised and documented by each interviewer and have been incorporated into the results and discussion section of the review report.

Table 2-2 Data segments for online survey quantitative analysis

Segments for quantitative analysis		
Stakeholder type	Land use	Facilitator (F68) access
1. Member of a Landcare group	1. Rural	1. No access to F68
2. Member of a Landcare network	2. Pre-urban	2. Access to F68 through network or another group
3. Member of another community group	3. Urban	3. Access to F68 through own group
4. Landcare coordinator or facilitator	4. Country town	
5. CMA or other government staff; peak body representative	5. Other e.g. coastal	
6. Other e.g. education sector		

3 Review results

3.1 Stakeholder engagement overview

This section provides the main results and findings from the online survey, stakeholder interviews, and meetings and workshops held during August / September 2015. Relevant findings from a desktop review of related documentation of some of the core activities and outputs from the Victorian Landcare Program are also included. The interviews and the online survey were conducted concurrently as outlined in the previous section.

RMCG personnel interviewed 164 stakeholders by telephone and face-to-face during regional visits. These included Landcare representatives (volunteers, staff and executives), VLLFI facilitators, RLCs, and CMA representatives. Attendance at Landcare Network chairs meetings also took place in several regions. Workshops and meetings were also held with the Victorian Landcare Team and others and additional interviews were conducted with representatives from relevant peak bodies and personnel from interstate Landcare jurisdictions.

The significant findings from the targeted interviews, workshops and meetings have been synthesised and integrated into the following results sections for each of the main elements of the VLP.

3.2 Online survey demographic profile

The purpose of the survey was to establish a representative view of the health or state of Landcare (now compared to four years ago), its strengths, as well as the threats or major challenges to the movement. The survey asked respondents to rate the importance of each of the main elements of the VLP as well as provide an assessment of the success of the VLLFI. It also sought feedback on how the Victoria government can most effectively provide support to meet the needs of the Landcare community over coming years.

Over 900 people took the opportunity to participate in the online survey. The geographical distribution of respondents across Victoria is shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 Geographic distribution and land use zones - survey participants (n = 919)

CMA region	Respondent numbers	Land use zone	Respondent numbers
Port Phillip and Western Port	172	Rural	555
North Central	132	Peri-urban	106
Goulburn Broken	119	Country town	150
North East	111	Urban	83
Corangamite	104	Other e.g. coastal	3
West Gippsland	79		
Glenelg Hopkins	52		
Wimmera	50		
Mallee	41		
East Gippsland	40		
N/A	19		

The achieved sample has a suitable distribution of all Landcare community segments of interest. This section provides an overview of the profile of the survey respondents.

3.2.1 Respondent characteristics

Stakeholder type

The makeup of the survey sample was representative of the target Landcare population where the vast majority indicated that they were members of a Landcare group and / or network. Noting that the two are not mutually exclusive and those indicating network rather than group were likely to be those holding executive positions within a network and typically would also be a member of a Landcare group (but not always). There were also respondents from other community groups, government staff, peak bodies and smaller numbers of other interested individuals. Figure 3-1 illustrates the proportion of each stakeholder group.

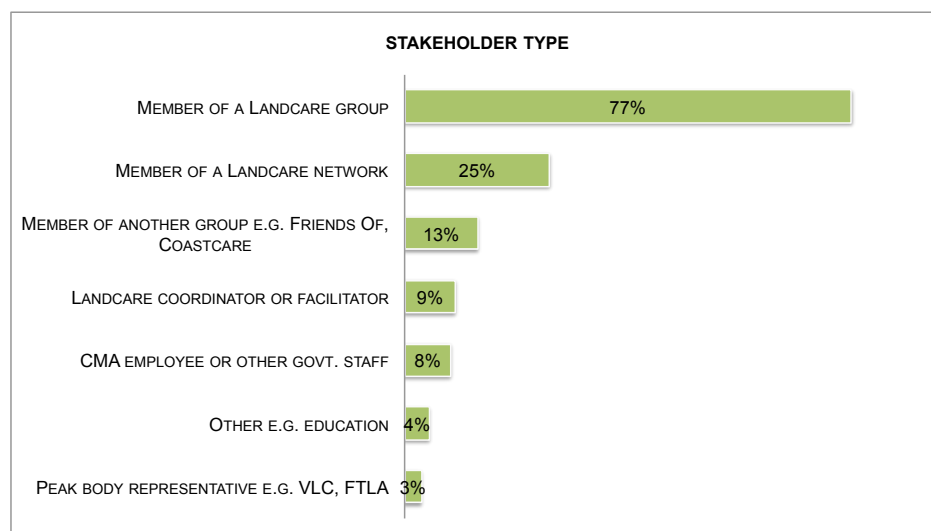


Figure 3-1 Respondents profile by stakeholder type

Age and gender

The majority of respondents (68 per cent) were older than 50 years where only a small proportion were younger than 35 years, as illustrated in Figure 3-2. This reflects the age profile that is evident amongst a lot of volunteer based organisations. The gender balance of respondents was female (52 per cent) and male (48 per cent).

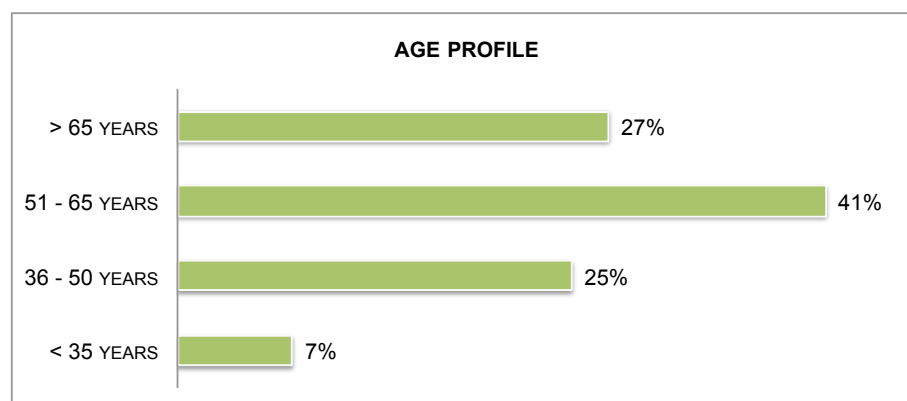


Figure 3-2 Respondent's age profile

Just over 50 per cent of respondents had been involved in Landcare less than ten years with almost 30 per cent less than five, which points towards there being some renewal in Landcare membership over recent years. On the other hand, almost 20 per cent indicated that their involvement had spanned more than 20 years demonstrating that there are long term participants having sustained a connection with

Landcare since its early days. Figure 3-3 illustrates the profile of respondents with respect to years of involvement in Landcare.

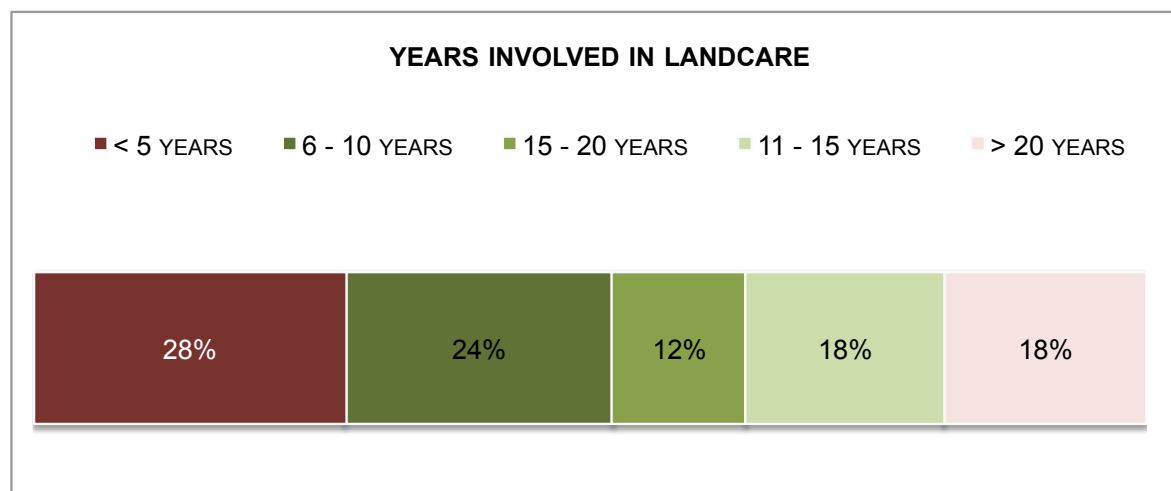


Figure 3-3 Number of years of involvement in Landcare

3.2.2 Location and land use characteristics

CMA region

There was a wide range of response levels to the survey at a regional level. The distribution of respondents by CMA region is shown in Figure 3-4. Port Phillip and Western Port region had the highest response at 172 participants, representing almost 20 per cent of the sample. North Central, Goulburn Broken, North East and Corangamite all had more than 100 responses with the other five regions making up the remaining 30 per cent of the respondents.

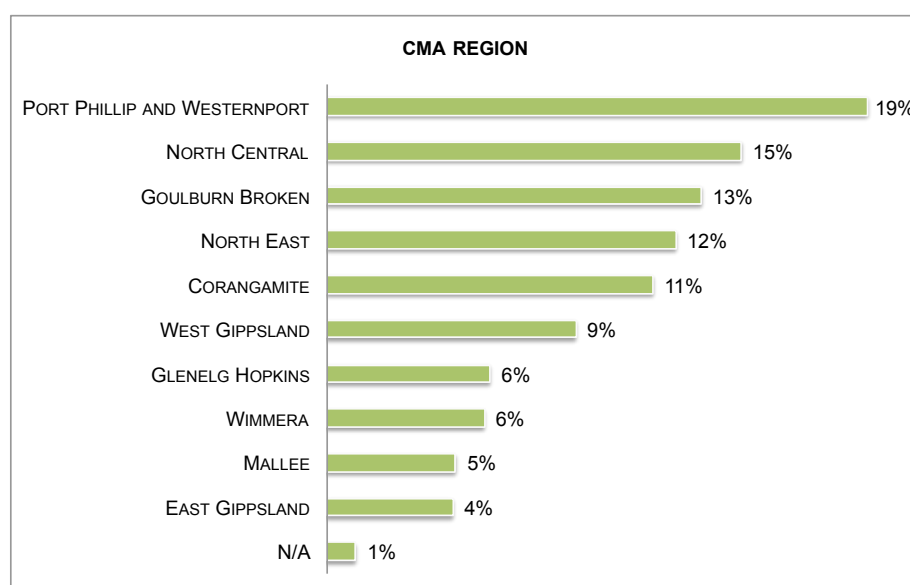


Figure 3-4 Respondents by CMA region

Land use zone

Almost two thirds of respondents indicated that their place of residence was rural, and a further 12 per cent as peri-urban. Around one quarter of respondents were from country towns or urban areas (Figure 3-5).

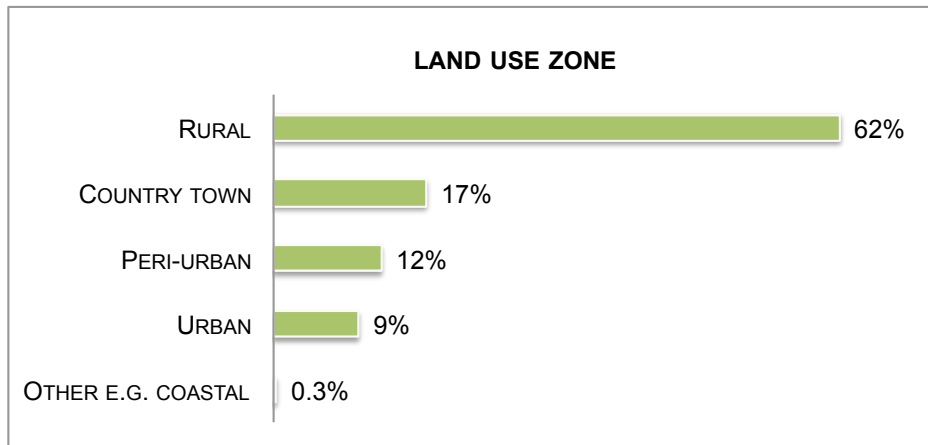


Figure 3-5 Respondents' local environment

Land use type

There was a good spread of land use types amongst respondents (Figure 3-6). Around 35 per cent of respondents were farming with the majority mixed farming or grazing; only a small number of cropping farmers responded (i.e. 26 or 3%). Those with lifestyle or hobby farms comprised 27 per cent of the sample and a further 14 per cent indicated that they are managing their property for conservation purposes. Urban or town block holders were just over 20 per cent of respondents.

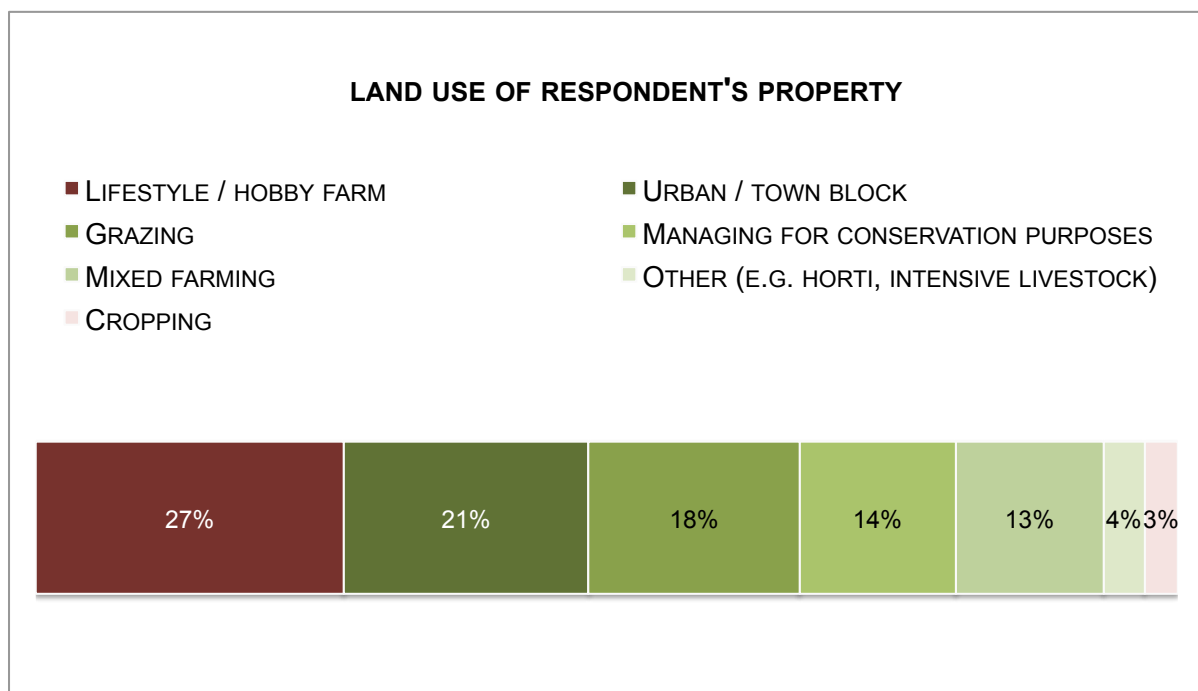


Figure 3-6 Main land use of respondent's property

3.2.3 Landcare group activity

The vast majority of respondents with membership or close association with a Landcare group indicated that they were part of a network (85%). Over half of respondents indicated that they either currently held or have held a committee role in Landcare over the past five years.

Types of activities

Landcare groups focus on a wide range of activities as illustrated in Figure 3-7. Revegetation / protecting remnants and pest animal and weed control were the most common focus areas for Landcare activities. Around 80 per cent of respondents indicated that these were important activities for their groups. Community education and capacity building was the next most important area where groups focused their efforts. This was reported by over half of all respondents.

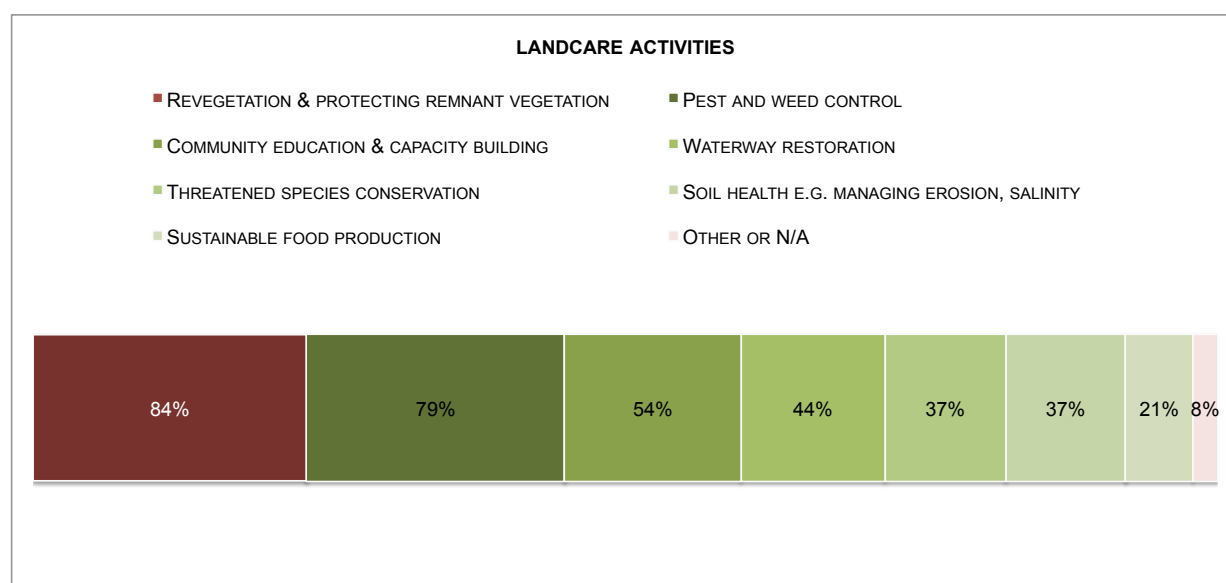


Figure 3-7 Main focus areas for Landcare activity

Facilitator access

Over three quarters of respondents indicated that their groups had received some level of support from a facilitator funded under the Victorian Government's facilitator initiative (Figure 3-8).

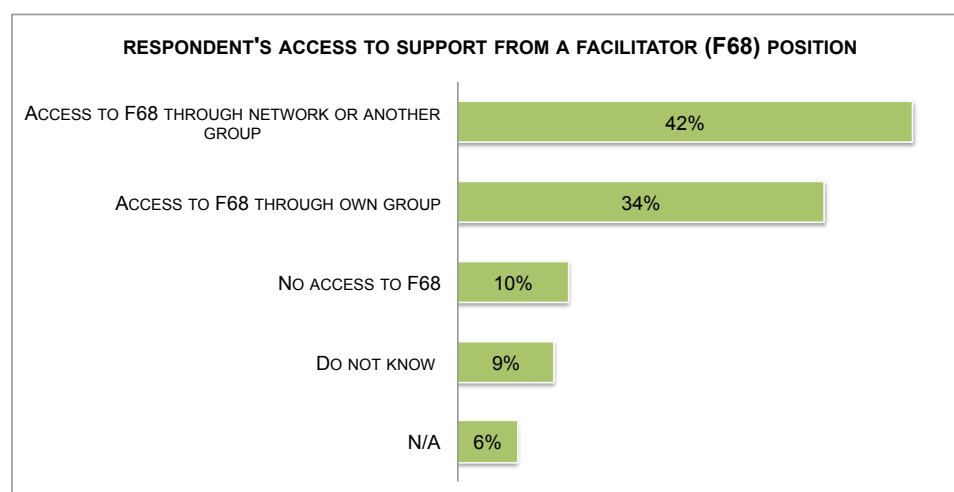


Figure 3-8 Access to support from a facilitator

Ten per cent (or 71 respondents) indicated that their group did not have access to F68 support and a further nine per cent was unaware if they had support or not. The achieved sample reflects the situation on the ground where there is good coverage of F68 support throughout the Landcare community.

3.3 How is Landcare tracking?

3.3.1 Health of Landcare now (compared with 4 or 5 years ago)

The survey question - “how is Landcare going generally (now compared to four years ago)” - garnered a range of opinions, even within the same jurisdiction or Landcare network area. This is partly because of differing ideas on what Landcare is and should be.

Overall opinions

Figure 3-9 provides an overview of the responses to this question.

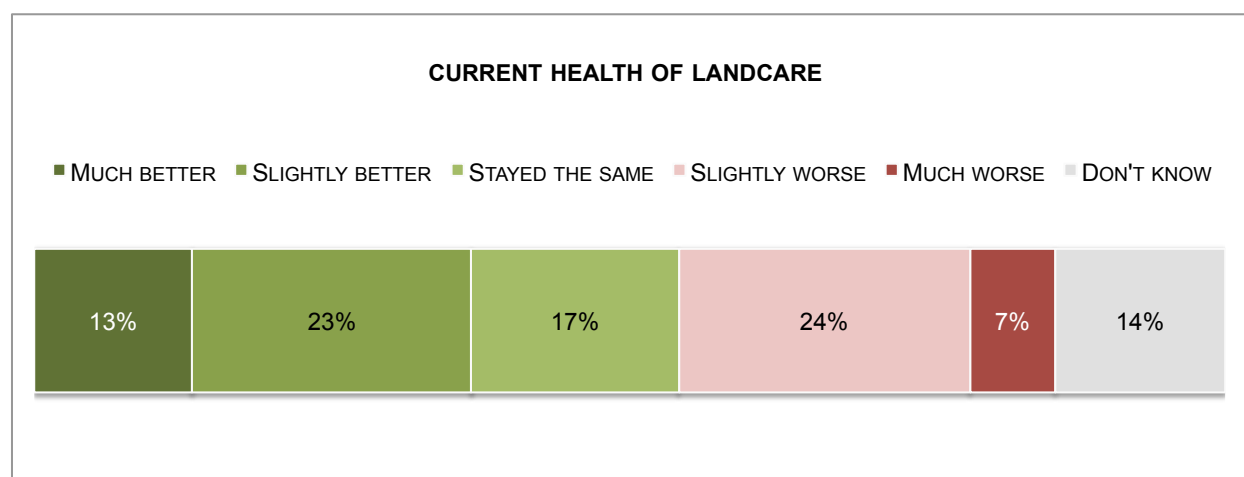


Figure 3-9 Total survey response to Q. “how would you rate the health of Landcare now, compared to four or five years ago?”

These responses demonstrate the diversity of opinions held and there was no majority consensus on the current health of Landcare. Similar number of respondents perceived the health of Landcare to be “better” as those who believed it to be “worse” at some level e.g. a combined total of 36 per cent of respondents perceived Landcare to be either “much better” or “slightly better”, while a combined total of 31 per cent felt Landcare was “slightly worse” or “much worse”.

A further 17 per cent indicated that Landcare has “stayed the same” over the past four to five years with the remaining responding with “don’t know”.

Opinions by stakeholder segment

A diversity of opinion was evident across the range of stakeholder types (Figure 3-10). Of the different stakeholder types, Landcare coordinators and facilitators had the highest proportion of respondents that felt the health of Landcare is either “much better” or “slightly better” (54%). In contrast, the stakeholder type with the highest proportion of respondents to record that the health of Landcare is either “slightly worse” or “much worse” were members of another community group such as a Friends Of group (49%) and those in the ‘other’ category e.g. representatives of the education sector (58%).

There was a marked difference in perceptions of Landcare health amongst those that had access to an F68 facilitator and those that did not (Figure 3-11). Respondents that had access to a facilitator, either through their own group or through a network or another group, had a more optimistic perception of the health of Landcare. Combined, an average proportion of 48 per cent of respondents from these groups believed the health of Landcare to be either “much better” or “slightly better”.

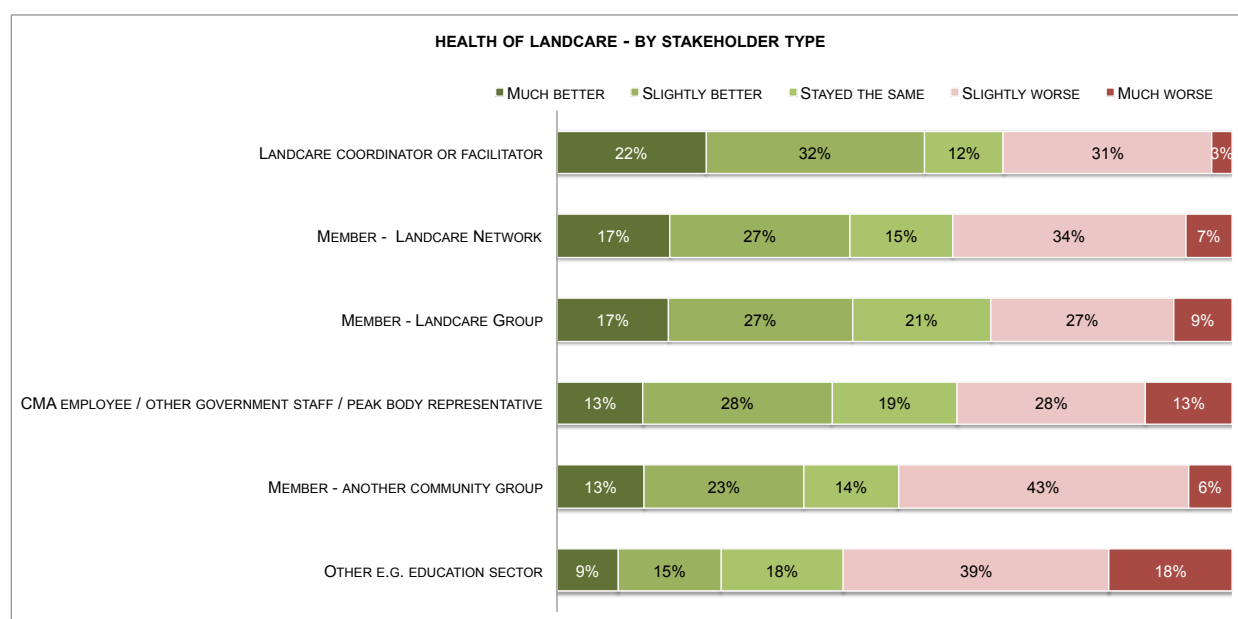


Figure 3-10 Rating of the health of Landcare - by stakeholder type

Respondents with access to facilitator support, either directly within their own group or through a network or another group, felt that Landcare was performing better than those without access to a facilitator. Amongst those respondents that did not have access to a facilitator, no one reported that the health of Landcare was “much better” and only 17 per cent perceived it to be “slightly better”. Almost 60 per cent reported it to be “slightly worse” or “much worse” (Figure 3-11).

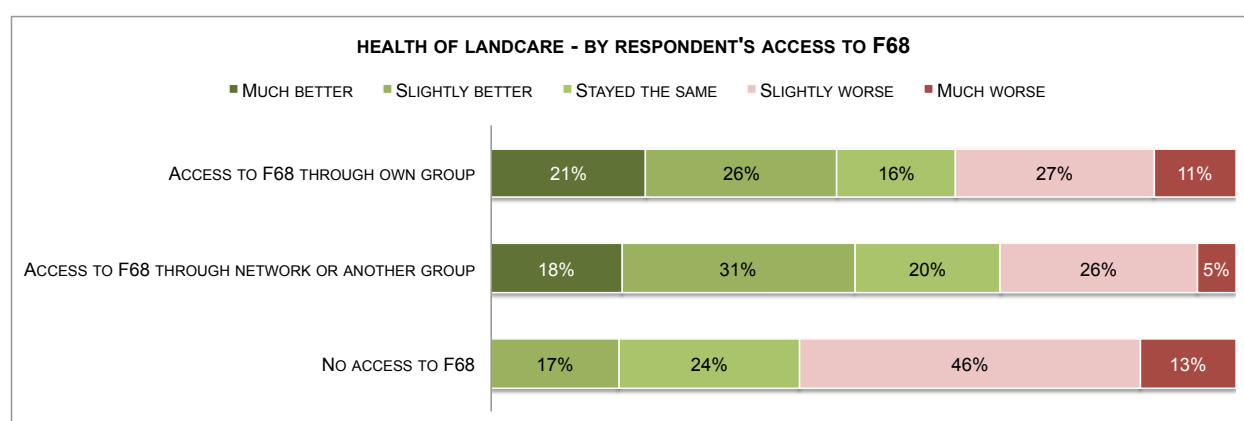


Figure 3-11 Rating of the health of Landcare - by those who had access to a F68 facilitator

There was found to be little variation in the perceived health of Landcare according to geographic location (Figure 3-12). Those respondents that live in urban or peri-urban locations are generally more positive about the health of Landcare. Combined, half (50%) of respondents from urban and peri-urban locations rated the health of Landcare as either “much better” or “slightly better”. This is compared to an average proportion of 41 per cent of respondents from country towns and rural locations. This may be reflective of the declining and ageing population in many Victorian country towns and rural communities.

This was identified as a major challenge by several respondents to the online survey and in-depth interviews, as discussed in more detail later in this report.

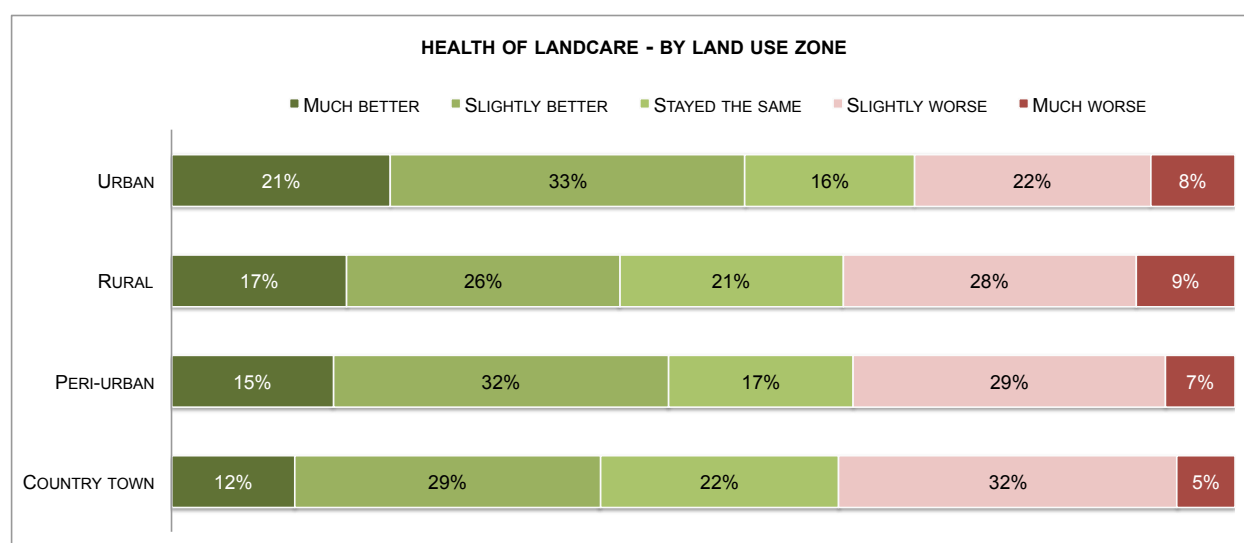


Figure 3-12 Rating of the health of Landcare - by stakeholder geographic location

In summary, the quantitative data from the online survey indicates that stakeholders with the most optimistic perception of the health of Landcare now, compared to four or five years ago are Landcare staff (coordinators and facilitators) and groups and networks that have access to facilitators. Those that have a more pessimistic view of the health of Landcare are more likely to be those that are more removed from the Landcare program, such as 'Friends Of' and other groups, and those that do not have access to facilitator support.

This is consistent with the qualitative responses received when respondents were asked to explain their perception of the health of Landcare. Of those that identified the health of Landcare to be "much better" or "slightly better", common explanations included:

- *Having access to Landcare support staff such as local facilitators and regional coordinators:* evidenced by the largely common understanding that the Landcare support staff, among other benefits, enable groups to operate more efficiently, provide better collaboration and communication across groups and with government agencies, provide improved access to information and activities and provide greater focus and direction for groups.
- *A strong regional Landcare structure:* such as the formation and strength of Landcare networks, improved collaboration with CMAs, industry groups and other community groups and more strategic direction for Landcare at the regional level.
- *A higher and increasing level of community awareness of the environment.*
- *Better promotion of Landcare:* seeing the results of activities and more community engagement activities have led to an increased awareness of Landcare and the benefits (environmentally, economically and socially) of being involved.
- *The diversification of Landcare:* it takes many forms and has diversified greatly from the traditional farm-based focus upon which it was founded. There is now an eclectic membership encompassing urban to rural communities, and groups are undertaking a range of activities on public and private land. Several respondents believe this diversification and the ability to remain flexible and respond to community interests as a major contributor to the ongoing health of Landcare.
- *More diversity in funding:* some respondents felt there needs to be more diversity in the types of funding streams available to Landcare now, such as philanthropic and industry investment.

Amongst those respondents that believe Landcare to be “slightly worse” or “much worse”, common explanations included:

- *Challenges associated with funding:* this included an overall lack of funding available for Landcare and difficulty accessing funding that is available due to overly complex grant applications, onerous reporting requirements and increasing competition for funding.
- *A decline in participation and membership in Landcare:* common reasons for this included volunteer burn-out, an ageing and declining population especially in rural areas, a lack of young people interested or with time to commit and a general sense of community apathy towards the environment and volunteering.
- *A decline in Government support:* according to respondents, this decline in government support is evidenced through groups not having a facilitator but requiring one; a feeling that government support for facilitators and staff has declined; a sense that government doesn’t value the contribution of Landcare; and the frustrations experienced by the Landcare community in response to frequently changing government priorities and increasing bureaucracy.

The interview responses with Landcare stakeholders provided further depth and context to the overall health of Landcare.

It was reported by some stakeholders that they had observed an increase in the number of inactive groups or groups in recess, however this trend is not consistent with data held by DELWP. Nevertheless, Landcare continues to evolve in response to various factors, for example, changes in land use (farm consolidation and / or subdivision), shifts in demographics, changes in government support for NRM / agriculture, socio-economic factors and cultural norms in rural and peri-urban areas. This evolution has seen groups merge in some cropping areas of the Wimmera and Mallee, which contrasts with new groups forming in areas experiencing population growth particularly around coastal areas and peri-urban Melbourne and other regional cities.

Many Landcare groups no longer function in the same way. Small scale projects on individual properties are still happening yet a lot of on-ground works projects are now planned and executed at a larger scale and delivered at the Landcare network level rather than by the groups themselves. It has been suggested that this may be impacting on the interest and involvement of volunteers at the group level.

It was reported that funding is no longer as readily available (through either Commonwealth or Victorian government programs) for some of the trademark Landcare type works – weeds and rabbits, and erosion control for example. This is discouraging for members in those catchments where these issues have been a traditional focus, e.g. Goulburn, North Central, Upper Wimmera.

Some groups have intentionally chosen to modernise their structure and reduce the administrative and time burden of upholding a conventional executive committee with office bearers holding monthly meetings with minutes taken and distributed etc. but instead they meet irregularly on an as-needs basis. *“Today’s land carers will attend an activity rather than a meeting”.*

For some, Landcare “looks different” to how it used to be and this affects their opinions on how Landcare is going.

3.3.2 Drivers and threats to Landcare performance

Strengths

The online survey asked respondents to identify what they perceive to be the main strengths of Landcare.

In total 82 per cent (n=757) of survey respondents provided a response to this question. Consistencies were identified across the suite of responses. For example, the majority of responses identified the social and community aspects of Landcare, such as fostering social cohesion and the fact that Landcare is community owned and driven, as the main strength. Second to the community and social benefits, was the contribution that Landcare makes to improving the local environment and building local knowledge and skills.

A summary of the main responses is provided beneath:

- **The people** – nearly half of the responses (45%) made reference to “the people” and the social benefits associated with Landcare as being one of its greatest strengths. Increased community connectedness, building local support networks, the commitment and passion demonstrated by the volunteer community and the power of working collaboratively were commonly identified in the responses. Examples of the types of comments received include:

“Social connectivity built around place and the environment”

“Community involvement and resulting sense of well-being”

“Social network with a tangible purpose”

“One of the last remaining opportunities for country people to get together and tackle problems as a supported group”

- **Landcare is community driven** – the responses indicated that community members value the fact that Landcare is community owned and driven, that it’s built upon local knowledge and responds to local priorities. Around 18 per cent of respondents identified this as the main strength of Landcare. Examples of the types of comments include:

“Community action based on local community priorities”

“Grassroots responsiveness to local community issues”

“Local knowledge of environmental values”

- **The contribution to improving local environments** – around 17 per cent of respondents felt that the main strength of Landcare was the framework it provides for volunteers to make a valid contribution to improving local environments. This includes reference to the contribution made through a range of activities from conservation based activities on public land to sustainable farming practices on private land. Examples of the types of responses include:

“(Landcare) provides a framework and support for individuals to contribute to caring for country”

“Creating landscape change in areas outside the reach of other organisations or authorities”

“Implementing sustainable land use strategies”

Other strengths identified by a smaller number of respondents include:

- Access to information to help build volunteer skills and capacity, as well as access to funding through government grants
- The Landcare brand and reputation.

Threats

The online survey asked respondents to identify the main threats or challenges facing Landcare.

A total of 82 per cent of survey respondents provided a response to the question. The main threats identified by respondents referred to challenges associated with funding, succession and recruitment, and a sense of declining Government support.

A summary of the main responses is provided beneath:

- **Challenges associated with funding** – the largest proportion of respondents (35%) identified challenges associated with funding as the main threat to Landcare. Responses commonly referred to an overall decline in Government funding, the increasing complexity of funding applications and the restrictions of targeted investment and the misalignment with local priorities. Examples of the types of responses include:
 - “Increasing bureaucracy – higher costs, complexity and reduced funding”*
 - “Lots of paperwork for small groups to access funding”*
 - “Becoming so targeted in the approach to funding that many people are excluded”*
 - “Lack of funding for grants that meet the group’s needs in what they want to do with onground works”*
- **Succession and recruitment** – approximately 31 per cent of respondents identified the challenges associated with succession and recruitment as a threat. An ageing and declining rural population, the difficulty in attracting new and young members, volunteer burn-out and a general sense of community apathy towards the environment were commonly identified threats. Responses included:
 - “In the Mallee it is an ageing and declining rural population base”*
 - “People are too time poor to commit to any ongoing roles in Landcare”*
 - “(Challenge is) capturing the interest of the next generation of potential volunteers”*
- **Decline in Government support** – an overall sense of declining government support was identified as a threat by around 23 per cent of respondents. Amongst the responses there was common reference to a decline in government funding and support for Landcare staff, changing government priorities, lack of government recognition of the contribution made by Landcare and the increasing bureaucracy, “red tape” and paperwork required of volunteers. Responses included:
 - “Lack of support by government bodies and the challenges of trying to cut through red tape/policies”*
 - “Changing priorities of state and federal governments. Landcare should be one of the top (priorities) all the time”*
 - “Lack of recognition of the importance of Landcare by policy makers in government”*
 - “Employment of professional support (coordinators) is short-term, subject to funding and not permanent”*

Other threats that were identified by a smaller number of respondents included:

- Land management issues e.g. weeds, pests and climate change, and changes in land use such as an increase in urbanisation and development, and a rise in corporate farms
- Limited capacity of volunteers e.g. knowledge, resources, skills
- Landcare governance e.g. a general lack of uniformity and leadership.

3.4 Victorian Landcare Program Support

3.4.1 Summary – stakeholder opinions

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback on seven components of the VLP program by providing an importance rating to each component. Figure 3-13 provides an overview of the results by component. The Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI) was rated the most highly closely followed by the Victorian Landcare Grants (VLG). The Regional Landcare Coordinators (RLC), based in the CMA regions, were also rated highly.

Around one third of respondents rated the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator (ALF) position as very important; however, a considerable proportion (16%) responded “don't know” to this component. The main means of information provision, communication and acknowledging achievement (the Gateway, the magazine and the awards) about the Statewide program were rated as very important by around one quarter of respondents with the awards rating slightly higher than the Gateway website and the magazine.

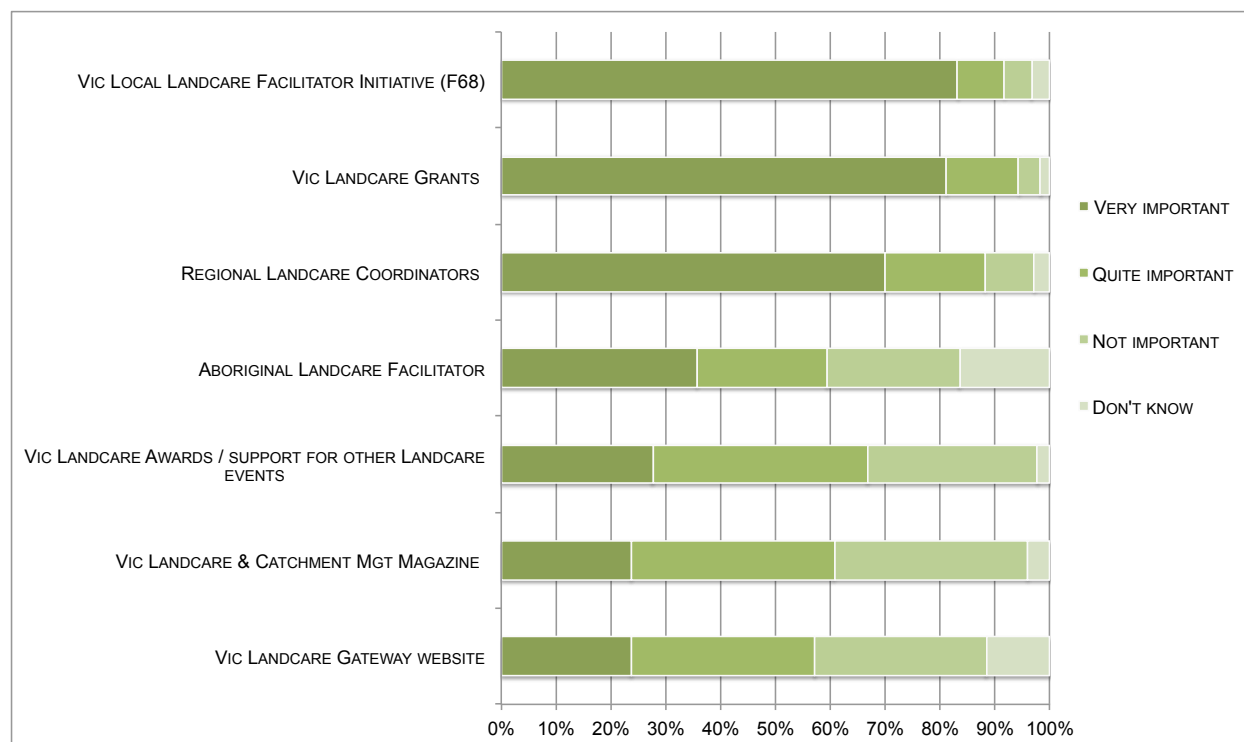


Figure 3-13 Rating of the importance of VLP components – all respondents

The results of a segmented analysis, based on stakeholder type e.g. Landcare member, other community groups, government staff, land use zone e.g. rural, peri-urban, country town, and group's access to support from a F68 position (yes / no) has also been provided in Appendix 3. There was found to be some variation between responses within these segments and where noteworthy, these have been highlighted in the following section.

More specific feedback on each of the VLP components, from both the targeted interviews and from a synthesis of responses to the open questions in the survey, also follows. A full list of suggested improvements to the VLP is provided in Appendix 4.

3.4.2 Victorian Landcare Grants

Importance

The Victorian Landcare Grants (VLG) are greatly valued by the Landcare community. Interview responses from Landcare stakeholders attest to this, with the majority indicating that groups know the VLG well and view it as a reliable source of income that keeps them engaged, enables them to do projects of interest and can be anticipated and planned for each year. For some groups and networks, the VLG is “enabler” funding, which allows them to leverage other funding streams such as federal grants or private investment. The maintenance and start-up grants are particularly important for smaller groups that do not receive large amounts of funding and are sufficient to keep them “ticking along” and for many groups helps to cover their insurance expenses.

Both the Landcare stakeholders and online respondents indicated that administration of the VLG by the CMAs has a number of strengths. CMAs are able to tailor the VLG to suit the needs and circumstances of the regions. Their regional connection created via the VLG between the CMAs and groups and networks is important and numerous mentions and examples were offered (in the survey as well as in the interviews) where CMAs provide support to groups and networks to prepare grant applications and project reports. In most regions, groups and networks are now familiar with the application process and what is involved.

The value of the VLG is highlighted in the responses to the online question asking respondents to rate the importance of the VLG. A significant majority of respondents rated the VLG to be “very important” (82%) and this rating was generally consistent across the different stakeholder groups (Figure 3-14). All stakeholder groups, except members of another community group (76%) and ‘other’ stakeholders (69%) had more than 80 per cent of respondents rate the VLG as “very important”.

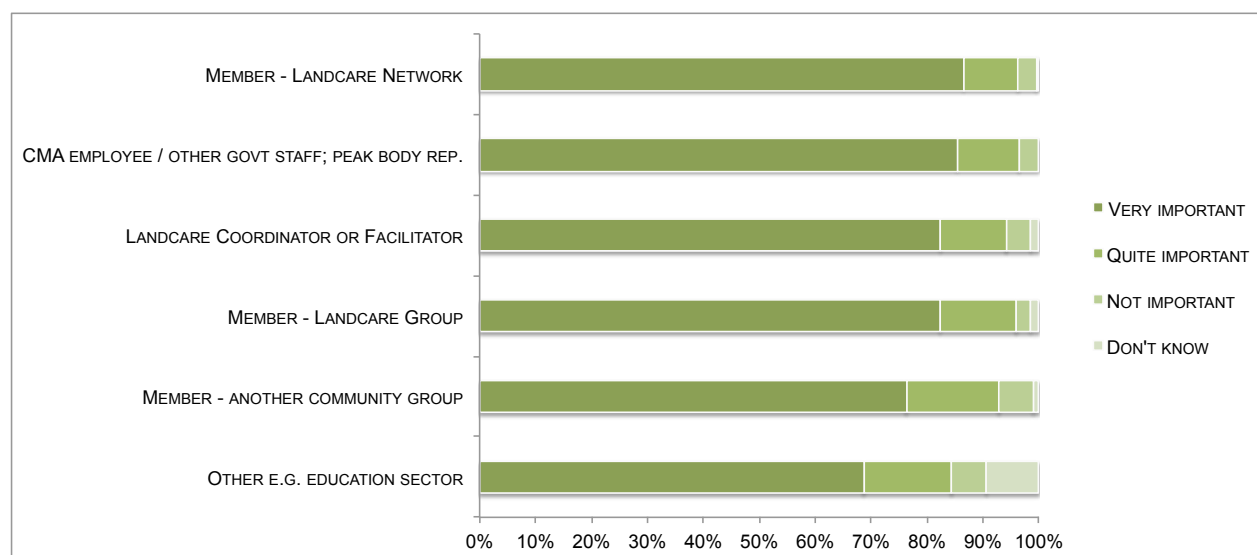


Figure 3-14 Rating of the importance of the VLG component – by stakeholder group

An assessment of the on-ground works delivered through Landcare using funding from the VLG program against the statewide aggregated outputs by CMA region indicates that the Landcare contribution is significant. For example, standard outputs data for 2013-14 for vegetation and weed control achieved in the North Central and Corangamite regions is shown in Table 3-2. Note: complete comparable data sets from ten CMAs was unavailable at the time of writing, so two data sets were used as an indication.

The data indicates that between 34 and 40 per cent of the vegetation standard output was delivered through Landcare (funded by the VLG) and between 36 and 66 per cent of the area of weed control.

Table 3-2 Landcare delivered outputs through the VLG program 2013-14

DEPI Standard Output	North Central CMA region			Corangamite CMA region		
	VLG contribution	Total region	% VLG	VLG contribution	Total region	% VLG
2.1 Vegetation (Ha)	78	194	40%	52	154	34%
2.2 Weed control (Ha)	1060	2935	36%	800	1213	66%

Source: Victorian Catchment Management Authorities Actions & Achievements Report 2013-14, data provided on VLG outputs from Corangamite and North Central CMAs

Concerns and improvements

Amidst the positive feedback, stakeholders did express some concerns about the VLG. Concerns that were captured through the in-depth interviews suggest that while the VLG is popular, it is oversubscribed and there's a perception that there's generally less money available for CMA programs. The onerous nature of the application and reporting processes, the short timeframes for project delivery and the emphasis on state and regional priorities as opposed to local priorities were also noted as concerns. Note – these concerns are not specific to any region(s).

A recent review of the VLG program (KPMG 2013⁷) also found room for improvement in timing and accessibility of the grants provided in some regions and emphasised that CMAs could be more efficient in their management and administration of project proponents and a need for greater auditing or verification of reported outcomes. These recommendations have been addressed in relation to management and administration efficiency and a number of CMAs no longer apply an administration charge to the VLG funding.

Many of these concerns were the basis for recommended future improvements, which were sought from the Landcare community via the online survey. The survey asked respondents to identify improvements that could be made to the VLG to better meet the needs of Landcare in their region. Two main improvements were commonly identified and include:

- **Increase the amount of funding available** - more than 100 respondents identified the need for more funding to be available to support Landcare programs in their region. The VLG is generally well regarded and relied upon by most groups, however there is a sense that costs to do on-ground works are increasing, while available Government funds are decreasing. Examples of the types of responses received include:

"More funding made available, bigger grants for landscape scale projects"

"Costs in controlling pests have increased when amounts of grants have reduced"

"Increased funding to compensate for loss of funding for CMA programs"

"These grants are our bread and butter. We could always use more money though".

⁷ KPMG (2013) Victorian Landcare Grants – High Level Evaluation. Prepared by KPMG from Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

- **Provide more flexibility to meet local priorities** - respondents reported they would like to see more scope in the VLG criteria to deliver on local priorities rather than needing to align with regional, state or federal government priorities. Examples of the types of responses received include:

“More local, less specific”

“They need to be flexible to meet different needs”

“Landcare members / committees need to be able to decide what they want to use this for, in equal collaboration with the CMA”

Other improvements to the VLG identified by a smaller number of respondents included:

- **Simplify the application and reporting requirements** - respondents identified the need to simplify the application process and reporting requirements associated with the VLG. The types of responses received include:

“Streamline grant process; currently cumbersome and over bureaucratic in relation to amount of grant (funding) available”

“The level of detail required for outputs and activities is excessive”

“Simplified reporting especially for low value grants”

- **Increase the continuity of funding and allow for multi-year projects** - this includes providing greater certainty and security of funding and providing longer term funding cycles to allow for larger scale projects that have a longer timeframe. Longer term funding would also allow for uncertainty, such as dry periods that may delay a project. The types of responses received include:

“Multi-year grants would be a huge improvement. By the time the funding is received each year there is only 9 months to complete the project”

“More funding to allow landscape scale long-term projects e.g. five year projects”

“Provide guaranteed funding over four to five years”

- **Improve the overall VLG process** - this includes better promotion of the grants, providing more time for the application process, providing groups with more support in applying for and reporting on grants and providing groups more time to complete on-ground works. Responses included:

“Offer more pre and post advice / feedback to facilitators, group and network executives”

“More continuity in when grants open each year”

“Better advertisement and longer time to prepare applications”

3.4.3 Victorian Landcare Facilitator Initiative

The VLLFI evaluation report⁸ undertaken in parallel with this review provides greater depth on the Initiative. This section presents a summary of the main VLLFI evaluation findings.

Importance

The VLLFI has been very positively received and is highly regarded by the Landcare community. This was strongly reflected in the on-line survey (Figure 3-15) where more than 80 per cent of respondents across all stakeholder groups rated this initiative as “very important”.

⁸ RMCG (2015) *Evaluation of the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative*. Report prepared for the Victorian State Government, Melbourne.

There is a widely held view that without this initiative, many Landcare groups would have folded and enormous energy and momentum would have been lost. Again from the on-line survey:

'We exist, where we would not without the support of our facilitator'

'We still exist. Without support, our group, whilst a successful one, would fold.'

This success was not uniform across the state. In some areas the number of active Landcare groups has reduced markedly however this has occurred over a longer time period. This is most evident in the broadacre farming regions to the north and west of the State, as discussed previously in Section 3.3.1.

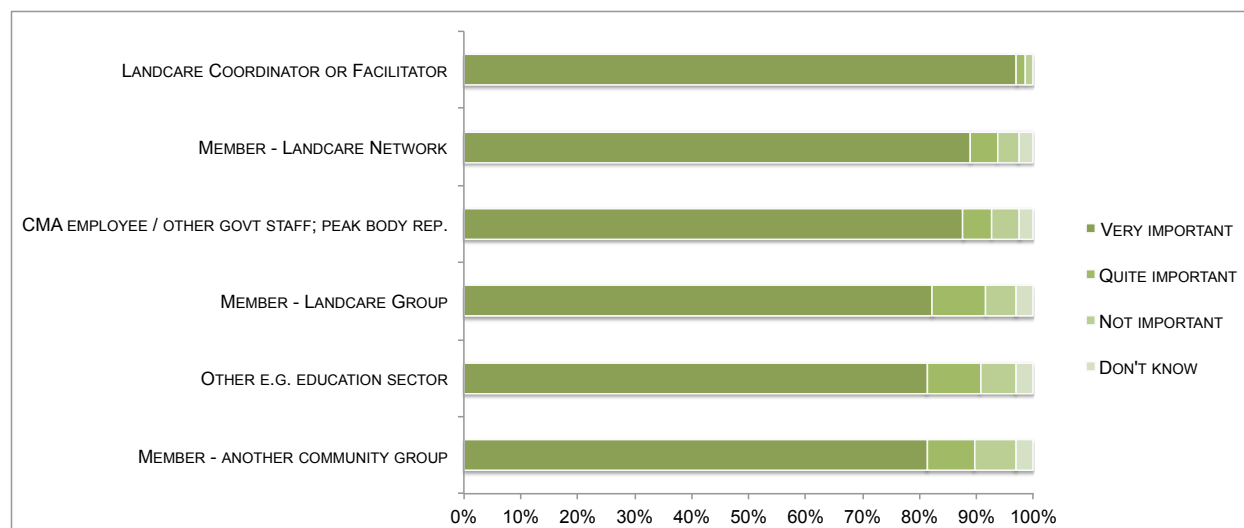


Figure 3-15 Rating of the importance of the VLLFI component – by stakeholder group

The success of the initiative also means that those groups or areas that were unsuccessful in seeking funding for a facilitator feel even more disappointed. This increases the pressure to address the perceived gaps in facilitator access.

In many regions the success of the initiative has also consolidated the role and value of Landcare networks. While there were many acceptable models of employment, many involved a Landcare network in some way (e.g. as host and/or employer). Those facilitators who operated under the banner of a network were considered to be among the most successful across the initiative. This is in part due to the facilitator immediately being part of something larger than their specific position. As part of a network they were well placed to call upon a much larger pool of knowledge, skills and experience. This is particularly valuable given a number of facilitators were new to these roles.

The targeted interviews and regional visits highlighted that there is a wide range of attainment in securing project grants and other funding amongst groups and networks, both within and between regions. Generally it will be the better resourced networks that have greater capacity in preparing quality applications and therefore more success with securing the most funding. The facilitator will have played some role here but there will usually be a range of factors operating, including the NRM priorities of investors, and historical associations or local connections with funding sources.

This carries through to there also being a wide range of accomplishment in terms of executing on-ground works amongst groups and networks, both within and between regions. Again the better resourced networks have shown that they are capable of delivering larger scale and more targeted projects. Some of these are presently utilising or planning to use Green Army provided resources, for example. However additional supervision and planning is required to host a Green Army team so scantily resourced groups

can't capitalise on these opportunities. The technical knowledge and previous work experience of facilitators in implementing works (or supervising work teams) will also have a strong bearing on their success in facilitating on-ground delivery that bring good environmental outcomes.

Within a CMA region, facilitators are strongly collaborating on NRM activities yet at the same time directly competing for funds and there is a strong sense that the availability of funding from both Commonwealth and State Government sources for NRM projects is now considerably tighter. Groups and networks (with facilitator support) are having some success with attracting funds from private sources but most groups feel ill equipped to properly position themselves to attract private (corporate or philanthropic, for example) funding.

RMCG interviewers heard that community engagement and building partnerships is both a foundational and pivotal role of the facilitators. This is the area where a good facilitator will always excel and perform well, irrespective of their success with attracting funds for projects.

There is universal appreciation of facilitators' essential role in communicating with the community on all matters to do with Landcare and building partnerships with other individuals or entities (persons, schools, groups, businesses or agencies) with an interest in NRM.

Interviewees regularly emphasised the point that the facilitator role is especially important in light of the slow and progressive withdrawal of State government support (NRM and agricultural) from local offices in regional centres.

Facilitators have also played a significant front line role in responding to natural disasters, for example, immediately following floods or bush fires and also in planning and executing recovery projects (including stock containment, livestock feeding information, erosion control, re-fencing and native vegetation replacement). Their contribution has led to positive on-ground outcomes and immense community approval and endorsement of these positions. Facilitator roles tend to be both flexible and cooperative. These attributes have made them valuable providers of assistance following natural disasters in rural areas.

Concerns and improvements

Even though there's overwhelming support for the VLLFI, certain concerns were repeatedly identified. Concerns commonly related to the tenuous nature of the facilitator positions e.g. there is limited job security beyond four-years; inconsistencies in facilitator wages and other awards both within regions and across the state; limited professional development and networking opportunities for facilitators; and constraints in the scope of the role e.g. groups not being able to "tailor" the role of facilitator to meet their needs, such as taking on project management tasks.

The diversity in employment hosting arrangements was seen as both a strength and weakness. Generally the Landcare community valued the opportunity to determine where and how a facilitator is hosted, with most appreciating the opportunity to have locally based, professional support. As previously mentioned, where a facilitator was hosted at a network this generally worked well. At the same time, there were examples where hosting arrangements were not working well, particularly at the group level, where groups and volunteers often did not have the experience or procedures in place to adequately host an employee.

Not surprisingly, there was also dissatisfaction amongst those groups and networks that did not receive a facilitator in the first instance and have again missed out in the recent renewal of existing positions. This has created a sense of deflation and frustration amongst those groups and networks without professional support.

There was also some concern that groups are largely dependant on facilitators and professional support, and the VLLFI objective of creating “self-supporting” groups and networks is unrealistic and unattainable for most. The general consensus amongst groups, networks, facilitators and other Landcare staff was that without professional support, the activity levels of groups would greatly diminish.

In response to these concerns, improvements to increase the effectiveness of the initiative and extend greater support to facilitators and the Landcare community have been identified. These include:

- **Provide specialist support to facilitators** – this includes extending greater support and opportunities to facilitators e.g. networking, training needs, professional development, employer/employee advice. As part of this, an annual statewide networking and training forum for facilitators could be convened.
- **Provide professional development support** – ensure employers understand that professional development of facilitators is a core part of their employment (to overcome reluctance of groups to allow facilitators to attend professional development activities) and include professional development in the position descriptions of facilitators.
- **Ensure adequate employment conditions** – provide support / advice that will ensure all existing facilitator employment arrangements are consistent with legal requirements (in relation to the contractors/employees issue). Provide extra mentoring to groups/networks that are employing for the first time to ensure employment administration matters are established correctly (*Note: assumes some gap areas will be filled with new positions*).
- **Adjust facilitator wages to include CPI** – make provision for facilitators’ salaries to have an annual CPI-equivalent increase.
- **Communicate the scope of the facilitator role** – continue to emphasise to groups/networks the importance of the facilitator role in building group capacity, and that groups should not expect facilitators to take on group administration roles.
- **Change the program objective** - the objective “*to build community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining*” is not seen as credible or achievable by many of the study respondents. It is recommended that the objective be simplified to “*to increase the community capacity of groups/networks*”.
- **Expand the VLLFI and cover gap areas** – expand the program to fill current gaps so that support is extended to groups that do not currently have access to a facilitator. This could be achieved through some facilitators expanding their service area to encompass new groups, other facilitators reducing the number of groups they service and other gap areas requiring new facilitator positions.

3.4.4 Regional Landcare Coordinators

Importance

Regional Landcare Coordinators (RLCs) play a central role in supporting local and regional Landcare. Landcare stakeholders value the role RLCs play as conduits between government and community and many stakeholders see the RLC as their “point of contact” to the CMA and other government agencies. As one Landcare stakeholder stated during an interview: “*there’s so much happening in NRM that it’s good to have someone collecting and filtering the information*”. The RLCs are also valued for the support and advice they provide to groups and networks, in building community capacity and in implementing the Regional Landcare Support Plans.

In many regions the RLC plays an active role in supporting the networks through facilitating regular network staff gatherings, meetings of chairs of networks, supporting the development of new networks

and assisting in identifying and implementing efficiencies in the regional network structure. The RLC also administers the VLG program in each region. A review of the VLG program (KPMG 2013) concluded that the RLC typically performs a significant role in the management and administration of the VLG and removal of this role would present a substantial risk to the program. Similarly a review of the VLPS (Ernst and Young 2013⁹) also concluded that withdrawing support for these positions would reduce the capability in Landcare groups, mean less coordination and collaboration within Landcare, and lead to poorer environmental outcomes.

The RLC often works collaboratively with the federally funded Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) and in most regions this is reported to be an effective partnership, that combined provides an important source of support and knowledge for the Landcare community. As one interviewee stated *“great interaction exists between the RLF and RLC. The RLF has the sustainable agriculture knowledge and drive, which adds to the RLCs greener angle. Together they cost share and come up with different ideas”*.

The importance of the RLC role was evident in the online survey responses, with the majority of stakeholders (68%) considering the role to be “very important”. Locally based Landcare coordinators and facilitators saw the role of RLC as being less important than other stakeholder groups; however 56 per cent of respondents in this group still rated the role of RLC as “very important” and a further 24% as “quite important”.

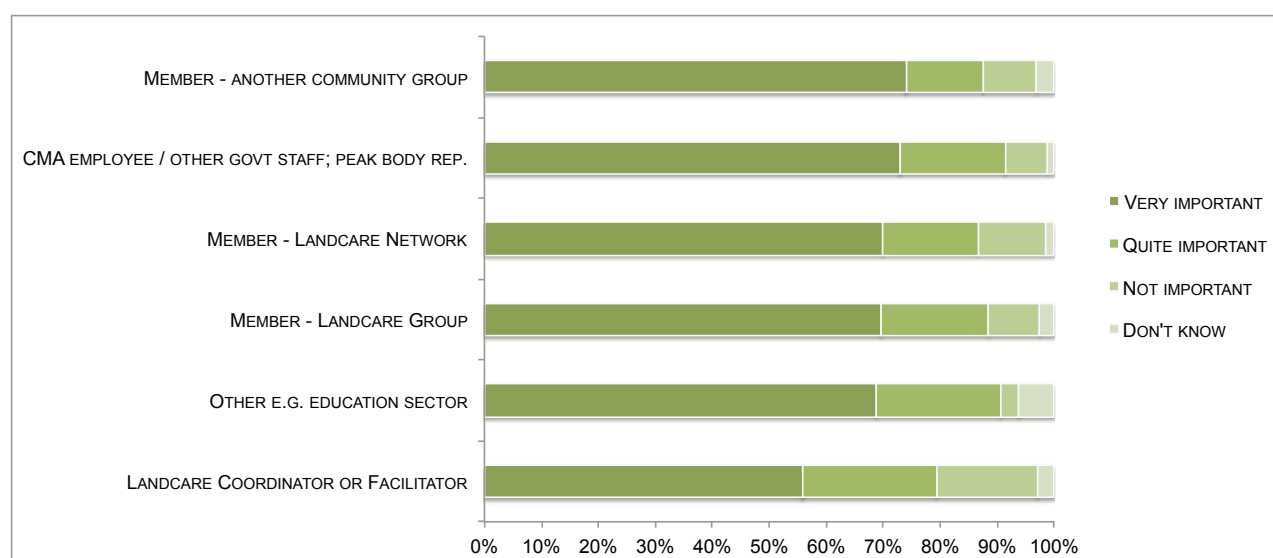


Figure 3-16 Rating of the importance of the RLC component – by stakeholder group

Concerns and improvements

Across the state and even within a region, the level of interaction between the RLC and groups and networks varies. Some groups and networks report they have a good working relationship with their RLC, whilst others say their contact is limited. This inconsistency could be partly attributed to the direction set by the CMA to the RLC – that is, the RLC is employed and directed by a CMA.

When survey respondents were asked to identify future improvements to the role of RLC, two main messages were received:

⁹ Ernst and Young (2013) Evaluation of the Victorian Landcare Program Support. Report prepared for Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

- **Maintain the role of RLC** - the role was generally viewed as “essential” and one that needs to be supported by Government to ensure their continuity. Several respondents expressed concern about the lack of resourcing, support and funding certainty for RLCs, which can impact their ability to adequately meet the needs of their local and regional Landcare community. The common perception of declining funding and resourcing for the NRM sector in general may have underpinned these concerns. It is also possible that some survey respondents, particularly those at the community level, confused the RLCs with their local Landcare facilitator or coordinator where funding uncertainty and resource constraints can be more pronounced. Examples of the types of comments received include:
“A great resource, they may need more support so that they can share information across the region more easily”
“Give them stability of employment and enough staff time to get around, communicate, share ideas and support”
“They have a massive geographic area to cover. They need support”
- **Provide more engagement with groups and networks and improve their understanding of Landcare** - some respondents expressed a desire for their RLC to have a greater community presence and assume a more “hands on” role through more direct involvement with community groups and volunteers. Responses include:
“Less administration so they can interact directly with the Landcare community more”
“(The RLCs) are seldom seen at the local group level. They need to meet with local groups to give the big picture to members and the community”.
“More contact with Landcare groups e.g. attendance at meetings and activities”

Other improvements to the RLC role, identified by a smaller number of respondents, included:

- **Increasing the coordination and support RLCs provide across networks and groups** - this includes providing more information, training and activities to build the capacity of volunteers and groups; strengthening regional connectivity and ensuring region wide support e.g. through extending the network structure; providing more networking and collaborative opportunities between groups and with government agencies and programs; and providing greater strategic direction for Landcare in the region e.g. through the implementation of the Regional Landcare Support Plans and working collaboratively with the local Landcare community to determine the future direction of Landcare in the regions.
- **Focus on supporting Landcare and not other CMA activities** - there was a common expectation that the role of RLC is to respond to the needs of local and regional Landcare and not to be distracted by other CMA and government requirements. Respondents identified the need for RLCs to focus more on advocating, promoting and supporting local and regional Landcare; for there to be more accountability and reporting of the RLC role to the Landcare community; and for there to be less administrative requirements and “red tape” for RLCs.
- **Provide more support to local facilitators** - includes providing increased coordination, support and communication between the RLC and other locally based Landcare staff.

3.4.5 Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator

Importance

The Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator is based at the North East CMA and works across the state. Not all stakeholders interviewed had had interactions with the facilitator, however amongst those that had the feedback was positive with reports that “he’s doing a great job”. Several stakeholders were not aware of

the facilitator position at all and this is unlikely to be a reflection on the facilitator, but rather on the limitations of the role with only one incumbent working statewide.

Even though not all were aware of the position or had interacted with the facilitator, there was still broad support for the role and recognition of the importance of indigenous issues and their inclusion in Landcare. Several stakeholders that were interviewed said that they have a good working relationship with their local Indigenous facilitator based at the CMAs and have benefited from regional workshops on topics such as cultural heritage awareness.

On average, 39 per cent of respondents to the online survey thought the role of Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator was “very important” and a further 28 per cent thought the role was “quite important”, while only 20 per cent reported it was “not important”. Across the stakeholder groups, members of other community groups such as Friends Of groups rated the importance of the role higher than members of traditional Landcare groups or networks (Figure 3-17). This difference could be related to land tenure, for example Friends Of groups generally work on public land whereas Landcare groups are predominately more private land focused. There may be greater sensitivities around cultural heritage and indigenous land management on private land.

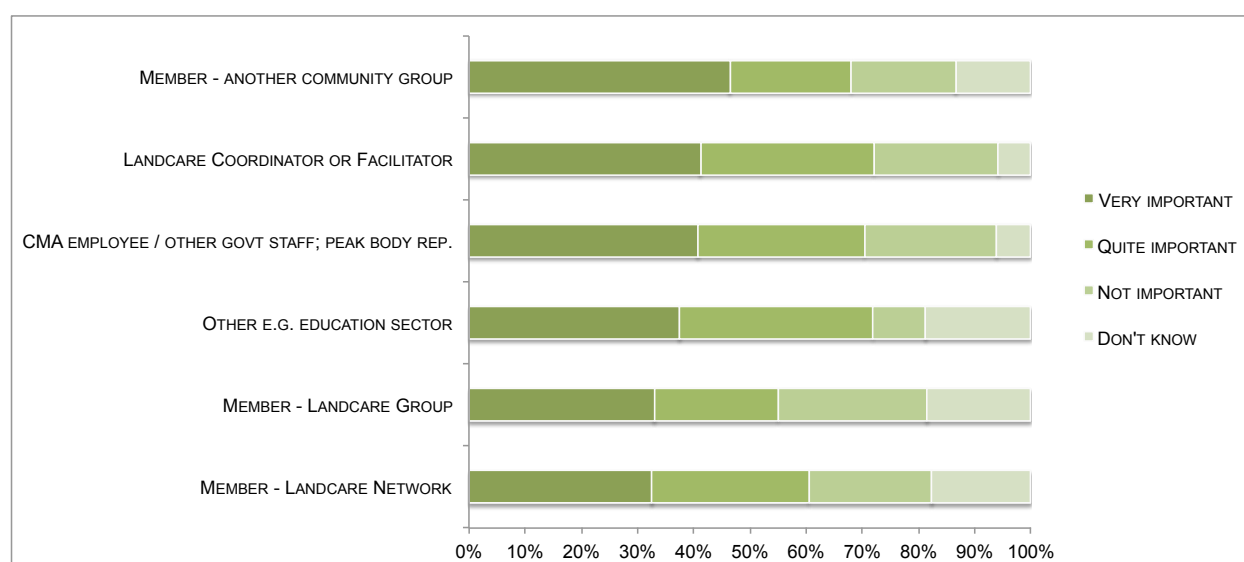


Figure 3-17 Rating of the importance of the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator component – by stakeholder group

Concerns and improvements

When asked what improvements could be made to the role of Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator, two main responses were received:

- **Increase the profile of the position** - respondents expressed an interest in learning more about the role, how the role can support the work of their group or network and what opportunities there are to engage with the facilitator, particularly at the group and network level. Examples of the types of responses include:

“(Better) publicity, clarity of the role and improved communication / connection with networks and groups”

“This important position is not widely known or is not properly utilised or understood”

“We need to know more about the work of the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator and how he/she can potentially help out Landcare group or network”

- **Increase support for the position** – ideally this would include providing more resources and funding to the position to enable the facilitator to increase his local presence and promotion of the role and allow more staff to support the role and better service the state. Additional support includes providing support for travel to increase the effectiveness of the role and providing clearer strategic direction for the role, which is not necessarily reliant on increases in funding. Responses included:

“Potential improvements could be made in terms of better defining what is hoped to be achieved and how this might look in the different regions, as well as additional people to fulfil the function – one person serving the whole state has severe limitations”

“We need more of these facilitators actively creating connections between indigenous people and Landcare groups”

3.4.6 Victorian Landcare Gateway website

Importance

The Victorian Landcare Gateway website (the Gateway) provides a central portal for the Landcare community to access information and resources, to have an online presence and post contact details for their group or network and advertise events and activities, as well as serving as an initial point of contact for new volunteers.

Most networks and a significant number of groups now have their own website which serves the purposes of promoting their group or network, posting contact details and locally relevant information and advertising activities. Responses from the stakeholder interviews indicate that many use their own group’s or network’s website instead of the Gateway, because it is more locally relevant, allows a greater sense ownership and identity and is easier to manage. Many interviewees considered the Gateway to be “clunky”, out-dated and difficult to navigate.

Increasingly, groups and networks are also using social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, and e-newsletters as their main form of promotion and communication. As one interviewee stated: *“media is about going where people are. I don’t think the Gateway is useful, not in regards to communication”*.

The interview responses are generally consistent with responses to the online survey, with only 24 per cent of respondents saying the Gateway is “very important”, 33 per cent said it was “quite important” and 34 per cent said it is “not important”. The response rate does not vary greatly across the stakeholder groups, although Landcare coordinators and facilitators, government staff and Landcare networks have a slightly higher proportion of respondents that believe the Gateway is important compared to other stakeholder groups (Figure 3-18). This suggests that those that have most to gain from the website value it’s importance more.

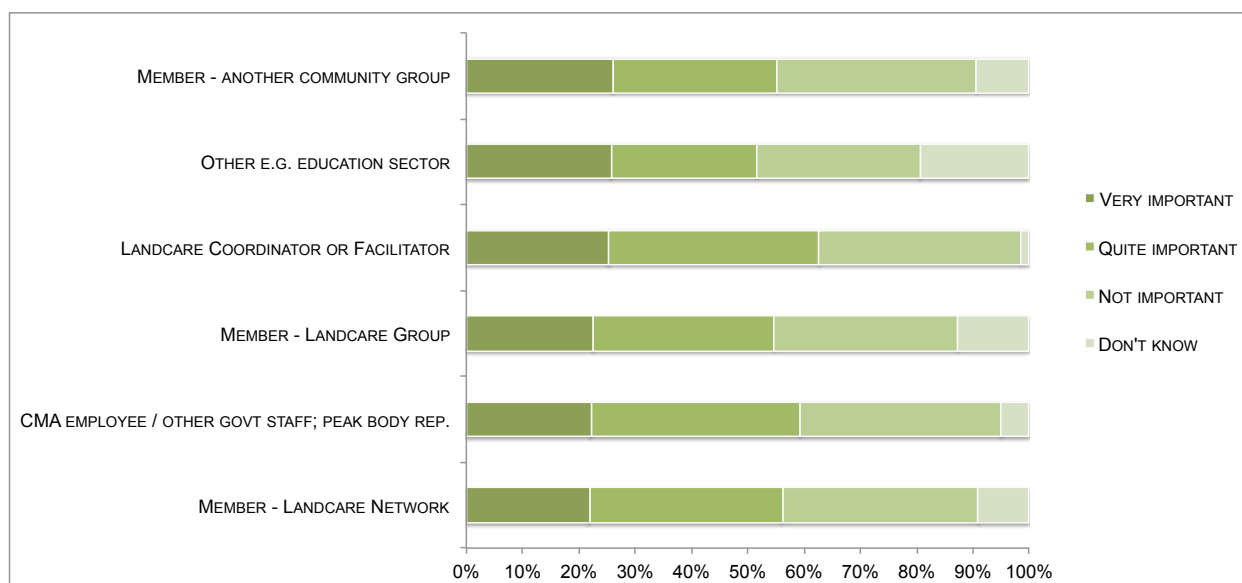


Figure 3-18 Rating of the importance of the Landcare Gateway website – by stakeholder group

Concerns and improvements

According to survey respondents, the main improvement that needs to be made to the Gateway is improving the overall useability and functionality of the website and ensuring it is kept up-to-date. In order to achieve this, respondents suggest:

- Improving search functions
- Reducing clutter on the site
- Provide more functionalities, such as calendar updates, facilities for groups to manage their membership including taking EFT payments, maintaining contact lists and even managing e-newsletters, and providing blogs or similar mechanisms for conversing and sharing online
- Improve links with external websites
- Make the Gateway compatible with social media and smartphones
- Ensure content is kept up-to-date, including group content.

A smaller number of respondents believed that the Gateway needed better promotion and that there was a role for Landcare staff to encourage groups to use the website.

In contrast, a small number of respondents believed the Gateway needed a complete overhaul or should be replaced with another platform such as Facebook. Amongst these respondents there was a sense that the website would become redundant with the advance of social media.

The feedback received on the Gateway is broadly consistent with the results of a 2012 review of the website¹⁰. The 2012 review found usage to be relatively low due to poor functionality; users accessing their information via other means such as directly from Landcare staff; an overall low awareness of the site and what it has to offer; confused navigation; difficulties associated with editing website content and the website trying to cater for multiple target audiences. The review also found there was a lack of clear governance arrangements that clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of its various stakeholders.

¹⁰ RMCG (2012) *Review of the Victorian Landcare Gateway Website*. Report prepared by RMCG on behalf of the Victorian State Government, Melbourne.

The review did identify several positive features, many of which were highlighted again in this current review. They included access to resources and publications, group and network information and contact details, events calendars, news items and group webpages.

3.4.7 Victorian Landcare & Catchment Magazine

Importance

Among stakeholders there was a mixed response towards the Victorian Landcare and Catchment Magazine.

Many of the Landcare stakeholders that were interviewed expressed support for the magazine, recognising it as an important publication for sharing stories, keeping up-to-date with Landcare in Victoria, maintaining enthusiasm amongst volunteers and for promoting Landcare more broadly. At the same time, several stakeholders believe the magazine is “tired”, the articles are “too narrow and the big issues are not addressed”, it is not owned by the community and there is little locally relevant content.

Responses to the online survey indicate divergent views where, on average, 24 per cent of respondents believe the magazine is “very important” while 37% per cent believe it is “not important”. A further 34 per cent believe it is “quite important”. This response rate was generally consistent across all stakeholder types. Landcare coordinators and facilitators had the highest proportion of respondents that believe the magazine is important (Figure 3-19).

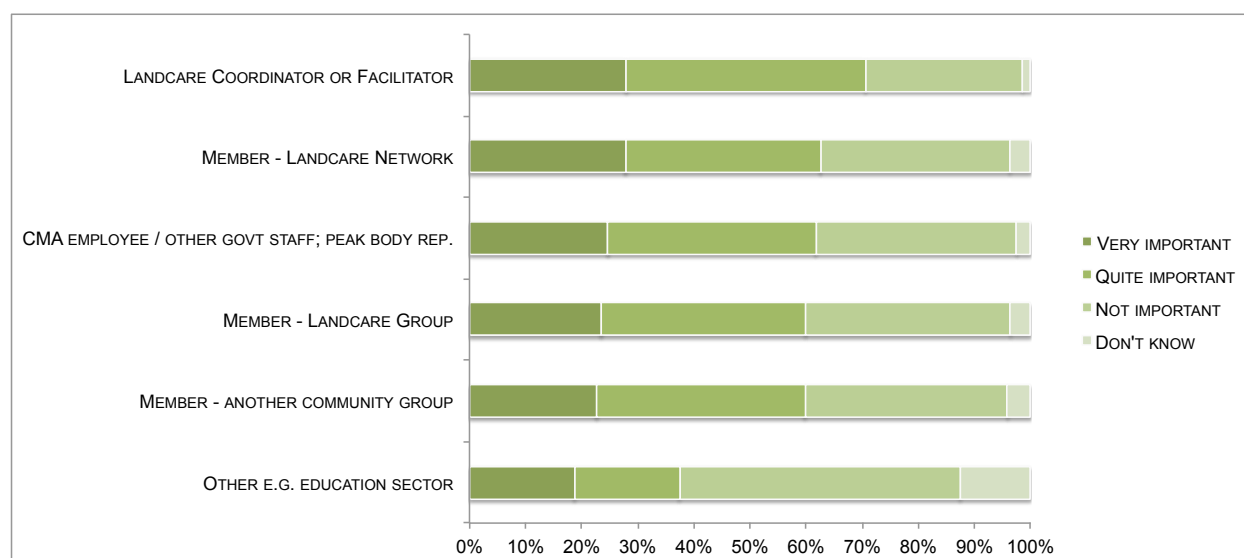


Figure 3-19 Rating of the importance of the Landcare & Catchment Magazine – by stakeholder group

Concerns and improvements

When respondents were asked how the magazine could be improved, a significant number indicated support for the magazine to remain, but for improvements to be made to the content. Suggestions included:

- Providing more locally relevant and practical content for groups and allowing more community and group contribution
- Increasing the substance of the magazine through more educational and scientific articles and by addressing some of the more substantial or controversial issues rather than just “feel good” content

- Broadening the scope of the magazine to highlight the diversity of Landcare, engaging ‘other’ groups such as coastal groups and addressing a broader range of themes.

There was mixed opinion regarding the transition of the magazine from print to a digital format, however overall more respondents expressed support for a digital version of the magazine than those that felt it important to retain hard copies. The risk of losing readership by moving to a digital version was frequently reported.

3.4.8 Victorian Landcare Awards

Importance

The Victorian Landcare Awards elicited mixed responses from the Landcare community. For many, the awards are valued for the recognition they give to local Landcare volunteers, groups and networks, for boosting morale and motivation, providing a networking opportunity for those that attend the awards ceremony and the publicity it gives to Landcare more broadly. Some groups and networks said that winning an award has enabled them to leverage other sources of funding, such as corporate sponsorship.

In contrast, others view the Victorian awards as unnecessary and report that the awards are of little interest to local groups (local and regional awards are of more value), the application process is onerous, they are too bureaucratic and that they are mostly for the politicians and funders rather than the Landcare community, and are too expensive and the money would be better spent elsewhere.

On average, 29 per cent of respondents to the online survey rated the awards as “very important”, 42 per cent as “quite important” and 27 per cent as “not important”. CMA and government staff and peak body representatives rated the importance of the awards higher than local Landcare coordinators and facilitators and members of local groups and networks (Figure 3-20).

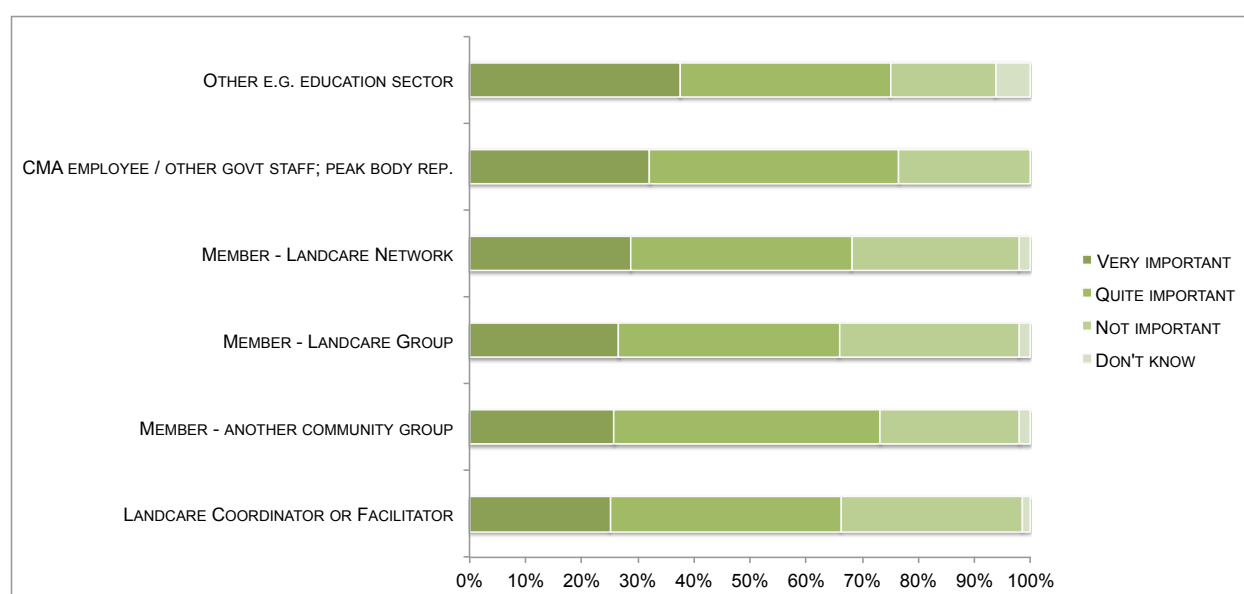


Figure 3-20 Rating of the importance of the Landcare awards – by stakeholder group

Concerns and improvements

When asked to identify improvements to the Victorian Landcare Awards, the division in opinion was evident again. More than 100 respondents said they were satisfied with the current awards structure and that no change was required. The next most frequent response was from those that thought the awards were not necessary and a perceived waste of money. Improvements were identified including:

- **Better promotion of the awards** - according to some respondents, the awards are an excellent opportunity to promote Landcare to the general public, including the urban population. While the awards may not attract strong media attention, particularly from the urban media, there is still an opportunity to explore greater promotion of the awards through various channels including print media, television, radio and social media. Responses include:
“Please promote amongst state and national press, not just the rural press”
“If we are going to spend all this money on a Melbourne extravaganza, where is the Melbourne press and why is this not being picked up and promoted to the urban community?”
- **Make participation in the awards easier** - there is a current feeling amongst some respondents that the application process for the awards is onerous and discouraging, particularly for smaller groups. There were also several comments about making the awards less formal, less expensive and more accessible for all, particularly those traveling from rural and remote locations and making the awards less bureaucratic and more for the Landcare community. Responses included:
“Sometimes the groups are so small and so overwhelmed that they just don’t get time to do it (apply for an award)”
“Improve the distribution and quantity of tickets for nominees. Currently not equitable!”
“Could probably be done with less expense and therefore more project funded”
- **Reduce the frequency of the awards** - there was a sense that if held too frequently the awards lose their significance and there is not enough time for projects to be successfully implemented and celebrated. Respondents usually suggested that no more than two years is appropriate, with some recommending every 3 – 5 years as a preference. Responses included:
“Hold less regularly to increase the importance”
“Awards should only be held every three to four years so they hold more prestige and allow projects sufficient time to be implemented and then celebrated”
“State Landcare Awards every three years. Regional Awards every eighteen months”.

3.4.9 Additional government support for Landcare

Survey respondents were asked “what would you change about Landcare?” and “are there other ways the Victorian Government could support Landcare in your region and across the State?”

The majority of the responses mirror those already discussed in the previous sections of this chapter (refer to Sections 3.3.1 to 3.4.8). In summary, the main changes or additional areas of support identified include:

- Increase Government funding availability and reliability for Landcare. As already discussed in Section 3.4.2, this also includes efficiencies to funding administration such as streamlining funding application and reporting processes, increasing funding cycles and providing more discretion and autonomy to groups and networks to use funding to better meet local priorities.
- Provide more Landcare support staff to assist groups e.g. with planning, recruitment, receiving funding and promotion. Included in this is providing better conditions for Landcare staff, such as competitive wages, security of tenure and professional development opportunities (as discussed in Section 3.4.3 and 3.4.4).
- Increase broader community engagement and participation in Landcare and provide assistance to groups in recruiting new members and in succession planning. This includes increasing and diversifying involvement in Landcare to include the next generation, new landholders, urban population and other minority groups, such as migrants.

- Achieving better alignment and partnerships between Landcare and all levels of government, increasing government consultation with Landcare, and providing greater government recognition and support for Landcare.
- Review the overarching vision and core objectives of Landcare, improve organisational efficiencies e.g. one peak body, and simplify processes and governance.
- Consider exporting Landcare more widely overseas and capitalising on the Landcare knowledge of Victoria. This may include:
 - Funding for study tours by overseas Landcare leaders to see how Landcare works in Victoria, matched with local Landcare input (including local travel and accommodation)
 - A small fund for Landcare groups to apply to match their own contribution to an overseas Landcare project via the Overseas Landcare Fund
 - A small fund for support to Landcare groups in Victoria to publicise their overseas Landcare project to the wider Victorian Landcare community
 - Funds to support Victorian Landcarers to travel to the Asia /Pacific region to assist development of Landcare
 - The establishment of a Victorian Overseas Landcare Facilitator.

4 Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 Context of the review

The level of support provided by the Victorian Government to Landcare is significantly greater than that which occurs elsewhere by other Australian state and territory governments. Given that Victoria is the birthplace of Landcare, this is probably understandable and not surprising. Nevertheless it is worth noting as it provides a perspective on the Victorian Landcare Program that is likely to be appreciated by only a few of the participants of this review.

Despite this support, this review has heard that there is a growing gulf in capacity, activity and participation among Landcare groups. It could be likened to a two-speed economy – to borrow the phrase that once described the difference between the low growth economy of eastern Australia and the mining boom economy of Western Australia. The drivers of this trend appear to be a function of the following:

- Population change, e.g. growth in some areas provides new entrants to Landcare compared to other areas where local populations are stable or declining
- Land use change, e.g. agriculture replaced by rural lifestyle use
- Changing attitudes towards volunteerism
- Government investment in NRM being more targeted towards national and state priorities with fewer opportunities for local priorities to be funded
- Ability of groups to adapt and/or renew themselves, e.g. forming and/or joining networks, adopting new technology such as online membership management tools.

The implication of this is that developing a support program for Landcare requires a sound understanding of the variation that now exists among the 600+ groups and 67 networks and 500 other community-based NRM groups.

4.2 Effectiveness of the Victorian Landcare Program

The review has found that the Victorian Landcare Program has been effective in supporting Landcare. The VLP provides a complementary suite of policy tools that have serviced important needs of Landcare.

It is clear from the review that the facilitator initiative and the grants program are the most valued components of the VLP. They are fundamentally important to the viability and operation of many groups and networks. There was remarkable consistency in views on the relative importance of VLP components, between Landcare (community) members and program support staff, including facilitators.

The facilitators have had a dramatic impact on Landcare in Victoria. Respected leaders within Landcare have reported that the facilitator initiative has revived Landcare from a precarious state four years ago. The increase in Landcare staff has coincided with progressive withdrawal of State government services offering NRM and agricultural support. This has heightened their prominence and observed value to regional communities.

Naturally there have been some concerns with the implementation of the facilitator initiative, as there are for most government programs, but despite these, the Victorian Government has been applauded for

funding 68 facilitators initially and for committing to a further four years – to quote a member of the Victorian Landcare Council, *“we are the envy of the other states.”*

The facilitator initiative, as it currently stands, provides 68 positions that service a large proportion of the Landcare community. Landcare groups and networks that were unsuccessful with their applications for a facilitator have reported difficulties in keeping participation among members up and in attracting project grants. They are keen to receive support from a facilitator as many of their neighbouring groups and networks do.

This review has heard that in recent years government investment in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture has become harder to access by Landcare and the amount available is less than what it has been previously. Against this backdrop, the Victorian Landcare Grants have been the lifeblood for many groups. The grants have enabled these groups to design and implement projects which have helped give them a purpose without which, many groups may have gone into recess or closed down altogether.

The Regional Landcare Coordinators continue to play a necessary linking role between the community and CMAs. It has been reported that the Regional Landcare Coordinators are most effective where they have the ability to bring a sound understanding of the regional Landcare community into discussions and interactions with agencies like the CMAs and state government. When drawn upon, this understanding can positively influence the design and delivery of regional programs and projects and lead to greater participation by Landcare in these programs and projects. Similarly, the RLCs need to be adept at communicating with the community about government and CMA policies and programs, and the opportunities these represent for Landcare.

The existence and role of the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator is relatively poorly understood by the Landcare community. Hosted by the North East CMA at Wodonga and in a statewide role, the facilitator seeks to work in response to requests for assistance and in collaboration with the regional indigenous facilitators located in CMAs. The review has found that where the Facilitator has been active the role has been effective in increasing understanding of indigenous heritage and approaches to natural resource management. There is an opportunity to increase the outcomes achieved from the role if there was better awareness of the role.

The Victorian Landcare Awards play an important role in acknowledging exceptional work of volunteers. The awards also help to maintain and/or raise the profile of Landcare among state politicians, senior government staff and various business and industry leaders. Held every two years, the Victorian awards are aligned with the National Landcare Awards convened by Landcare Australia Ltd.

The frequency of the Victorian awards has been questioned, however shifting to every three or four years, as has been suggested, is problematic given the relationship with the national awards process. The Victorian awards garner some publicity however media coverage in Melbourne and regional areas is considered to be less than satisfactory, and hence a missed opportunity.

The awards nomination process is perceived by some to be burdensome and time consuming and this has impacted on the number of nominations. The cost (time and travel costs) of attending the awards ceremony in Melbourne was cited as another reason for some people in regional areas to not participate.

The VLP has two communications components – the Gateway website and the Landcare magazine. The effectiveness of the website is questionable. An earlier review identified areas for improvement which have not been implemented and this review has now found that many in Landcare are using other websites and social media in preference to the Gateway website. The magazine generated a mixed response in this review due to different preferences about content and format. However, it is apparent the magazine plays a subtle yet important role in connecting the Victorian Landcare community. It serves

as a reminder to people that they are part of a bigger movement and this can help provide motivation, inspiration and sense of community – necessary ingredients for successful and effective community-based volunteer movements.

4.3 Recommendations

The purpose of the Victorian Landcare Program is to support Landcare and help it to be more effective. The review has captured many suggestions for improving the VLP that are a response to perceived weaknesses in the current suite of components and/or are a response to new issues and trends affecting Landcare.

This review has heard that Landcare faces challenges, that will not be new to people familiar with Landcare, such as difficulty in attracting new members, particularly young people, burn out of long serving members, complexity of funding applications and reporting requirements, limited funding for local priorities, lack of facilitators, uncertainty of funding, changing government priorities and ineffective or unproductive relationships with important stakeholders such as catchment management authorities. These challenges do not apply to all groups and networks by any means, however where they occur they can have a demotivating and disempowering effect.

Recommendations are provided that aim to improve the effectiveness of the VLP and hence better assist the Landcare community in their work to stop the decline and improve the health of the natural resource base.

4.3.1 Victorian Landcare Grants

The VLG contributes to the viability of many Landcare groups. The purpose of VLG is to support community capacity and NRM outcomes. The current allocation of VLG funds to each region is based on historic levels. However Landcare in each region differs in size, activity and health, and so there is an opportunity to revisit the regional allocations to ensure they are commensurate with the particular needs and circumstances of Landcare in each region. A model or rationale for how the VLG funds should be allocated should be developed to increase the transparency of the process and help to ensure equity across regions.

The VLG is oversubscribed. If additional funding became available to the VLP, increasing the allocation to the VLG should be considered given how highly the VLG is valued by the Landcare community.

It is recommended that the VLG continue to be delivered through the VLP, largely in its current form, and maintain the flexibility given to CMAs to tailor its implementation to local circumstances.

Assessment of the value for money from VLG is difficult due to the variability in regional reporting on VLG outputs. It is recommended that regions use DELWP's output delivery standards (and the associated output data standards) for reporting both the NRM and community capacity outputs resulting from VLG.

It is likely that the benefits from the VLG would be enhanced if multiple-year projects could be funded under VLG – it is recommended this opportunity should be examined.

4.3.2 Victorian Landcare Facilitators

A separate evaluation of the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative provides detailed findings on the outcomes of the initiative and makes recommendations on ways to strengthen arrangements to support Landcare.

There recommendations are summarised below.

Statewide distribution of facilitators

It is recommended that the facilitator initiative should be expanded to increase coverage across the Landcare community. This can be achieved with additional positions the number of which should only be determined after firstly reviewing how the existing arrangements could be improved to achieve a better workload balance among the 68 positions.

This process of reviewing the existing arrangements should involve DELWP, VLC, FTLA and CMAs. Three strategies are suggested. For some regions, all three strategies are expected to be needed, whereas in others, only one or two will suffice. The strategies are:

- Some facilitators should add new groups to their existing workload because they have capacity that is under-utilised
- Some facilitators should reduce the number of groups they service because they have too many to provide adequate support
- Some gap areas will require new facilitator positions.

An estimate of the number of new positions that would be required relies on understanding the following:

- What can be achieved from adjusting the workload of the existing positions
- The level of interest from the Landcare community in the gap areas
- Whether there is the capacity within the gap areas to take on a facilitator.

The current working estimate of the number of new facilitator positions is 6 to 10, but obviously the final number should be determined through the process recommended above.

Employment arrangements

- The flexible employment arrangements should be retained with organisations encouraged to consider how office conditions (co-tenants, local support, peers) can contribute to supporting their facilitator.
- DELWP must make provision for facilitators' salaries to have an annual CPI-equivalent increase. This should be part of the funding agreement with host organisations.
- A strategy (and procedures) to manage situations where the arrangements fail needs to be developed so that both facilitators and employers have avenues to address issues as they arise. For example, ensure all existing facilitator employment arrangements are consistent with legal requirements (in relation to facilitators being engaged as contractors or as employees). Responsibility for this could be shared between DELWP as the funding body and VLC/FTLA as the peak bodies.

Facilitator roles and responsibilities

- Retain the current arrangements that allow organisations and facilitators themselves to manage their roles and the needs of their groups.
- Review and revise documentation describing the role of the facilitators. Make this documentation readily available for the organisations and facilitators to use as they require. This could also include identifying tasks that are out-of-scope for facilitators. Providing more prescriptive 'rules' on facilitators' duties is not necessary.

- Continue to support the use of the Program Delivery Plans as the main means of documenting the work of facilitators.

Facilitator support

- Ensure host organisations clearly understand that professional development is part of their obligations as an employer and that DELWP considers loss of good staff as one of the most important risks to the initiative, which must be managed by both DELWP and the hosting organisations.
- To optimise the performance of the facilitators, it is recommended that support be provided to strengthen innovation and knowledge sharing among the cohort of facilitators. For example, DELWP and VLC/FTLA should jointly convene an annual gathering for the Landcare facilitators to share ideas and experiences, and to build networks. Supporting facilitators to attend this event could be specified as part of the minimum professional development responsibility of the host organisation.

Financial management

- Continue to closely monitor annual budgets and record actions to address under or over-expenditure.
- Develop guidance for facilitators on the collection and reporting of data on external funding secured.

Advice is also provided on Work Areas that guide the role of the facilitators as well as the reporting framework to collect data and report on the impact of the facilitator initiative over the next three years.

4.3.3 Regional Landcare Coordinators and Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator

RLCs are at the interface between Landcare communities and government. In their role they need to have sound knowledge and understanding of government and CMA policies and programs, as well as the issues and needs of the Landcare community. It is recommended that RLCs are encouraged to establish and maintain a close relationship with Landcare, to assist Landcare to capitalise on funding opportunities presented in government programs and to assist Landcare to have its views heard and understood by CMAs and state agencies.

Increasing awareness of the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator role, particularly among Landcare groups and networks, is recommended. Also as the position services the entire state from Wodonga, implementing the role requires extensive travel. Additional support for travel may need to be considered to improve the effectiveness of the role.

4.3.4 Victorian Landcare Awards

There is an argument for changing the frequency of the awards to every four years however the link with the national awards makes this problematic.

However it is recommended that opportunities for simplifying the nomination process be implemented. Consideration should also be given to supporting people to attend where cost is a limiting factor for them.

A range of other suggestions to improve the awards were identified through the consultation process. It is recommended that, as part of its ongoing review and implementation of the awards, consideration be given to the following suggestions: supporting biennial regional awards; awards such as Young Landcare Leader are only available to volunteers; having fewer awards and greater prize money; having awards

that acknowledge young farmers for sustainable farming practices; shifting the emphasis of the awards away from 'finding winners' to 'acknowledging Landcarers'.

4.3.5 Landcare Gateway website and Landcare & Catchment Management magazine

The Landcare Gateway website should not continue in its current state. Improving the user experience is essential if it is to be maintained over the long term. The review of the website in 2013 identified a number of recommendations, many of which are still relevant. This review has found that there are two main purposes of the website, if it is to be continued – an entry point for people wanting to learn about Landcare, and as a library of resources for Landcare. These roles are valid and the Gateway website has the potential to fulfil them. Other suggestions made about increasing the functionality of the website, such as on-line payments and integration with social media for example should be considered once a clear purpose for the website is established.

The magazine is valued by many in Landcare. It could be shifted to an on-line version to reduce costs, however some readers reported there is a real risk that this would impact negatively on readership, particularly with less computer-literate community members and/or in areas with poor quality internet. It is recommended that the paper version be retained but recipients are asked to opt-in if they wish to continue to receive hard copy. An on-line version should be developed but the access should be active (e.g. via an online reader app) rather than passive (e.g. by emailing a link to a web-page).

However the future of the website and the magazine need to be considered as part of a broader communications plan for the VLP. A communications plan should identify the objective of providing communication tools, audiences to be reached and appropriate mechanisms to reach those audiences. Some deliberate thinking on this is warranted, as well as consideration of suitable approaches to integrate with tools and materials being developed by CMAs and other government programs.

It is recommended that a communications plan be developed under the VLP to provide a strategic justification and purpose for the website and the magazine.

4.3.6 Key performance indicators

The VLP seeks to support Landcare be more effective in its work to stop the decline and restore the natural resource base of Victoria. Three of the major outcomes of the VLP are:

- Improved management and condition of natural resources
- Building community capacity across Landcare, and
- Leveraging of additional resources (funds, in-kind support) for Landcare projects.

An indicator for the environmental outcome could relate to the area of land (ha and %) managed by all landholders involved in Landcare-related activities.

Currently, there is a some focus on better measurement of capacity change driven by Landcare, for example, group health scores are collected annually, as is change in the number of groups and members. This could be strengthened by including an indicator of the reach and influence of Landcare on people other than members.

The third outcome, leveraging, is not measured robustly or consistently. Data on funding leveraged by Landcare networks and groups is available, and could be used to calculate a return on investment. It is suggested that a credible and robust method to measure and report on return on investment in Landcare be developed.

4.3.7 Other support

As Landcare approaches its 30th year, it is timely to consider how Landcare continues to evolve, for example with sophisticated and highly capable networks, using new technology, special interest areas such as equine groups, urban based groups, sustainable food production, blackberry control, and so on.

The Landcare support model needs to continue to accommodate these emerging variations on the traditional Landcare group.

Secondly, the widening split in capacity within Landcare in Victoria which sees the professionalisation of Landcare in some networks, and is in stark contrast to some groups in low/declining population areas, presents a challenge. The challenge for the VLP is to respond and support Landcare across this spectrum. It is likely that the VLP will need to become more versatile than it is currently. A uniform model of support across all groups is likely to be ineffective. It is recommended that the VLP continues to consider tailoring support to Landcare in its many guises across the state. Two specific points are noted:

- Landcare networks are increasingly important in many parts of the state. It is recommended that the VLP continues to support networks to build their capacity to meet the needs of their member groups.
- Many respondents reported that the new facilitators who recently came into Victorian Landcare brought many new ideas and fresh approaches to groups and networks. To continue to stimulate Landcare and address on-going challenges, such as involvement of young people, it is recommended that the VLP examine how it can strengthen innovation and greater knowledge sharing between groups, particularly in areas where local populations are stable or declining.

Names removed for privacy reasons

Appendix 1: Stakeholder consultation list

No.	Name	Organisation
1	[REDACTED]	Farm Tree and Landcare Association
2	[REDACTED]	Farm Tree and Landcare Association
3	[REDACTED]	East Gippsland CMA
4	[REDACTED]	West Gippsland CMA
5	[REDACTED]	Project Platypus Association Incorporated
6	[REDACTED]	Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network
7	[REDACTED]	Basalt to Bay Network
8	[REDACTED]	Bellarine Catchment Network
9	[REDACTED]	Glenelg Hopkins CMA
10	[REDACTED]	Wimmera CMA
11	[REDACTED]	Wimmera CMA
12	[REDACTED]	Port Phillip & Westernport CMA
13	[REDACTED]	Landcare Association of South Australia
14	[REDACTED]	Northern Territory Landcare Inc.
15	[REDACTED]	Bellarine Landcare Group Inc.
16	[REDACTED]	Loddon Uplands & Avoca Network
17	[REDACTED]	Minimay Landcare Group
18	[REDACTED]	Mallee CMA
19	[REDACTED]	Farm Tree and Landcare Association
20	[REDACTED]	Bass Coast Landcare Network
21	[REDACTED]	Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network
22	[REDACTED]	Mallee CMA
23	[REDACTED]	Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork
24	[REDACTED]	South Eastern Mallee Consortium
25	[REDACTED]	Nillumbik Landcare Network
26	[REDACTED]	Victorian Blackberry Taskforce
27	[REDACTED]	Bellarine Catchment Network
28	[REDACTED]	Mid-Loddon Sub Catchment Management Group
29	[REDACTED]	North East CMA

No.	Name	Organisation
30	[REDACTED] t	North East CMA
31	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network
32	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Western Port Catchment Landcare Network
33	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Mitta to Murray Landcare Network
34	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Gecko CLaN
35	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	North Central CMA
36	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Moorabool Landcare Network (PPW)
37	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Landcare New South Wales
38	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Landcare ACT
39	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
40	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Landcare Queensland Ltd
41	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] s	Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
42	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Upper Campaspe Landcare Network
43	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Port Phillip & Westernport CMA
44	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Northern Yarra Landcare Network
45	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	South Eastern Mallee Consortium
46	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	St Arnaud Hills Landcare Group
47	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Yarra Ranges Landcare Network
48	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] g	South West Goulburn Landcare Network
49	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Hamilton - Coleraine Railway Line Landcare Group
50	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	West Gippsland CMA
51	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Hindmarsh Landcare Network
52	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Loddon Plains Landcare Network
53	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Up2Us Landcare Alliance
54	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network
55	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Barongarook Landcare Group
56	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Upper Barwon Landcare Network
57	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	North Central CMA
58	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Victorian Landcare Council
59	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Clifton Creek Community Landcare Group
60	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Yarrilinks Landcare Network

No.	Name	Organisation
61		Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group
62		Central Otways Landcare Network
63		Hindmarsh Landcare Network Inc.
64		Yarram Yarram Landcare Network
65		Victorian Landcare Council
66		Mount Pleasant - Research Landcare Group
67		Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network
68		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
69		Yarrilinks Landcare Network
70		Landcare Australia Ltd
71		Granite Creek network (part of Gecko Clan)
72		Upper Murray Landcare Network
73		Farm Tree and Landcare Association
74		Glenaroua Land Management Group
75		Yarra Valley Landcare Network
76		Sunday Creek Dry Creek LC group
77		North East CMA
78		Wodonga Urban Landcare Network
79		Woody Yaloak LC Network
80		Mandurang Strathfieldsaye Landcare Network
81		Goulburn Broken CMA
82		Woody Yaloak Catchment Group
83		Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
84		Lismore Land Protection Group
85		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
86		Avon Landcare Group Inc.
87		Landcare Australia Ltd
88		Glenelg Hopkins CMA
89		Kowree Farm Tree Group
90		Northern Yarra Landcare Network
91		Upper Goulburn Landcare Network

No.	Name	Organisation
92		Leigh Catchment Group
93		CreekLink
94		Yarram Yarram Landcare Network
95		Campaspe Shire
96		North East CMA
97		Upper Mount Emu Creek Landcare Network
98		Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group Inc
99		Laharum Landcare Group
100		Northern United Forestry Group
101		Northern Mallee Landcare Network
102		Corangamite CMA
103		Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network
104		Basalt to Bay Landcare Network Inc.
105		East Gippsland CMA
106		Broadford Land Management Group
107		Loddon Plains Landcare Network
108		Kooloonong Natya Landcare Group
109		Bass Coast Landcare Network
110		Woody Yaloak Catchment Group Inc.
111		Goulburn Broken CMA
112		Christmas Hills Landcare Group
113		Southern Otway Landcare Network
114		Nillumbik Landcare Network
115		South Gippsland Landcare Network
116		Corangamite CMA
117		West Wimmera Landcare Network
118		South West Coastal Action Network
119		East Gippsland Landcare Network
120		Nillumbik Landcare Network
121		Southern Otway Landcare Network
122		Kiewa Catchment Landcare Group

No.	Name	Organisation
123		Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
124		Yarra Ranges Landcare Network
125		Western Melbourne Catchments Network
126		Buangor Landcare Group
127		Landcare Tasmainia
128		Mid Loddon Network
129		WA Landcare Network Inc.
130		Southern Otway Landcare Network
131		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
132		Otway Agroforestry Network, Victorian Landcare Council
133		Goulburn Broken CMA
134		Blampied Kooroocheang Consortium of Landcare Groups
135		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
136		Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network
137		West Gippsland CMA
138		South West Goulburn Landcare Network
139		Bellarine Landcare Group Inc.
140		Corangamite CMA
141		Upper Campaspe Landcare Network
142		Heytesbury District Landcare Network
143		Ovens Landcare Network
144		Gerangamete and District Landcare Group
145		Mallee CMA
146		Connecting Country
147		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
148		Port Phillip Westernport CMA
149		Heytesbury District Landcare Network
150		Connecting Country Network
151		Far East Victoria Landcare Network
152		Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
153		Central Mallee Landcare Network

No.	Name	Organisation
154		MAD for the Merri Inc.
155		Upper Goulburn Landcare Network
156		Beyond Bolac Network
157		Upper Murray Landcare Group
158		Glenaladale Landcare Group
159		Maffra & Districts Landcare Network
160		Landcare ACT
161		Clear Lake Landcare Group
162		Corangamite Lakes Landcare Network
163		Glenelg Hopkins CMA
164		Wimmera CMA

Stakeholder Reference Group representatives

Name	Organisation
Karen Alexander	Farm Tree and Landcare Association, Johns Hill Landcare Group
Artur Muchow*	<i>Farm Tree and Landcare Association</i>
Kaye Rodden	Victorian Landcare Council, Otway Agroforestry Network
Gareth Smith	Corangamite CMA

**Attended on behalf of Karen Alexander at one Stakeholder Reference Group meeting.*

Appendix 2: On-line survey questions

Introduction

The Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is conducting a review of the Victorian Landcare Program, including an evaluation of the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative. RM Consulting Group (RMCG) has prepared this survey on behalf of the Victorian Government.

This survey is part of a broader statewide consultation process that commences in mid-August. Your feedback will help inform the Victorian Government about how it can most effectively provide support to meet the Landcare community's needs over the coming years.

The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete. All information you provide will remain confidential.

If you need assistance completing this survey, please contact Jaclyne Scally at RMCG on tel: 0468 813 609 or email: jaclynes@rmcg.com.au

Can you tell us about your involvement with Landcare?

1. Which Catchment Management Authority region are you from?

- ☐ Corangamite
- ☐ East Gippsland
- ☐ Glenelg Hopkins
- ☐ Goulburn Broken
- ☐ Mallee
- ☐ North Central
- ☐ North East
- ☐ Port Phillip and Westernport
- ☐ West Gippsland
- ☐ Wimmera
- ☐ N/A

2. How are you involved in Landcare?

- ☐ Member of a Landcare group
- ☐ Member of a Landcare network
- ☐ Member of another group e.g. Friends Of, Coastcare
- ☐ Landcare coordinator or facilitator
- ☐ CMA employee
- ☐ Other government staff
- ☐ Peak body representative e.g. VLC, FTLA, National Landcare Network
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. Is your group part of a Landcare or equivalent network?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ N/A

4. What are the main activities that your group focuses on?

- ☐ Pest and weed control
- ☐ Revegetation & protecting remnant vegetation
- ☐ Soil health e.g. managing erosion, salinity
- ☐ Waterway restoration
- ☐ Threatened species conservation
- ☐ Sustainable food production
- ☐ Community education & capacity building
- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5. Do you currently hold, or have had in the last five years, a committee role in Landcare, e.g. President, Secretary, etc.?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ N/A

6. How long have you been involved with Landcare?

- ☐ < 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 15 years
- ☐ 15 - 20 years
- ☐ > 20 years

7. What is your age?

- ☐ < 20 years
- ☐ 21 - 35 years
- ☐ 36 - 50 years
- ☐ 51 - 65 years
- ☐ 66 - 80 years
- ☐ > 80 years

8. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

9. Which one best describes where you live?

- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Peri-urban
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Country town
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. Which one best describes your property?

- ☐ Cropping
- ☐ Grazing
- ☐ Mixed farming
- ☐ Lifestyle / hobby farm
- ☐ Managing for conservation purposes
- ☐ Urban / town block
- ☐ Other (please specify)

How is Landcare going?

11. How would you rate the health of Landcare now, compared to four or five years ago?

- ☐ Much better
- ☐ Slightly better
- ☐ Stayed the same
- ☐ Slightly worse
- ☐ Much worse

Can you please explain why?

12. What do you think are the top three strengths of Landcare?

1.
2.
3.

13. What do you think are the top three threats or challenges facing Landcare?

1.
2.
3.

14. What would you change about Landcare?

How effective is the Victorian Landcare Program in supporting Landcare?

The Victorian Landcare Program is the Victorian Government's program of support to the Landcare community across the state. It includes:

- Victorian Landcare Grants delivered by each Catchment Management Authority (CMA)
- Regional Landcare Coordinators based in each CMA and the statewide support team
- Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator
- Victorian Landcare Gateway website
- Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management Magazine
- Victorian Landcare Awards and support for other Landcare events
- Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (68 facilitator positions funded by the Victorian Government)

We would like your feedback on this program.

15. Are you aware the Victorian Government supports Landcare?

☐ Yes

☐ No

16. Rate the importance of the following components of the program.

	1. Unimportant	2. Slightly important	3. Quite important	4. Very important	Don't know
1. Victorian Landcare Grants delivered by each CMA	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Regional Landcare Coordinators based in each CMA and the statewide support team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Victorian Landcare Gateway website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management Magazine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Victorian Landcare Awards and support for other Landcare events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (68 facilitator positions funded by the Victorian Government)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. What improvements could be made to the program's components to better meet the needs of Landcare in your region?

1. Victorian Landcare

Grants delivered by each
CMA

2. Regional Landcare

Coordinators based in
each CMA and the
statewide support team

3. Aboriginal Landcare

Facilitator

4. Victorian Landcare

Gateway website

5. Victorian Landcare &
Catchment Management
Magazine

6. Victorian Landcare

Awards and support for
other Landcare events

More detailed questions on the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative are included in the next section of this survey.

18. Are there other ways the Victorian Government could support Landcare in your region and across the State?

How successful was the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative?

The Victorian Government funded 68 part-time facilitator positions over the last four years who were employed to provide support to many Landcare groups and networks across the state.

We would like your feedback on those 68 facilitator positions.

19. Was your group supported by a facilitator employed under this Victorian Government initiative?

- ☐ Yes, we had a facilitator position for our group
- ☐ Yes, we received support from a facilitator employed by a network or another group
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ N/A

20. The 68 facilitator positions aimed to achieve the five outcomes listed below - please rate how well you think these outcomes were met.

1. Mostly not met 2. Partially met 3. Mostly met 4. Successfully met Don't know

1. Helping groups to undertake projects i.e. assisting delivery of on-ground works, sharing NRM knowledge and information

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Helping groups to become more self-sustaining i.e. through courses/ workshops/ seminars, identifying funding opportunities, effective operation of the group/network.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. Helping groups to increase participation and build partnerships i.e. working with other groups, providing opportunities for wider participation in group activities, increasing group membership.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4. Helping groups with planning, monitoring and reporting i.e. development and planning of local NRM projects, providing assistance to meet reporting requirements.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5. Helping groups to access grants and funding i.e. successful grant applications, more opportunities for funding, increased number of activities / projects.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

21. Can you list any other achievements of the facilitator positions?

22. Is your Landcare group or network doing anything differently as a result of having a facilitator?

23. Over the last four years, what aspects of the facilitator positions or arrangements do you think could have been delivered better?

The Victorian Government has recently committed funding to ensure the continuation of the 68 facilitators for another four years, commencing July 2015.

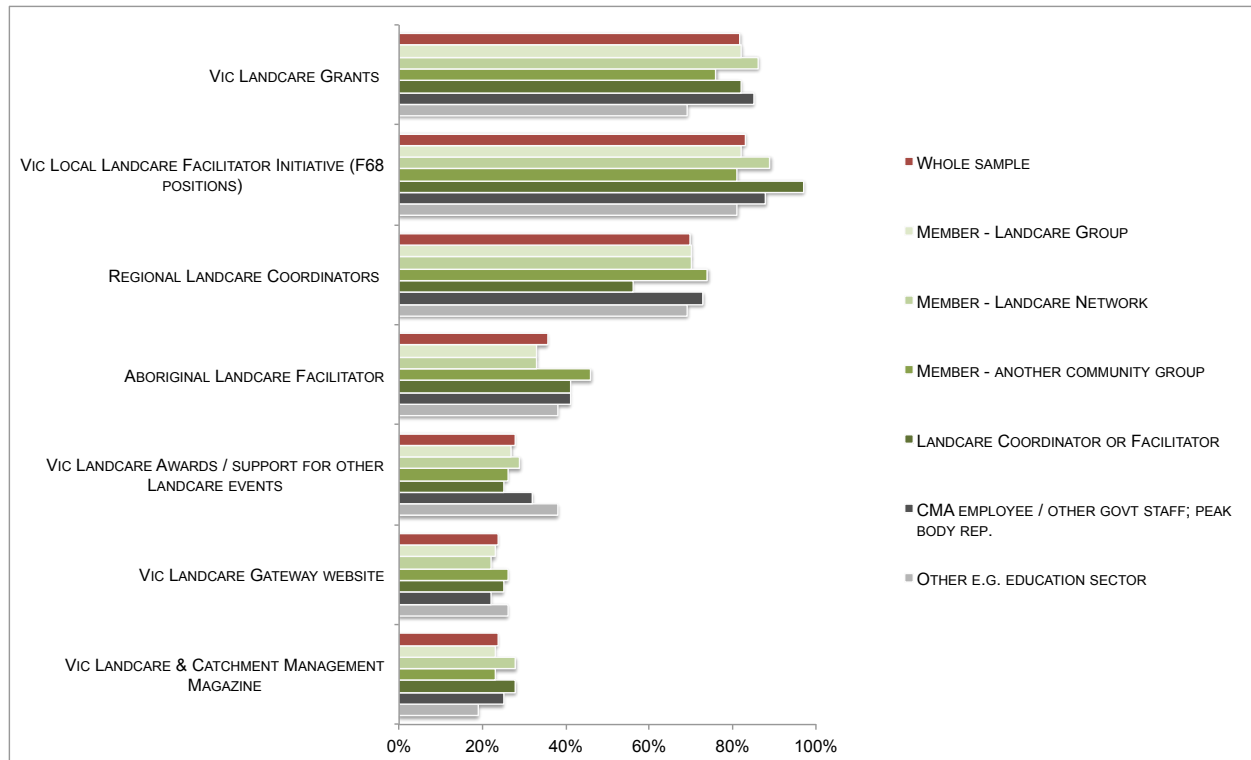
24. How do you think the facilitator positions or arrangements for the next four years could be strengthened to better meet the needs of Landcare groups and networks and the Landcare community?

25. How did you find out about this survey?

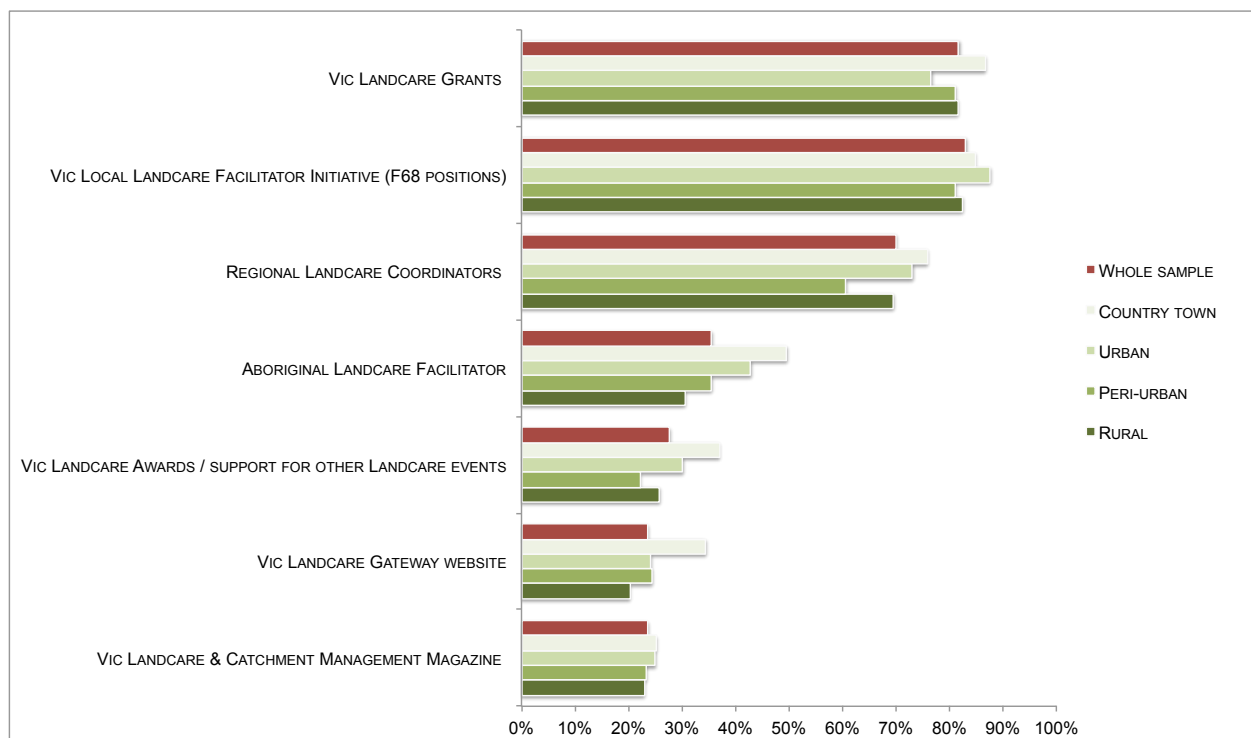
- ☐ Landcare Gateway website
- ☐ Email from Regional Landcare Coordinator
- ☐ Email from facilitator / coordinator
- ☐ Email from Landcare network
- ☐ Email from Landcare group
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Appendix 3: Segmented analysis of survey results

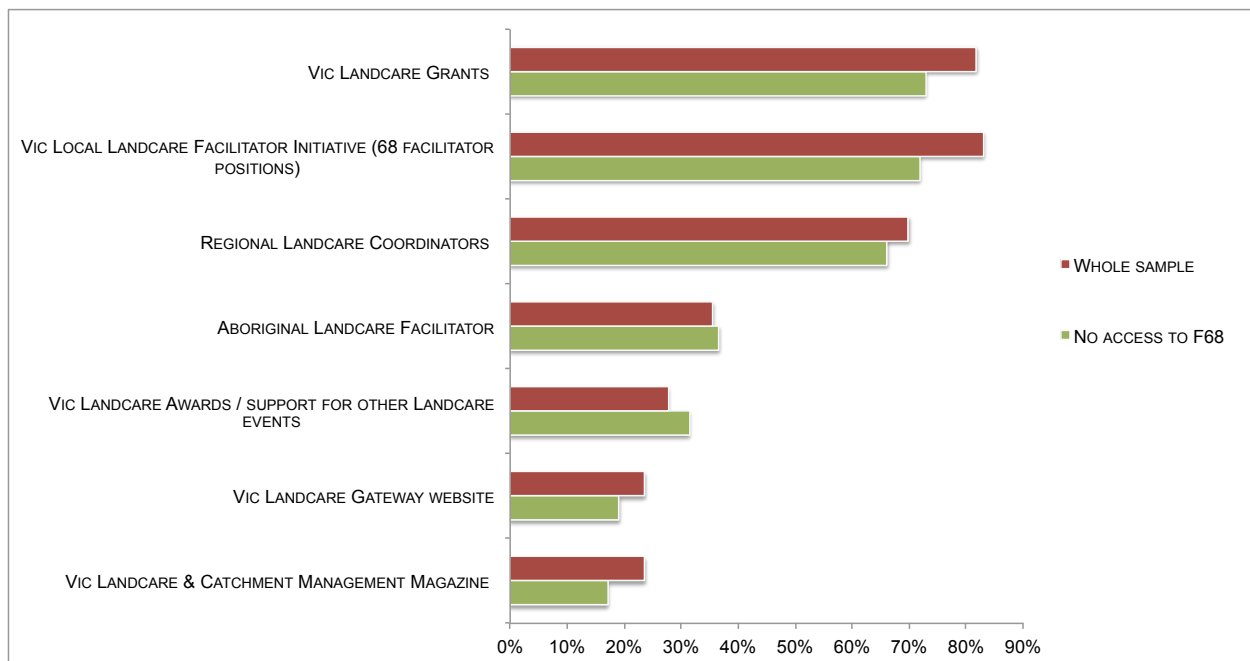
By stakeholders - % frequency rated “very important”:



By land use zone - % frequency rated “very important”:



By access to F68 support - % frequency rated “very important”:



Appendix 4: Suggested improvements to the VLP

Complete list of suggested improvements to the VLP and its components, as identified through the online survey and stakeholder interviews.

VLP component	Suggested improvements
Victorian Landcare Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the amount of available funding i.e. the total amount and the amount for individual grants (particularly for networks) ▪ Provide more flexibility to meet local priorities ▪ Better collaboration between the CMAs and groups / networks in setting developing projects ▪ More transparency and consistency across the state in the assessment of grant applications ▪ Better equity in the allocation of grants across the state and within regions ▪ Simplify the application and reporting requirements ▪ Provide greater certainty and security of funding ▪ Provide longer-term funding cycles ▪ Improve the promotion of the grants ▪ Provide more time for the application process and advertise the deadlines well in advance ▪ Consider a pre-application phase where applicants can put in an Expression of Interest (this is occurring in some regions) ▪ Set the same due date each year so applicants can plan accordingly ▪ Provide groups greater support in applying for and reporting on grants ▪ Provide groups more time to complete on-ground works ▪ Improved promotion of project achievements ▪ Better monitoring of project outcomes ▪ Increase allocation of grant money to project management costs ▪ Better cost sharing arrangements with CMAs e.g. requiring 1:1 contributions from groups / networks would increase the funding output (could be in-kind contributions) ▪ Revise the standard cost rates e.g. for fencing, as they are out-dated and the actual costs are much higher. Currently not competitive with other CMA funding rates, such as River Health rates. ▪ Better integration of the VLG with other funding programs e.g. Community Landcare Grants and Communities for Nature ▪ Review the objectives of the VLG e.g. is it building capacity OR achieving landscape priorities? ▪ Change the title of the VLG to be more encompassing of other groups ▪ DELWP to provide guidelines on standard application templates and assessment processes ▪ Standardise output reporting so it is consistent across regions ▪ Use output reporting to better tell the story and leverage more funding for Landcare ▪ Consider SMARTY grants to reduce paperwork
Victorian Landcare Facilitator Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide greater support and opportunities to facilitators e.g. networking, training, professional development ▪ Provide a professional development budget

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure adequate employment conditions for the facilitator ▪ Provide employment support to groups that are hosting a facilitator ▪ Align facilitator reporting milestones with twice-yearly financial payments ▪ Adjust facilitator wages to include CPI ▪ Emphasis to groups / networks the importance of the facilitator role in building group capacity and not in taking on administration roles ▪ Simplify the program objective <i>“to build community capacity to enable groups / networks to be self-sustaining”</i> to be <i>“to increase the community capacity of groups / networks”</i> ▪ Expand the Facilitator Initiative to cover gap areas, so that support is extended to groups that do not currently have access to a facilitator
Regional Landcare Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain the role, ensuring government support for RLCs continues and is strengthened ▪ Increase RLC community presence – more “hands on” and available for groups / networks ▪ Provide more opportunities to build group and volunteer capacity e.g. through information provision, coordinating training and activities ▪ Strengthen regional connectivity through extending the network structure and ensuring region wide support ▪ Increase networking and collaboration opportunities between groups and with Government departments and programs ▪ Provide more strategic direction and establish consistent priorities and direction for regional Landcare ▪ Increased knowledge of environmental management and current land management practices to provide more technical support ▪ Improved knowledge and understanding of government and CMA policies and programs and improved skills at interpreting and translating policy and strategic directions ▪ More focus on supporting and advocating local Landcare and not other CMA activities ▪ Reduce the bureaucracy and paperwork associated with the RLC position ▪ More accountability and reporting of the RLC role to the Landcare community ▪ Greater communication to the Landcare community of the RLC role e.g. what they do and how they can support groups / networks ▪ Provide more support to local Landcare facilitators ▪ Less frequent turn-over of staff in RLC positions ▪ More people in Landcare support roles
Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the profile of the position ▪ Provide more opportunities for groups / networks to engage with the facilitator ▪ More staff in the role to achieve wider coverage across the state ▪ The state government to provide more strategic direction for the position ▪ Provide support to groups / networks on cultural heritage assessments and project planning (to include a cultural heritage / indigenous component) ▪ Better coordination between the role and other state department indigenous employees ▪ More emphasis on education for the Landcare community, the general community and schools ▪ Encourage greater indigenous participation e.g. through volunteering, knowledge sharing and employment in Landcare

Victorian Landcare Gateway website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise and redefine the purpose of the website, including identification of the target audience and the services the website aims to provide ▪ Provide more functionalities on the website e.g. notifications and calendar updates ▪ Provide functionalities for groups to manage their membership, including taking EFT payments, maintaining contact lists and e-newsletters ▪ Provide blogs or similar mechanisms for conserving and sharing online ▪ Improve the current website search functions ▪ Reduce the overall clutter on the site ▪ Improve links with external sites ▪ Make the website compatible with social media and smartphones ▪ Ensure the content is kept up-to-date, including group content ▪ Increase promotion of the website and encourage groups to use it ▪ Provide better support to groups / networks to use the website e.g. FAQ section, how to maintain group pages ▪ Consider replacing the website completely with a simplified, more relevant and less expensive platform e.g. Facebook ▪ Provide each Landcare group with an email address so it remains consistent, rather than lots of private email addresses ▪ Integrate the Gateway website with the LAL website.
Victorian Landcare & Catchment Magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise and redefine the purpose of the magazine including identification of target audience and the messages the magazine aims to communicate ▪ Provide more locally relevant and practical content for groups ▪ Allow more community and group contribution ▪ Provide more substantial content e.g. more scientific articles and serious discussion about the “big issues” impacting Landcare, not just content that “feels good” ▪ Broaden the scope of the magazine to highlight the diversity of Landcare, address a range of themes and to engage a broader range of groups ▪ Make it electronically available ▪ Retain some hard copies ▪ Update the distribution list and delivery efficiencies, making sure it goes where needed e.g. each group receives a copy ▪ Input opportunities for the VLC ▪ Do a readership survey to properly determine the readership ▪ Provide a list of groups in Victoria and their contact details in each edition ▪ Include a map of the state that shows the working areas / location of each group and a list of the projects groups are working on ▪ Include a Q&A forum within the magazine for members to ask questions and share ideas
Victorian Landcare Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better promotion of the awards, particularly to the urban population ▪ Make the application process less onerous for staff and groups / networks ▪ Make the awards less formal, less expensive and accessible for all ▪ Reduce the bureaucracy – make it more for the Landcare community and not for government ▪ Hold the awards less frequently e.g. every 2 – 5 years ▪ Provide better opportunities to involve and recognise small and new groups ▪ Remove staff awards ▪ Have fewer awards and greater prize money

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include awards that acknowledge young farmers / landholders ▪ Shift the emphasis from 'competitive' to 'acknowledgement' ▪ Include other opportunities as part of the awards ceremony e.g. networking, a conference, information provision and learning ▪ Provide more support for local and regional awards ▪ Provide other forms of recognition or rewards e.g. money for groups ▪ Inform invited guests whether they have been nominated, by whom and what is required at the ceremony ▪ Consider occasionally hosting the awards outside Melbourne
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase broader community engagement and participation in Landcare and provide assistance to groups in recruiting new members and in succession planning. This includes increasing and diversifying involvement in Landcare to include the next generation, new landholders, urban population and other minority groups, such as migrants. ▪ Achieving better alignment and partnerships between Landcare and all levels of government, increasing government consultation with Landcare, and providing greater government recognition and support for Landcare. ▪ Review the overarching vision and core objectives of Landcare, improve organisational efficiencies e.g. one peak body, and simplify processes and governance. ▪ Consider exporting Landcare more widely overseas and capitalising on the Landcare knowledge of Victoria. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding for study tours by overseas Landcare leaders to see how Landcare works in Victoria, matched with local Landcare input (including local travel and accommodation) ○ A small fund for Landcare groups to apply to match their own contribution to an overseas Landcare project via the Overseas Landcare Fund ○ A small fund for support to Landcare groups in Victoria to publicise their overseas Landcare project to the wider Victorian Landcare community ○ Funds to support Victorian Landcarers to travel to the Asia /Pacific region to assist development of Landcare ○ The establishment of a Victorian Overseas Landcare Facilitator.