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Evaluation of the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative

Final Report

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

rmcg.com.au

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List of abbreviations

CMA	Catchment Management Authority
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DEDJTR	Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
EFT	Equivalent Full Time
FTLA	Farm Tree and Landcare Association
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RLC	Regional Landcare Coordinator
RLF	Regional Landcare Facilitator
RMCG	RM Consulting Group
VLC	Victorian Landcare Council
VLLFI	Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative
VLP	Victorian Landcare Program

Executive summary

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) commissioned an evaluation of the four year (2011 to 2015) Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI).

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Identify outcomes and achievements
- Determine the effectiveness of program design and delivery
- Identify opportunities for improvement in the delivery of the current Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program (2015/16).

The VLFFI funded sixty-eight facilitators to support Landcare groups and networks according to their local needs and priorities.

The objectives of the VLLFI are represented by the following five key Work Areas:

- Supporting on-ground NRM delivery
- Building local community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining
- Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships
- Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Securing project grants and other funding.

RM Consulting Group (RMCG) was engaged to undertake the evaluation of the VLLFI between July and October 2015. The project used multiple methods of data collection across a wide spectrum of the Victorian Landcare community including Landcare volunteers, groups and networks, Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's), peak Landcare bodies, the Victorian Landcare Team and other stakeholders (e.g. agricultural industry representatives).

Methodology

This evaluation focussed on two key parts of the initiative – the five Work Areas and the design and delivery of the initiative.

Three data sources were used – VLLFI reporting and other documentation, interviews with Landcare stakeholders and an on-line survey open to all stakeholders. Using this approach we aimed to achieve full coverage of stakeholders in the Landcare community and regions across the state. The opportunity to participate via the on-line survey was communicated widely through multiple channels. The stakeholders to be interviewed were identified by DELWP and a Stakeholder Reference Group.

Findings

RMCG interviewed 164 stakeholders by telephone and face-to-face during regional visits (Table 4-1). These included Victorian Landcare representatives (volunteers, staff and executives), VLLFI facilitators, Regional Landcare Coordinators, and Catchment Management Authority representatives. 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.

An on-line survey also formed a major part of the data collection. The purpose of the survey was to gather views on the importance of the initiative and to provide an assessment of the success of the VLLFI. A total of 919 people participated in the on-line survey.

General findings

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

The general 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, Landcare networks featured prominently as the host and employer. Those facilitators who operated under the banner of a network were among the more successful across the initiative.

Flexible and adaptable approach

The flexible approach used across the initiative was highly valued by all stakeholders and participants. The ability to match the employment and hosting arrangements to the local conditions was considered invaluable by many. While there were problems for some facilitators, these were very limited and did not undermine the overall value of the approach.

This flexibility was also instrumental in allowing facilitators to respond to the evolving Landcare movement. Across the state there are new Landcare groups emerging, though they might be quite different to traditional groups. We noted that facilitators were working with urban Landcare groups, equine Landcare groups and groups focussed on issues like food and agroforestry. Many of the new Landcare groups came from these non-traditional areas.

Innovation and growth

The creation of the VLLFI resulted in a major injection of new people into leadership roles in Landcare in Victoria. With them has come new energy and new ideas, some of which are novel approaches to long running challenges. To illustrate this, some of the innovative ideas noted during the evaluation were:

- Creating on-line membership payment system at the network level to relieve groups of the need to manage memberships
- Allowing people to join networks without joining a local group since this allows them to be part of Landcare and to participate on their terms
- Changing the model of how a Landcare group can function. Some Landcare Networks support Landcare groups to operate without formal office holders (e.g. president, secretary, treasurer) since this can help to make joining the group more attractive
- 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 a needs basis (e.g. participate in an activity rather than in a meeting).

These are a few of the approaches identified across the state. A challenge for the next phase of the VLLFI is to create the means of sharing these experiences and building the capacity of the facilitators

across the whole state. 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.

Characteristics of the most successful facilitators

Having examined the overall initiative, we have identified some characteristics of the more successful situations:

- The facilitator was well connected to the local CMA, DELWP and DEDJTR staff. A convenient way to create and maintain these connections, though not essential, was to co-locate with these organisations
- The facilitator had a strong local support network
- The facilitator had the capacity to adaptively manage and was very capable of operating in a changing environment
- The facilitator had the ability to take advantage of the flexibility of the initiative and use this to tailor their approach to the needs of their local community
- The organisation employing the facilitator had experience and/or capability as an employer
- The organisation employing the facilitator had appropriate governance in place with capacity to set strategic directions and meet the requirements of the VLLFI.

Reporting

This evaluation has drawn on the reporting data collected from the facilitators over the four years of the initiative. This includes several specific measures for each of the five Work Areas. Over the course of reviewing this data, particularly the annual data, we have concluded that there are quality issues with many of the measures. Because of this we have tended to note the trends in the data, rather than quote specific annual or aggregated data (though there are some cases where the data has been referenced).

There has clearly been recognition that there are issues with the quality of the data being reported and there have been positive efforts to both gather feedback from facilitators on the reporting and to improve the data collection process. This does appear to have improved the quality of data being reported in 2014-15. Notwithstanding these changes, issues still remain with the way the current data is handled and presented. There is still ambiguity with respect to the definitions of some of the measures (e.g. new partnerships). Presentation of the data also creates confusion and undermines the value of the data. In particular, given the significance of the data quality issues over the early years of the initiative, several of the measures should not be collated and reported as totals for the four years.

A framework for reporting on the VLLFI

In determining how best to report on the VLLFI, the high level objectives of the initiative should be considered. One way to summarise these objectives is to say they focus on two things:

- increases in general Landcare activity, and
- specific results or impacts of that increased activity

Increases in general activity can be measured by focussing in four specific areas:

- increase in **participation** in Landcare related activities (current measures: membership numbers, number of new Landcare groups/networks formed, participation in events measured in people days. This should also have a strong link to the headline indicator 'Community participation - level of participation in Landcare and community groups)

- increase in the number of Landcare related **activities** (current measure: 'number of events')
- increase in the **area** of land that could be influenced by Landcare (this measure could have a strong link to the headline indicator 'Land managed for conservation- active stewardship')
- increase in the amount of **funding** directed into Landcare related activities (current measure: external funding secured)

These measures could be thought of as coarse or large-scale measures of change. The next level of measures focuses on the impacts of those increases in activity. These measures should focus on specific changes in the capacity of groups and land managers, and on natural resource management actions. Examples of these measures could include:

- network/group level action planning (current measure: number of new/updated network/group action plans)
- number of land managers participating in Landcare related training
- increase in sustainable agriculture practices
- increase in native vegetation protected or enhanced

The specific measures used at this level should be drawn from the Department's standard output measures.

Setting-up the reporting framework

The process used to design and test the reporting framework will have a major influence over its successful adoption. The framework proposed here could form the basis of discussions with the facilitators that ultimately determines the reporting arrangements for the next phase of the VLLFI. Importantly, this discussion would include defining the measures that will be collected so there is less ambiguity and misinterpretation.

Recommendations

Recommendations from evaluation of Work Areas are

Work Area 1: Supporting on-ground NRM delivery:

- i. Continue to focus on the support functions described in this Work Area, particularly planning and development of local projects, and assistance and support for delivery of on-ground projects.
- ii. Implement a quality assurance process to ensure the data collected for this Work Area can be confidently reported. Providing each facilitator with a copy of the reports that incorporate their data should be a component of this quality assurance process.
- iii. Convene a short-term reporting project with representatives of the VLLFI facilitators (e.g. three meetings over four weeks) to revise the performance measures being used to monitor Work Area progress, reducing the focus on on-ground works and increasing the focus on the support functions.

Work area 2: Building local community capacity to enable groups/ networks to be self-sustaining

- iv. Retain the focus on local capacity building and particularly on the facilitators' role in information provision and the identification of opportunities for learning and development of the skills of Landcare members.

- v. Reconsider whether there continues to be a need to build community knowledge and understanding of NRM policies and programs and priority setting processes, and whether the facilitators are well positioned to achieve this objective.
- vi. Remove reference to groups or networks becoming 'self-sustaining' as the main goal of the Work Area title and re-focus on building local capacity.
- vii. Develop more specific measures of the impacts of capacity building. Some CMAs are developing measures of capacity change (e.g. specific changes in knowledge and skills following participation in activities) to aid in their reporting. Measures should be developed in consultation with facilitators (see recommendation iii) and CMAs.

Work Area 3: Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships

- viii. Continue the focus on basic engagement of the local community as a key foundational activity of facilitators.
- ix. Ensure the new groups that have been established recently, continue to be supported in their early phases.
- x. Continue to support the establishment of 'non-traditional' Landcare groups, especially those that form around shared interests (rather than locales), in order to reflect the evolving nature of Landcare as a community-led movement.
- xi. Refine the performance measures for this Work Area focussing on measures of community engagement (e.g. clarification of partnerships) or the results of that engagement (e.g. measures of changes in knowledge and awareness). (Also refer to Recommendation iii regarding the process for refining these measures.)

Work Area 4: Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- xii. Continue to reinforce the understanding that the facilitators are to focus on supporting groups in planning and reporting.
- xiii. Review and, in the light of experiences over the first phase of the VLLFI, revise information on the roles and purpose of Landcare facilitators that has been provided to host organisations.

Work Area 5: Securing project grants and other funding

- xiv. Improve the collection of external funding data in order to be able to accurately and confidently report on the leveraging impact of the facilitator initiative. This would include clarifying the specific types of funding data that is to be collected (e.g. cash co-investment, in-kind, private funding etc.) and the rationale for collecting and reporting it.

Program design and delivery

Recommendations from the evaluation of the program design and delivery are:

Distribution of facilitators across the state

It is recommended the DELWP, CMAs, Victorian Landcare Council and Farm Tree and Landcare Association review the existing arrangements and determine where additional positions should be located. This group should consider expansion of the program's coverage to fill gaps concurrently with a fine-tuning of the existing arrangements to achieve a better workload balance. The initial process could involve a region-by-region engagement and discussions, which would be followed by a statewide assessment.

At the regional level, three strategies should be used to adjust current arrangements:

- facilitators add new groups to their existing workload
- facilitators reduce the number of groups they currently support
- new facilitator positions are created

Estimating the number of new positions that would be required depends on:

- 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 are any other barriers in the gap areas that might weigh against employing a facilitator (e.g. some areas may not have local capacity to employ a facilitator).

The current working estimate of the number of new facilitator positions is 6 to 10. The DELWP, CMAs, VLC and FTLA group could work through these factors and then recommend the final number and location of additional facilitators.

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.

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.

Overall program development, delivery and management

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

Revisit the reporting approach for the VLLFI. If data that facilitators are required to provide is not used in any subsequent reporting then consider removing it from reporting.

1 Introduction

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) commissioned an evaluation of the four year (2011 to 2015) Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI).

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Identify outcomes and achievements
- Determine the effectiveness of program design and delivery
- Identify opportunities for improvement in the delivery of the current Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program (2015/16).

This evaluation was delivered concurrently with the broader Victorian Landcare Program (VLP) review. Whilst the VLP review focused on the future directions of the overall statewide program this evaluation is specific to the VLLFI.

The VLFFI funded sixty-eight facilitators to support Landcare groups and networks according to their local needs and priorities.

The objectives of the VLLFI are represented by the following five key Work Areas:

- Supporting on-ground NRM delivery
- Building local community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining
- Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships
- Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Securing project grants and other funding.

RM Consulting Group (RMCG) was engaged to undertake the evaluation of the VLLFI between July and October 2015. The project used multiple methods of data collection with stakeholders across a wide spectrum of the Landcare community including Landcare volunteers, groups and networks, Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's), peak Landcare bodies, the Victorian Landcare Team and other stakeholders (e.g. agricultural industry representatives).

2 Background of the VLLFI

In late 2008, funding reductions led to the loss of many local and network level Landcare coordinator and facilitator positions. The VLLFI was developed to restore support to Landcare across Victoria and help local community volunteers protect and restore Victoria's environment. The initiative was intended to build on the strengths of the existing Victorian Landcare Program by enabling a more coordinated approach at a local and network level and by making stronger links between environmental priorities on private and public land.

Key objectives of the initiative are:

- strengthening investment in Landcare;
- supporting community volunteers;
- protecting and restoring Victoria's environment; and
- effective investment of government funds.

The initiative's \$12.0 million (over four years) funded up to 68¹ Landcare facilitator positions, most of which would be part time. They were to provide support for local communities to engage, participate and contribute to environmental and sustainable agriculture outcomes. These positions were specifically targeted at a local level to support existing groups and networks.

A maximum of \$50,000 per financial year would be made available to successful organisations to contribute to the salary of each facilitator. It was anticipated that the \$50,000 per financial year would contribute in the order of 55% of an average full time facilitator salary at the equivalent to mid VPS 3 level. Successful applicants, referred to as host organisations, were given the discretion to decide whether to use the \$50,000 to fund the base salary for between two and three days per week or to adopt another model. If they wished to advertise their positions at a higher level the EFT equivalent would be reduced.

Environmental groups and networks across the state were invited to apply. Applications came from existing Landcare groups and networks, as well as Catchment Management Authorities and local government. Applicants would be responsible for arranging supervision, accommodation and other operating costs for the positions. Successful organisations were selected via an open and competitive process overseen by DSE. Service level agreements were developed between DSE and the organisations that employed the facilitators.

¹ Initially the initiative was to employ 60 facilitators, but savings realised due to a late start in the program enabled 68 positions to be funded.

3 Methodology

This evaluation focussed on two key parts of the initiative – the five Work Areas and the design and delivery of the initiative.

Three data sources were used – VLLFI reporting and other documentation, interviews with Landcare stakeholders and an on-line survey open to all stakeholders. Using this approach we aimed to achieve full coverage of stakeholders in the Landcare community and regions across the state. The opportunity to participate via the on-line survey was communicated widely through multiple channels. The stakeholders to be interviewed were identified by DELWP and the Stakeholder Reference Group.

Consultation framework

A consultation framework was developed to guide the data collection approach (Table 3-1). The framework was based on identifying how each stakeholder type would be consulted. It was 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.

Further detail of the evaluation approach is provided in the following sections.

3.1 Data collection

Meetings/Workshops

Victorian Landcare Team

An initial workshop was held with the Victorian Landcare Team in late-July prior to the 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 a regional perspective on key challenges and opportunities within Landcare and to further inform the focus of targeted interviews within each region.

Stakeholder Reference Group

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 ensure there were no gaps in the range of stakeholders to be consulted.

The second meeting held in mid-October provided an opportunity to present the preliminary findings of the 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 (phone and face-to-face interviews)

Phone interviews were conducted with at least 2 VLLFI Facilitators per CMA region, the 10 Regional Landcare Coordinators; 9 of the federally funded Regional Landcare Facilitators (one position was vacant at the time of consultation); the 10 CMA Chief Executive Officers, and 8 Landcare groups that were unsuccessful in securing a VLLFI Facilitator.

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, industry representatives and groups not covered by networks.

Interview guides were developed for each stakeholder type to provide a consistent structure to data collection and ensure the full suite of VLLFI components relevant to the evaluation were covered. The templates were used as a guide only to allow for further exploration of important topics dependant on the stakeholders knowledge and experience.

Online survey

An online survey was developed in conjunction with the interview guides. The online survey was developed using Survey Monkey® and was open for a period of five weeks from mid-August to mid-September. A link to the online survey was uploaded on the Landcare Gateway website and also distributed via email to networks and groups through the Regional Landcare Coordinator.

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

Literature review

DELWP provided this evaluation with a comprehensive library of documentation relating to the VLLFI since its inception. This documentation provided a valuable source of information and data on the initiative, its implementation and processes, and achievements.

Table 3-1: 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Respected Landcare people and Groups not covered by Networks. Includes specific questions for at least 10 networks that host a VLLFI facilitator to address VLLFI evaluation

Stakeholder group	Data collection method	Details
		<p>questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>Telephone: tailored interviews</p> <p>Meeting (x2)</p>	<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 and RLCs at the start of the consultation phase to provide regional insight and post consultation to present draft findings and recommendations.
RLFs	Telephone: tailored interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questionnaire will be 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.
VLP team and state Aboriginal Landcare	Meeting (x3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting will be held with the VLP team at the DELWP Melbourne office to provide input to both VLP review and VLLFI evaluation questions Meeting with VLP team and RLCs at the start of the consultation phase to provide regional insight and post consultation to present draft findings and recommendations.
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.
Stakeholder Reference Group	Workshop (x2)	<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 and 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 to inform VLLFI evaluation.

3.2 Data analysis

Respondents to the on-line survey were provided with several opportunities to offer their own opinions on the VLLFI. A large proportion of respondents took this opportunity and this data was analysed and synthesised into themes which are reported on in the following sections.

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.

4 Findings

4.1 Stakeholder engagement overview

This section provides the main results and findings from the VLLFI reports, the on-line survey, stakeholder interviews, and meetings and workshops held during August / September 2015.

The findings from the VLLFI reporting, on-line survey and targeted interviews have been synthesised into sections 4.2 to 4.8 covering the five Work Areas of the initiative, and section 4.9 covering the design and delivery of the initiative.

4.1.1 Profile of the interview participants

RMCG personnel interviewed 164 stakeholders by telephone and face-to-face during regional visits (Table 4-1). These included Landcare representatives (volunteers, staff and executives), VLLFI facilitators, RLCs, and CMA representatives. In some regions data was gathered by attending Landcare Network chairs meetings. 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.

Table 4-1 Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholder group	Number interviewed
Landcare representatives (e.g. networks, groups)	73
VLLFI Facilitators	30
RLCs and Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator	11
RLFs	9
Peak bodies	7
CMA CEOs	10
Unsuccessful applicants for VLLFI funding	9
Inactive Landcare groups (VLP Review only)	8
Interstate Landcare representatives	7
Total number of interviews completed	164

4.1.2 On-line survey demographic profile

As noted earlier, an on-line survey formed part of the data collection for this evaluation. For the VLLFI evaluation, the purpose of the survey was to establish a representative view of the importance of the initiative and to provide an assessment of the success of the VLLFI. A total of 919 people participated in the on-line survey. This is considered an excellent response rate compared to similar online surveys we have undertaken for previous evaluations. The geographic distribution of respondents across Victoria is shown in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2 Geographic distribution and land use zones - survey participants (n = 919)

CMA region	Respondents	Land use zone	Respondents
Port Phillip and Westernport	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		

More details about the profile of the respondents to the survey is provided in Appendix 1, including things like age profile, categories of respondents, land use of respondents and their Landcare related activity. This information shows that the sample is a good representation of the diversity of Landcare in Victoria.

4.2 General findings

The VLLFI has been very positively received and is highly regarded by the Landcare community (Figure 4-1). There is a widely held view that without the initiative, many Landcare groups would have folded and enormous energy and momentum would have been lost. 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, though this has occurred over a longer time period (than the VLLFI). This is most evident in the broadacre farming regions to the north and west of the state. This appears to have limited the impacts of the initiative in these parts of the state.

This general 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.

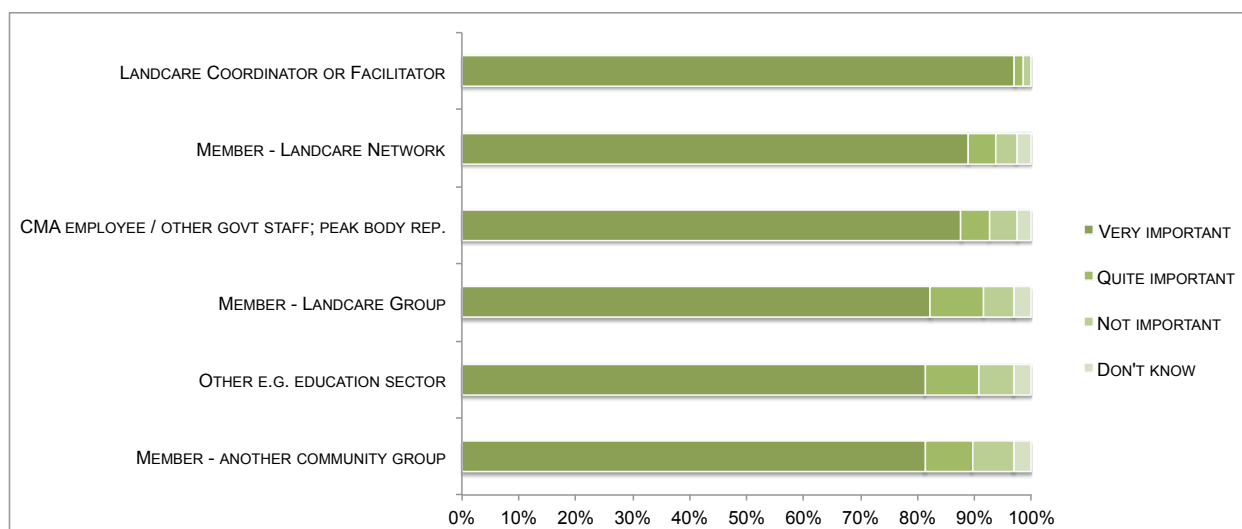


Figure 4-1 Rating of the importance of the VLLFI by stakeholder group

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, Landcare networks featured prominently as the host and employer. Those facilitators who operated under the banner of a network were 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 that a number of facilitators were new to these roles.

Flexible and adaptable approach

The flexible approach used across the initiative was highly valued by all stakeholders and participants. The ability to match the employment and hosting arrangements to the local conditions was considered invaluable by many. While there were problems for some facilitators, these were very limited and did not undermine the overall value of the approach.

This flexibility was also instrumental in allowing facilitators to respond to the evolving Landcare movement. Across the state there are new Landcare groups emerging, though they might be quite different to traditional groups. We noted facilitators working with many urban Landcare groups, equine Landcare groups and groups focussed on issues like food and agroforestry. Many of the new Landcare groups came from these non-traditional areas.

Innovation and growth

The creation of the VLLFI resulted in a major injection of new people into leadership roles in Landcare in Victoria. With them has come new energy and new ideas, some of which are novel approaches to long running challenges. Some of the innovative ideas noted during the evaluation were:

- Creating on-line membership payment system at the network level to relieve groups of the need to manage memberships
- Allowing people to join networks without joining a local group since this allows them to be part of Landcare and to participate on their terms
- Changing the model of how a Landcare group can function. Some Landcare Networks support Landcare groups to operate without formal office holders (e.g. president, secretary, treasurer) since this can help to make joining the group more attractive.

- 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 a needs basis (e.g. participate in an activity rather than in a meeting)

These are a few of the approaches identified across the state. A challenge for the next phases of the VLLFI is to create the means of sharing these experiences and building the capacity of the facilitators across the whole state.

Characteristics of the most successful facilitators

Having examined the overall initiative, we have identified some characteristics of the most successful situations:

- The facilitator was well connected to the local CMA, DELWP and DEDJTR staff. A convenient way to create and maintain these connections, though not essential, was to co-locate with these organisations.
- The facilitator had a strong local support network
- The facilitator had the capacity to adaptively manage and was very capable of operating in a changing environment
- The facilitator had the ability to take advantage of the flexibility of the initiative and use this to tailor their approach to the needs of their local community
- The organisation employing the facilitator had experience as an employer
- The organisation employing the facilitator had appropriate governance in place with capacity to set strategic directions and meet the requirements of the VLLFI

Reporting

This evaluation has drawn on the reporting data collected from the facilitators over the four years of the initiative. This includes several specific measures for each of the five Work Areas. Over the course of reviewing this data, particularly the annual data, we have concluded that there are significant quality issues with many of the measures. Because of this we have tended to note the trends in the data, rather than quote specific annual or aggregated data (though there are some cases where the data has been referenced).

There has clearly been recognition that there are issues with the quality of the data being reported and there have been positive efforts to both gather feedback from facilitators on the reporting and to improve the data collection process. This does appear to have improved the quality of data being reported in 2014-15. Notwithstanding these changes, issues still remain with the way the current data is handled and presented. There is still ambiguity with respect to the definitions of some of the measures (e.g. new partnerships). Presentation of the data also creates confusion and undermines the value of the data. In particular, given the significance of the data quality issues over the early years of the initiative, several of the measures should not be collated and reported as totals for the four years.

A framework for reporting on the VLLFI

In determining how best to report on the VLLFI, the high level objectives of the initiative should be considered. One way to summarise these objectives is to say they focus on two things:

- increases in general Landcare activity, and

- specific results or impacts of that increased activity

Increases in general activity can be measured by focussing measures in four specific areas:

- increase in **participation** in Landcare related activities (current measures: membership numbers, number of new Landcare groups/networks formed, participation in events measured in people days. This should also have a strong link to the headline indicator 'Community participation (Level of participation in Landcare and community groups))
- increase in the number of Landcare related **activities** (current measure: 'number of events')
- increase in the **area** of land that could be influenced by Landcare (this measure could have a strong link to the headline indicator 'Land managed for conservation- active stewardship')
- increase in the amount of **funding** directed into Landcare related activities (current measure: external funding secured)

These measures could be thought of as coarse or large-scale measures of change. The next level of measures focuses on the impacts of those increases in activity. These measures should focus on specific changes in the capacity of groups and land managers, and on natural resource management actions. Examples of these measures could include:

- network/group level action planning (current measure: number of new/updated network/group action plans)
- number of land managers participating in Landcare related training
- increase in sustainable agriculture practices
- increase in native vegetation protected or enhanced

The specific measures used at this level should be drawn from the Department's standard output measures.

Setting-up the reporting framework

The process used to design and test the reporting framework will have a major influence over its successful adoption. The framework proposed here could form the basis of discussions with the facilitators that ultimately determines the reporting arrangements for the next phase of the VLLFI. Importantly, this discussion would include defining the measures that will be collected so there is less ambiguity and misinterpretation.

Following two pages removed due to inaccuracies in data as discussed above

5 Outcomes and achievements

In this chapter, the outcomes and achievements under the five key Work Areas of the VLLFI are examined. These Work Areas, which formed the roles and responsibilities for each facilitator, were:

1. Supporting on-ground NRM delivery
2. Building local community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining
3. Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships
4. Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
5. Securing project grants and other funding

In the following sections, each Work Area is examined by drawing on the reporting data available, results of the on-line survey and insights from the interviews with stakeholders and participants in the VLLFI.

5.1 Work Area 1: Supporting on-ground NRM delivery

The business case for the VLLFI and other documentation indicates that the rationale for this area of work was that facilitators could assist groups and networks with general advice, and project planning and development support, which would 'allow Landcare members and volunteers to concentrate more on delivery of on-ground works¹'.

The additional details for this Work Area are:

- provide (generalist) NRM advice and provide links to more specialist information and expertise to support project delivery
- provide assistance and support to ensure that funded on-ground projects are delivered effectively
- assist with the planning and development of local on-ground projects

5.1.1 Findings

Quantitative data

VLLFI reporting data relevant to this Work Area includes

- number of on-ground projects supported
- number indigenous trees/shrubs/understorey/ground cover species planted
- area revegetated, protected or enhanced
- area treated for pest plants and animals

This data shows a consistent pattern of increases in these activities over the four years of the initiative. This is a pattern that is consistent with the ramping up of activity under the initiative, and suggests that there has been strong growth in native vegetation focussed on-ground projects.

However, it is important to note that the data reported for the initiative is extremely variable year to year and some of the values reported are so large they are unlikely to be accurate. For example, from year 1 to year 2, the area revegetated, protected or enhanced went from 542 hectares to 404,140 hectares. The

¹ From Landcare Facilitators Business Case 'Restoring Funds for Landcare Support', 2011.

404,140 hectares figure included one proponent reporting 400,000 hectares, while almost all other proponents reported figures of less than 100 hectares.

These direct measures of on-ground actions are not necessarily a good measure of the success of the facilitator. For example, an effective facilitator may have been successful in helping groups to focus on their on-ground works, but there may have been no opportunities to win additional funding. The amounts of on-ground work may have been modest but the facilitator may have still been extremely successful at supporting their group. This would not be reflected in the reporting data collected.

A further observation on the data collected is that three of the four data points focus on specific measures of on-ground works. Only the first measure, number of on-ground projects supported, could be argued to be a strong reflection of the support function. The expanded description of this Work Area includes things like provision of advice, linking groups to specialists, and helping with on-ground project planning and delivery. The measures being used to monitor this Work Area do not strongly focus on these elements.

Qualitative data

The opinion of those that responded to the on-line survey was quite strongly positive regarding this Work Area. Almost three quarters of respondents felt that the facilitators either met or mostly met this Work Area outcome (Figure 5-1). This feeling was confirmed by the interviews with Landcare representatives and stakeholders. Many interviewees noted that having the facilitator in place allowed them to re-focus on their on-ground projects which is what had originally attracted them to Landcare.

Interviewees reported that facilitators were focussing on all three focal areas for this Work Area – providing advice and linking groups to specialists, and helping with on-ground project planning and delivery. There was particular recognition of the importance of the role for:

- accessing additional funding – knowing where to look and what opportunities to pursue (and what to not pursue), and
- making connections between the interests of groups, and opportunities presented by agencies and organisations (public and private)

Interview results suggest that there is a wide range of accomplishments in terms of executing on-ground works amongst groups and networks. The better resourced and more mature networks continued to show that they are capable of delivering large scale and more targeted projects. Some of these have been able to (or planning to) use Green Army crews, for example. They reported that a key to being able to use the Green Army, is to recognise and allow for the supervision and planning that is required to capitalise on a Green Army team. For some Landcare Networks this has allowed them to see the opportunities the Green Army presents, but to do so with realistic expectations.

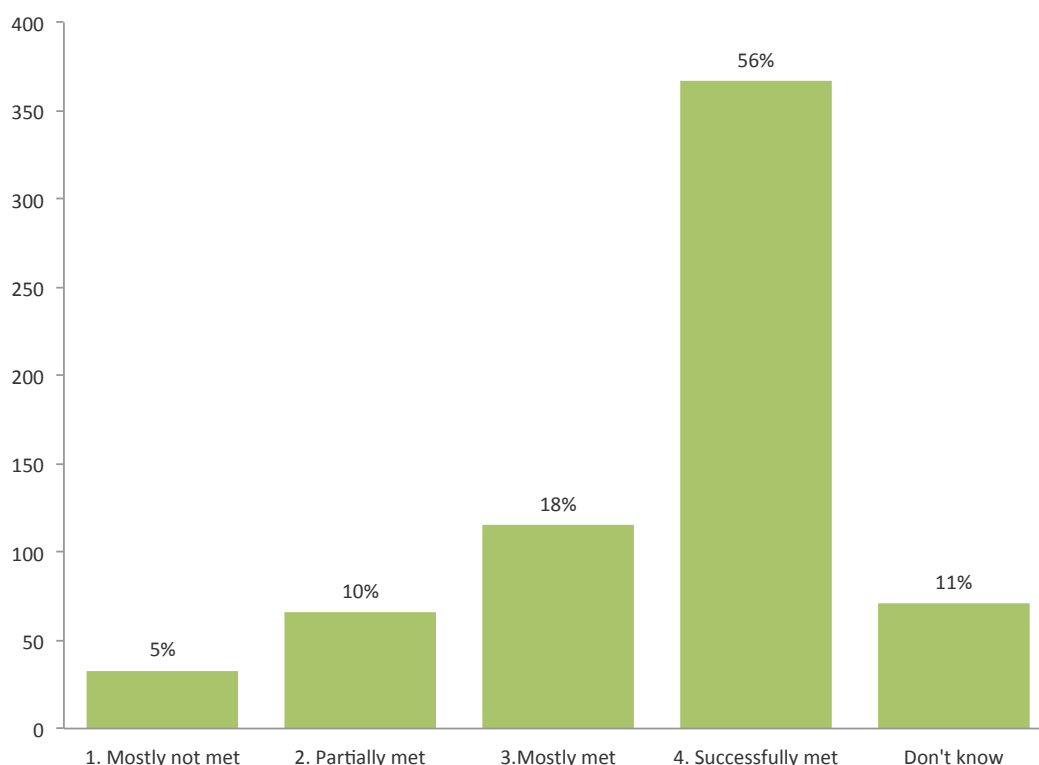


Figure 5-1 On-line survey results for achievement of work area 1- supporting on-ground NRM delivery

Summary of findings for Work Area 1:

There is good evidence that this Work Area is being delivered.

Groups that have facilitators see this support function as being the key role of their facilitator.

While the data collected to report on this Work Area shows patterns that are consistent with successful delivery, the actual quantities do not appear to be accurate.

Measures that focus on on-ground activities could be part of the performance measures for this Work Area, but there could also be additional focus on measuring the advice, assistance and support that has been provided.

Recommendations

- i. Continue to focus on the support functions described in this Work Area, particularly planning and development of local projects, and assistance and support for delivery of on-ground projects.
- ii. Implement a quality assurance process to ensure the data collected for this Work Area can be confidently reported. Providing each facilitator with a copy of the reports that incorporate their data should be a component of this quality assurance process.
- iii. Convene a short-term reporting project with representatives of the VLLFI facilitators (e.g. three meetings over four weeks) to revise the performance measures being used to monitor Work

Area progress, reducing the focus on on-ground works and increasing the focus on the support functions.

5.2 Work area 2: Building local community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining

The rationale for this Work Area appears to have been twofold. As the business case for the initiative states, without additional support from facilitators, the 'capacity of existing Landcare groups and networks to effectively operate to their full potential will not be realised'. A second element of this Work Area is that building the capacity of groups or networks can lead them to be more self-sustaining (and by implication less reliant on government funding).

The business case highlights that the initiative aims to build capacity through project development, partnership development, and knowledge sharing, which helps groups or networks to access funding to increase local community environmental action.

The additional details for this Work Area are:

- assist with the development and delivery of capacity building activities such as courses, workshops, seminars and field days
- increase the provision of information to groups by keeping them informed of funding, learning and other relevant opportunities
- build community knowledge and understanding of NRM policies and programs and priority setting processes

5.2.1 Findings

Quantitative data

VLLFI reporting data relevant to this Work Area includes the number of training events or workshops provided. The aggregated reporting data shows that over 2,000² activities have been delivered over the four years of the initiative, with the numbers increasing rapidly from year one.

The reporting data also includes the number of individuals participating in any events (reported as 'people days') (although these participant numbers are not specific to the training events relevant for this Work Area). As for the number of events, the numbers of participants also shows the same pattern of momentum building over the four years.

A third measure is the 'number trial/demonstration sites established'. The aggregated data show that 531 trial or demonstration sites have been established over the four years of the initiative.

² Although we have quoted this figure we do have concerns about the accuracy of the source data. For example, two proponents report having delivered over 100 training activities in a single year, while most other proponents had reported levels under 20.

Qualitative data

Though 63 per cent of respondents to the on-line survey reported that the facilitators had either met or mostly met this Work Area outcome, the profile of responses was less emphatically positive than that for the first Work Area. While there was no specific feedback in the on-line survey that explained this difference, comments from interview participants suggest that it may have been related to the second part of the outcome, namely that groups were to become self-sustaining.

Around 65 per cent of the 310 responses to the on-line survey question on the achievements of facilitators, highlighted some form of capacity building (building knowledge, skills and understanding, building social networks and community engagement). Approximately one quarter of those respondents specifically mentioned provision of information as an important achievement of the facilitators.

While there is no specific mention of facilitators increasing community knowledge and understanding of NRM policies and programs, and priority-setting processes, it seems likely that some of the information provision and capacity building work would have covered these subjects. There was also no specific mention of groups/networks becoming self-sustaining.

The interviews with stakeholders confirm the survey findings. Interviewees frequently highlighted capacity building activities as key roles of the facilitators. Their role as information providers and in identifying opportunities for groups to build their skills and knowledge were mentioned by many of those interviewed.

As mentioned earlier, many of those interviewed did not see the objective of making groups/networks self-sustaining as realistic. They viewed paid professional facilitators as essential to being able to sustain Landcare, rather than being a way to drive Landcare groups to become self-sustaining.

One of the major achievements reported by interviewees was that facilitators maintained enthusiasm and built the momentum of groups. In some cases they reinvigorated interest and activity where it had waned. This is viewed as an even more fundamental role than things like helping groups access funding for NRM related activities. Groups need differing levels of attention depending on their circumstances and paid facilitators have a good track record in ensuring they get the type of attention they need at the time they need it.

Interviewees also highlighted that there continues to be huge opportunities for information sharing across the Landcare community. Tools like web sites and the Landcare magazine exist and have a role but facilitators have a greater capacity to understand and meet the specific needs of their groups.

Summary of findings for Work Area 2:

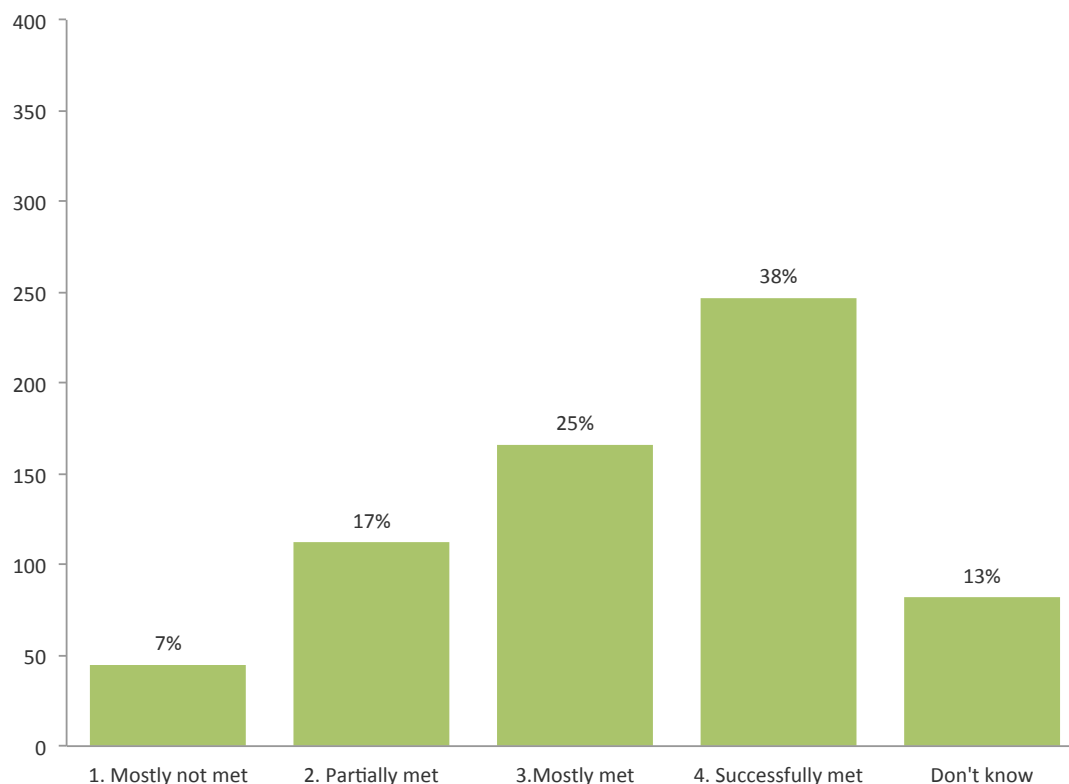
There is adequate evidence that facilitators have delivered capacity building activities with many groups and individuals.

The data available gives some indication of the level of activity under this Work Area, but there was little quantitative information available that assessed the impacts of capacity building activities.

One specific element of this Work Area was the building of community understanding of NRM policies and programs and priority setting processes. No evidence of specific work focussed on this area of understanding has been found and no respondents identified these as areas where their understanding or knowledge improved.

Many respondents felt that the assumption that capacity building work in this area would result in groups or networks becoming self-sustaining was not realistic.

Figure 5-2 On-line survey results for achievement of work area 2: building local community capacity



Recommendations

- iv. Retain the focus on local capacity building and particularly on the facilitators' role in information provision and the identification of opportunities for learning and development of the skills of Landcare members.
- v. Reconsider whether there continues to be a need to build community knowledge and understanding of NRM policies and programs and priority setting processes, and whether the facilitators are well positioned to achieve this objective.
- vi. Remove reference to groups or networks becoming 'self-sustaining' as the main goal of the Work Area title and re-focus on building local capacity.
- vii. Develop more specific measures of the impacts of capacity building. Many CMAs are developing measures of capacity change (e.g. specific changes in knowledge and skills following participation in activities) to aid in their reporting. Measures should be developed in consultation with facilitators (see recommendation iii) and CMAs.

5.3 Work Area 3: Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships

This Work Area reflects concerns that Landcare had been negatively affected by the widespread loss of facilitators and coordinators that had occurred in the 2000s. Efforts in this Work Area were to reconnect with communities, reinvigorate Landcare and then capitalise on interest in new groups. There was a strong focus on creating partnerships as a way to increase the collaboration between government, communities and Landcare.

The additional details for this Work Area covered a wide range of activities mostly focussed at the foundational level:

- facilitate information sharing, cooperation, collaboration and networking among Landcare groups/networks and with other local Landcare facilitators
- assist groups/networks to engage local communities in local activities
- assist groups/networks with their efforts to engage landholders
- develop and support local partnerships with other community groups and schools to increase awareness of, and involvement and participation in Landcare
- assist groups/networks to function effectively and assist new groups/networks to establish
- promote and provide opportunities for broader community participation in Landcare

5.3.1 Findings

Quantitative data

VLLFI reporting data relevant to this Work Area includes

- Number of new Landcare groups/networks formed
- Number new partnerships brokered
- Number community events/activities held (i.e. other than training events/workshops)
- Publicity materials developed (e.g. brochures, advertisements, newspaper articles, web articles)

The strongest indicator of successful delivery of this Work Area outcome is that as many as 179 new groups or networks have formed over the four years of the initiative. Information from our interviews would suggest that many of these new groups could be considered 'non-traditional' Landcare groups. This includes many 'urban' Landcare groups who are forming in many regional towns and cities, as well as in the major urban centres of Melbourne and Geelong. They also include groups that come together because of shared interests such as the emerging equine Landcare groups, agroforestry groups or food focussed groups. The continued emergence of interest-based groups and urban groups that identify as Landcare is a further indicator of the evolving nature of Landcare.

The specific data collected for this Work Area focuses on partnerships and events. As for Work Area 2, the number of events (and associated publicity materials) increased dramatically over the 4 years of the initiative. The number of new partnerships also appears to have increased but the pattern is less definitive. As occurs with some other measures, the source data for this partnerships measure shows very high variability, with proponents reporting anything from 0 to 26 new partnerships in one year. While partnership building is a clear focus of this Work Area, and should be monitored, the variability in the reporting of this measure suggests that the facilitators completing the reports may have used a variety of definitions of 'new partnerships'.

Qualitative data

Similar to Work Area 2, 64 per cent of respondents to the on-line survey reported that the facilitators had either met or mostly met this Work Area outcome (Figure 5-3).

A key aim of this Work Area was to reconnect with the Landcare community (after the loss of many facilitators) and to increase the general level of activity across Landcare. Responses to open-ended questions in the on-line survey included the following:

- 74 respondents highlighted information sharing and networking as an important achievement of their facilitator,
- 24 noted that they had formed partnerships with other groups,
- 60 respondents noted that there was increased coordination and communication across Landcare groups and networks, and
- 69 respondents noted that there was a general increase in activity in Landcare

Among those interviewed, the area that was most consistently identified as being an important value that facilitators offer was their focus on engagement, participation and partnerships. Feedback from both interviews and the on-line survey indicate that community engagement and building partnerships are considered to be foundational and pivotal roles of the facilitators.

There is also widespread appreciation of facilitators' 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. This role is especially important in light of the decreases in access to this type of support from state government agencies (NRM and agricultural).

Some facilitators have also played significant roles in responding to natural disasters. Because their roles are flexible, facilitators have been responsive to these circumstances, which has resulted in them providing valuable assistance following natural disasters in rural areas. For example, facilitators have assisted immediately following floods or bushfires, and also in planning and executing recovery projects (including stock containment, livestock feeding information, erosion control, re-fencing). Their contribution has led to positive on-ground outcomes and a strong recognition within the community of their support role.

Summary of findings for Work Area 3:

Evidence that this Work Area outcome is being delivered can be found in both quantitative and qualitative data.

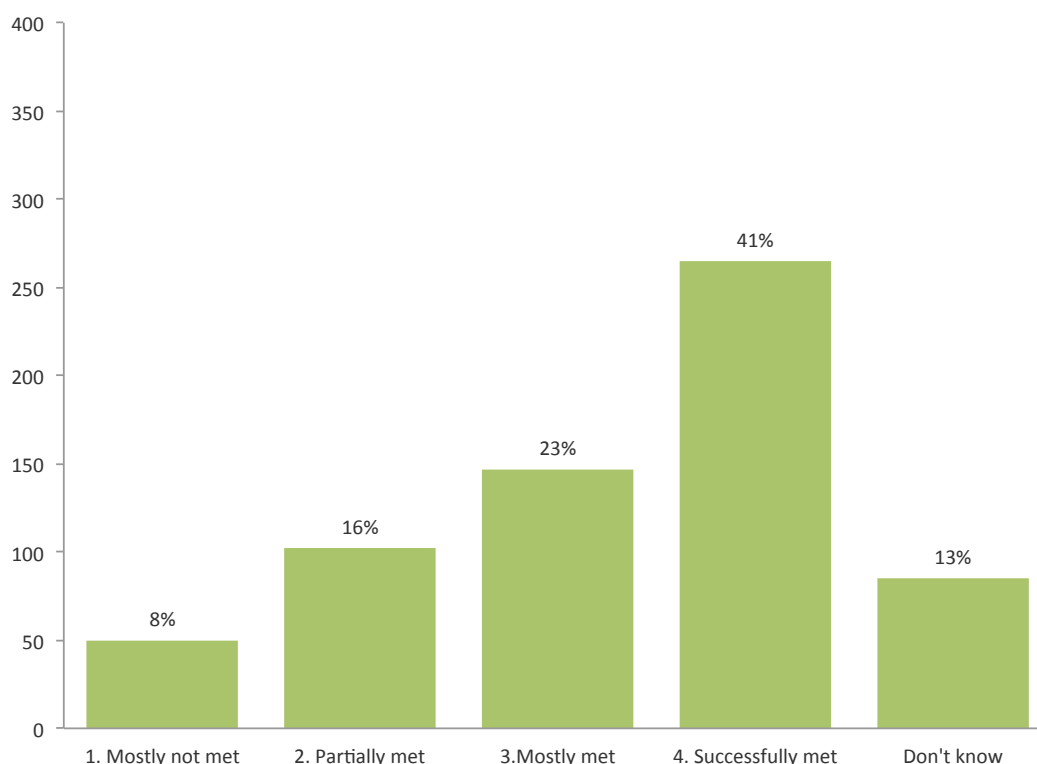
The strongest indication of the successful delivery of this Work Area is the establishment of 179 new Landcare groups or networks.

The available data also suggests that there has been an increasing level of general Landcare activity over the 4 years of the initiative.

The data on new partnerships also appears to indicate growth in this area but the definitions of new partnerships may have been inconsistent between facilitators.

The role that facilitators have played in emergency response may be an unanticipated positive outcome of the initiative.

Figure 5-3 On-line survey results for achievement of work area 3: community engagement and partnerships



Recommendations

- viii. Continue the focus on basic engagement of the local community as a key foundational activity of facilitators.
- ix. Ensure the new groups that have been established recently, continue to be supported in their early phases.
- x. Continue to support the establishment of 'non-traditional' Landcare groups, especially those that form around shared interests (rather than locales), in order to reflect the evolving nature of Landcare as a community-led movement.
- xi. Refine the performance measures for this Work Area focussing on measures of community engagement (e.g. clarification of partnerships) or the results of that engagement (e.g. measures of changes in knowledge and awareness). (Also refer to Recommendation iii regarding the process for refining these measures.)

5.4 Work Area 4: Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The rationale for this Work Area appears to have been that the facilitators can assist in reducing some of the project development and management burden on local Landcare. This could be by helping groups or networks to meet their planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. This could also help to address one of the issues often highlighted for Landcare, which is the need to become more effective at communicating the good works of Landcare. Work in this area was also intended to help groups and networks to make stronger links to organisations and agencies that might share their interests.

The additional details for this Work Area are:

- assist with the interpretation of regional natural resource management plans and priorities at group or network scale
- assist groups/networks with the development or review of practical local level action or strategic plans, if required
- provide an annual report to DELWP, as the funding body

5.4.1 Findings

Quantitative data

VLLFI reporting data relevant to this Work Area includes³

- Number new/updated group/network action plans
- Number project reports written or reviewed (1,444 over the four years)

The aggregated data shows that 525 new or up-dated action plans have been produced over the life of the VLLFI. This data suggests that the initiative has completed some type of planning work with around three quarters of all the Landcare groups in Victoria. Assisting with reporting is another significant area of support given that for 3 of the 4 years, the number of reports written or reviewed each year exceeds the number of Landcare groups supported.

This data suggests that most of the Landcare groups in Victoria have benefited directly from the planning and reporting support provided by the facilitators.

Qualitative data

The on-line survey results for the achievement of this Work Area outcome are again consistent with the other outcomes, particularly 2 and 3. In this case 65 per cent of respondents felt that the outcome was mostly or fully met (Figure 5-4).

Some respondents (7 per cent or 27 of 364 respondents) highlighted that with the facilitator in place, they were more organised and had improved their project planning, reporting and governance.

Many interviewees noted the importance of the facilitators' role as the person who would bring the groups and networks to the table to prepare plans and priorities, and to discuss opportunities to act on those

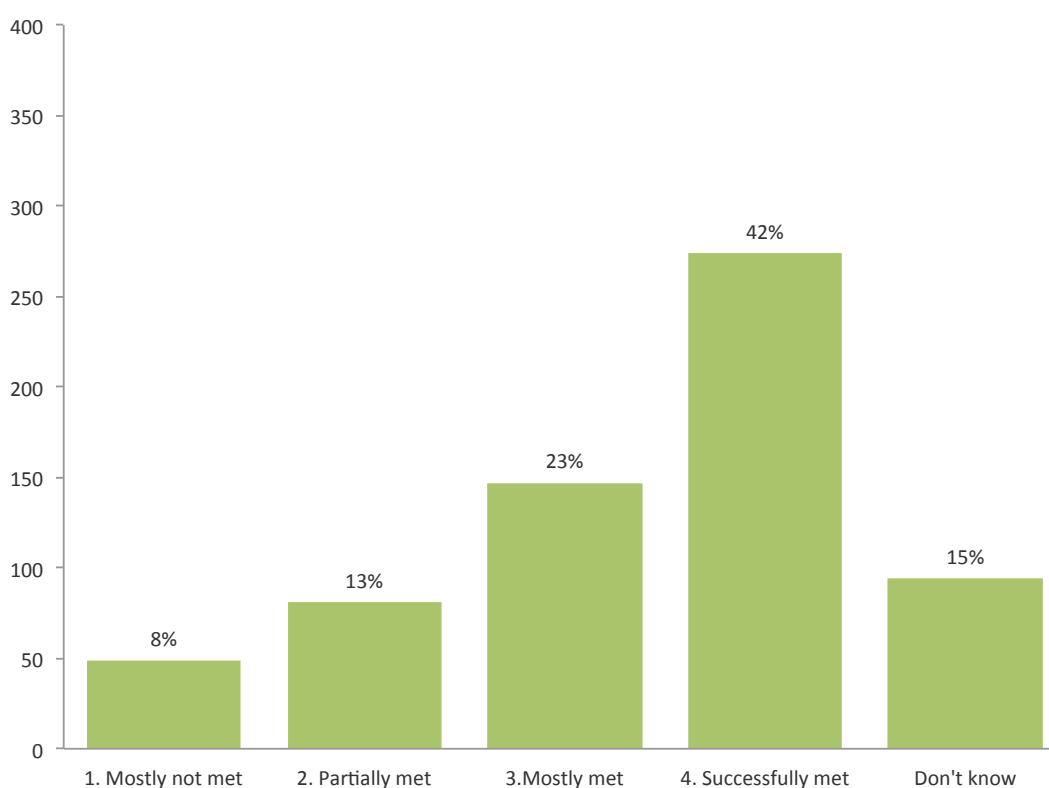
³ The initiative reporting includes another measure under this Work Area, namely 'Number trial/demonstration sites established'. This measure seems to be more closely related to Work Area 2 which focuses on community capacity, rather than this Work Area which focuses on planning and reporting. This measure has been included in Work Area 2.

plans. This particularly came to the fore when groups or networks were applying for funding. The facilitators understanding of government operations as well as their understanding of their local Landcare groups was a valuable combination.

Many interviewees reported that having the facilitator in place allowed groups to focus on their interests (on-ground action) rather than on the administration and process associated with Landcare (e.g. funding applications, routine reporting).

There was widespread recognition across interviewees of the risk that facilitators could be used for administration of local Landcare groups rather than focussing on development and capacity building opportunities. However, it appears that this risk is being managed by the networks, groups and facilitators themselves. They generally have a clear understanding of the developmental role that facilitators are expected to play and they monitor the work of their facilitators to ensure it remains their main focus. This is not to say that there will not be occasions when facilitators may need to take on an administrative support function for a group, but this was considered to be a stop gap measure.

Figure 5-4 On-line survey results for achievement of work area 4: assisting with planning, monitoring, valuation and reporting



Summary of findings for Work Area 4:

There is good evidence from the interviews and data collected that this Work Area outcome is being delivered, particularly in the form of support to prepare or up-date local action plans, and through the preparation and review of written reports.

There is good qualitative evidence that having facilitators in place did help groups to refocus on their interests and reduced the burden created by reporting and other administrative requirements.

Neither monitoring nor evaluation were mentioned as focal areas of work or achievements in either the qualitative or quantitative data.

There was widespread recognition of the risk that facilitators could be used as for administrative support, rather than capacity building and development of local Landcare. In most cases this risk was managed by the networks/groups themselves through being explicit regarding acceptable duties for the facilitators.

Recommendations

- xii. Continue to reinforce the understanding that the facilitators are to focus on supporting groups in planning and reporting.
- xiii. Review and, in the light of experiences over the first phase of the VLLFI, revise information on the roles and purpose of Landcare facilitators that has been provided to host organisations.

5.5 Work Area 5: Securing project grants and other funding

This area of work was intended to help groups and networks increase their access to additional funding. To some degree this Work Area is a product of the capacity building that is the focus of other Work Areas. For instance, with improved capacity, groups and networks are better placed to secure additional funding. The VLLFI funds can act as 'seed funding' that groups and networks use to expand their reach and impact. For the government, this focus has the potential to increase the ultimate impact of the VLLFI funding.

The additional detail for this Work Area is:

- identify grants and other funding sources and facilitate groups/networks to apply for and secure funds

5.5.1 Findings

Quantitative data

VLLFI reporting data relevant to this Work Area includes

- in-kind contributions (e.g. provision of resources/labour) that the facilitator has helped broker
- number of funding applications written or reviewed
- external (non-VLLFI) funding secured

The VLLFI summary report data notes that over 2,355 funding applications have been written or reviewed by facilitators over the four years of the initiative. The same report also records that approximately \$10

million of external funding was secured⁴ in each year. While this exact sum may be difficult to verify, results from the interviews do suggest that this was a particularly successful part of the initiative. Interview participants were asked to identify examples where their group (or groups within their network) collaborated other Landcare groups or with external organisations. Responses to this question identified a large number and a very wide range of organisations that Landcare groups had worked with, which in many cases included provision of funding.

These organisations included:

- local governments across the state
- state and Australian government agencies (e.g. Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee, water authorities, Parks Victoria)
- farmer related organisations (e.g. Southern Farming Systems, Birchip Cropping Group, GippsDairy)
- conservation and environment organisations (e.g. Phillip Island Nature Parks, Field Naturalists groups)
- private sector business related to primary industries (e.g. Santos, GDF Suez, Alcoa, HVP, Origin Energy)
- other private sector businesses (e.g. General Motors Holden)

The examples provided here represent a small sample of the organisations mentioned by interviewees.

The in-kind contributions are noted as descriptive text in the annual reports (not quantified) and do not appear to have been consistently completed.

Qualitative data

The on-line survey results suggest that respondents felt quite strongly that this Work Area outcome had been delivered. Similar to Work Area 1, some 71 per cent of respondents felt that the facilitators either met or mostly met this outcome (Figure 5-5). In relation to a question that focussed on the achievements of the facilitators, 29 respondents (9 per cent) mentioned securing funding, while another 38 respondents (10 per cent) mentioned increased access to funding in response to a question on what their group or network was doing differently as a result of the facilitator being in place.

One of the most frequently mentioned improvements related to funding. Respondents highlighted two aspects – continued funding for the facilitator positions and funding for Landcare works.

As has already been mentioned in reference to other Work Areas, many interviewees highlighted the role that facilitators have played in linking groups to opportunities to seek funding. Across all regions there is a strong sense that less funding is available from both the Victorian and Australian governments for NRM projects. Many interviewees also noted that the funding that is available tends to be small and short-term. Some groups and networks reported having some success at attracting funds from private sources but this support was unstable and somewhat unpredictable (e.g. it may have depended on particular events that drove a company to partner with local Landcare such as GDF Suez following the Morwell coal mine fire, or GMH following the closure of their proving ground at Lang Lang). While groups or networks welcomed private funding (corporate or philanthropic, for example) there was no expectation that it was a viable long-term alternative to government support.

⁴ The report records external funding for each year of the initiative. These are totaled, which suggests that over \$40 million of external funding has been secured. A preliminary review of the annual data suggests that there appears to be significant double counting from one year to the next. Because the totals for each year are around \$10 million (varying from \$9.1 to \$11.1), we have presumed that this may be a more accurate figure than the sum of all four years.

The Victorian Landcare Grants were very frequently noted as critical source of funding that is highly valued by the facilitators and their groups. It was noted as one of the more stable sources of support, though many are concerned that a declining amount of funding continues to be distributed amongst a stable or increasing number of individual groups and networks.

Summary of findings for Work Area 5:

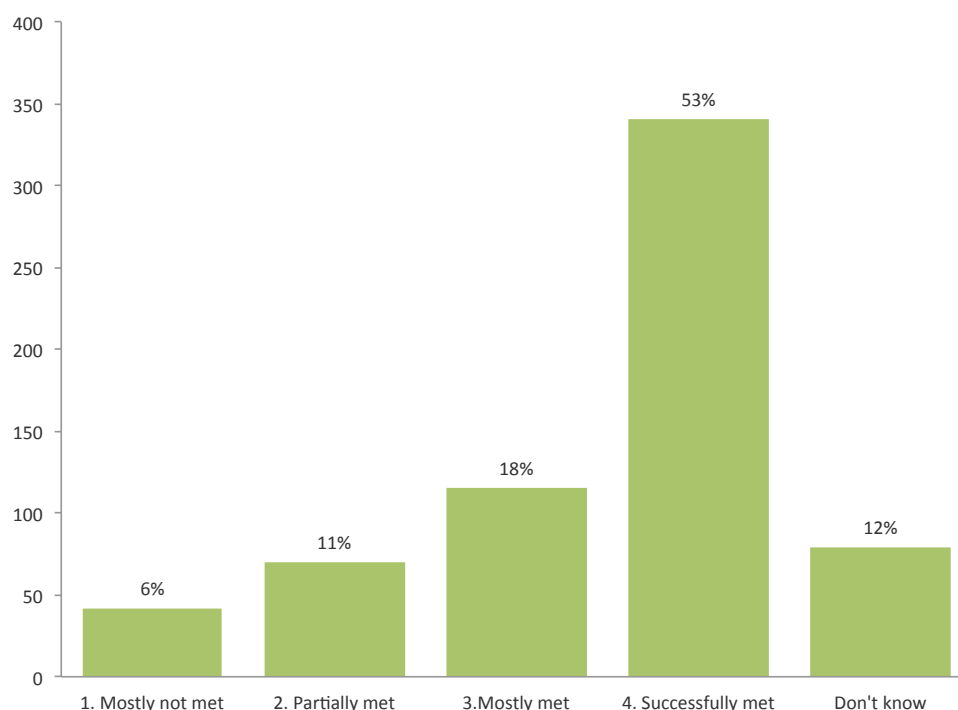
There is a strong qualitative evidence for the achievement of this Work Area outcome. Respondents to the on-line survey appeared to feel that this and Work Area 1 had been the Work Areas that were most successfully delivered. The number of funding applications written or reviewed is very high, which is consistent with feedback from the on-line survey and interviews that highlighted the role of the facilitators in working with groups to seek additional funding.

The reporting data on external funding secured does not appear to be reliable so it is not possible to quantify the funding leveraged by the facilitator initiative.

Recommendations

- xiv. Improve the collection of external funding data in order to be able to accurately and confidently report on the leveraging impact of the facilitator initiative. This would include clarifying the specific types of funding data that is to be collected (e.g. cash co-investment, in-kind, private funding etc.) and the rationale for collecting and reporting it.

Figure 5-5 On-line survey results for achievement of work area 5: securing project grants and other funding



5.6 Program design and delivery

The VLLFI featured several unusual design and delivery characteristics. Over the course of the on-line survey and particularly the interviews, these characteristics were explored. The results of this part of the evaluation have been divided into six sub-sections:

- Distribution of facilitators across the state
- Employment arrangements
- Facilitator roles and responsibilities – including project management and reporting roles
- Facilitator support – including induction and training
- Financial management
- Overall program development, delivery and management – including selection and contracting

5.6.1 Distribution of facilitators across the state

Issues covered in this part of the evaluation include:

- access to facilitators
- differing demands on facilitators

An important question for this evaluation was whether there is a case for expansion of facilitator support. This included considering how to address the incomplete spatial coverage of existing facilitator positions. The evaluation has identified three situations that could benefit from reconsidering the number and or arrangements for facilitators:

- facilitators that have a large number of groups to support (some have over 20 groups)
- facilitators that have only a small number of groups to support
- groups or networks that do not have access to a facilitator but would benefit from one (it is important to note that not all groups that fell into these 'gap' areas actually wanted a facilitator)

While it may be appealing to develop a formula for the optimum number of groups and members that one facilitator could support, the variability across Landcare means that this is unrealistic. It is however, important that the issues of uneven access to facilitators and differing demands on facilitators be addressed.

Re-organising the existing facilitators will not resolve incomplete spatial coverage of facilitators, therefore additional facilitators are needed. The final number of new facilitators needed will depend on what can be achieved through this re-organisation step. Based on discussions across all regions, we estimate that six to ten new facilitators are needed, and indicative locations for them are Corangamite, Goulburn-Broken, Glenelg Hopkins, North Central, Port Phillip and Westernport, and Wimmera.

Recommendations

It is recommended the DELWP, CMAs, VLC and FTLA review the existing arrangements and determine where additional positions should be located. This group should consider expansion of the program's coverage to fill gaps concurrently with a fine-tuning of the existing arrangements to achieve a better workload balance. The initial process could involve a region-by-region engagement and discussions, which would be followed by a statewide assessment.

At the regional level, three strategies should be used to adjust current arrangements:

- facilitators add new groups to their existing workload

- facilitators reduce the number of groups they currently support
- new facilitator positions are created

Estimating the number of new positions that would be required depends on:

- 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 are any other barriers in the gap areas that might weigh against employing a facilitator (e.g. some areas may not have local capacity to employ a facilitator).

The current working estimate of the number of new facilitator positions is six to ten. The DELWP, CMAs, VLC and FTLA group could work through these factors and then recommend the final number and location of additional facilitators.

5.6.2 Employment arrangements

Issues covered in this part of the evaluation include:

- Employment contracts and processes
- Hosting arrangements
- Employment conditions
- Recruitment and retention

Findings on these issues have been drawn from the interviews, from the survey results, and from data on turnover of facilitators from across the program. The key data on facilitator turnover is:

- a total of 122 facilitators have been employed over the life of the VLLFI
- 50 per cent of organisations had the one facilitator for the four years of VLLFI
- two organisations had four and five different facilitators employed over the four years of VLLFI

The strong feedback from the interviews was that the flexibility in the employment arrangements under the initiative was overwhelmingly positive. Because of the flexibility, many slightly different models emerged, according to the needs and circumstance in each region. This tailoring has created strong ownership of the initiative among the participating groups and helped to reinforce Landcare's status as a community-based program.

Two factors had a major influence on the success of the employment arrangements – the host organisation employing the facilitator and the location where the facilitator worked.

Facilitators who were located in a CMA or state government offices generally reported that this was a very helpful arrangement for their networking and communication roles (as well as administrative support for some). They felt they were readily able to keep in touch with the agencies that Landcare would often work with. They also reported that they had good peer support and the ability to readily access advice and experience. Some did note a disadvantage, which was that they could be perceived as CMA staff rather than Landcare (which could influence their interactions with Landcare).

There were some cases where the employment arrangements created problems for both the facilitators and the employer. These issues can be difficult to anticipate, but where difficulties did arise, they were often with organisations that had little experience as a direct employer, or where strong governance arrangements were not in place.

One common issue for both facilitators and employers was the question of the appropriate salary for facilitators. Under the current arrangements this is part of the responsibility of the employing organisation and this review has not identified any reason to change that arrangement. However, it is critical that facilitator salaries are adjusted to at least match annual CPI changes.

Recommendations

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.

5.6.3 Facilitator roles and responsibilities

Issues covered in this part of the evaluation included:

- Building capacity not dependency
- Key Work Areas
- Focus on facilitation versus project management versus extension. What is the appropriate mix? What provides the best return on investment?
- Integration with other Landcare support roles

The facilitator role, with respect to focussing on capacity and development, is well understood across all stakeholders. The daily challenges that arise for Landcare groups mean that from time to time facilitators were asked to perform tasks that, strictly speaking, might not be considered part of a facilitator's role. There was no strong evidence that this was creating a major or widespread problem or was increasing dependency on facilitators. Facilitators and their hosts were aware of this risk and reported that they were managing these issues as they arose (usually by putting measures in place to ensure the groups understand the facilitator role and focus on using them in the appropriate ways).

Interviews and the survey results indicated that the facilitators' major roles were in helping groups to identify opportunities, to access specific skills or expertise and to advise on project management and delivery. There was little evidence that facilitators were directly managing projects or providing extension advice directly to Landcare groups. This focus is very consistent with the intended role of facilitators.

No facilitators or stakeholders reported issues with integration of their role with other Landcare support roles. This is likely to be a reflection of the strong communication networks that exist across Landcare.

Recommendations

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.

5.6.4 Facilitator support

Issues covered in this part of the evaluation included:

- Induction for hosts/employers,
- Induction for facilitators
- Training and professional development

Feedback from interviewees was that the induction processes used at the beginning of the initiative were positive and helpful. However, facilitators that were employed after those inductions did note that they received little guidance on their role and had limited understanding of their links to the initiative.

Facilitator support and access to training and professional development was highly variable. Some facilitators felt very well supported and others felt professionally isolated. Some reported that one of the benefits of having an office in the local CMA or with the state government department was access to professional development opportunities and also to peer support. Other facilitators reported that their host organisation was reluctant to allow them time to undertake professional development.

Some facilitators highlighted that they learned a lot from each other, however this is not consistent across the cohort of facilitators. As a group, the facilitators have a wealth of experience and knowledge, and are a very capable group. Many survey respondents reported that the new facilitators who recently came into Victorian Landcare brought many new ideas and fresh approaches to groups and networks. There is great potential for further growth through sharing their experiences and lessons but this would require active support from DELWP.

Recommendations

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.

5.6.5 Financial management

Issues covered in this part of the evaluation included:

- Financial management and auditing processes
- Payment schedule and process
- Value for money

A total of \$12.8 million in funding was provided over four years for the VLLFI (\$3.2 million per annum). Detailed data for the first three years of the initiative has been reviewed. Key observations are:

- Initially many recipients were underspent. This has been addressed and there are currently only eight recipients underspent.
- Measures have been put in place to document how annual under-expenditure is being managed. This process also documents carryover funding and records advice or requests for action, and responses to those requests.
- Reporting and milestone payments do not appear to be closely aligned/ linked

A key measure of the value for money from the investment in the VLLFI is the additional funding secured from other sources. This data is captured in the annual reporting for the initiative (Table 5-1). This data represents an excellent opportunity to describe the value for money that the initiative can provide. However, the ability to make that case is compromised by the data quality. The figures presented in the VLLFI report appear to include significant double counting from year to year. That is, total budgets of multiple year projects are recorded more than once. This means the total funds secured is likely to be significantly less than the \$40 million reported. This figure also seems unlikely given the recent funding environment.

Table 5-1 External funding extracted from summary report on the VLLFI

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total
External funding secured	\$10,420,582	\$9,148,089	\$11,165,519	\$9,345,430	\$40,079,620

Recommendations

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.

5.6.6 Overall program development, delivery and management

Issues covered in this part of the evaluation included:

- Selection of successful applications and contracting
- Role of DELWP staff
- Annual reporting process against Program Development
- Program Delivery Plans – process of negotiation between Department and groups/networks

The application and selection process used in the initiative meant that some Landcare groups or networks were unsuccessful (Figure 5-6). This has resulted in some Landcare groups feeling very frustrated. While a competitive application process may have been an effective way to identify those organisations that were motivated and willing to take the responsibilities that come with employing a facilitator, it may have also disenfranchised some groups or networks who did not have the experience or capacity needed to be able to prepare a competitive application. Arguably, these may be some of the groups or networks most in need of support from a facilitator in order to build their capacity.

Many of the facilitators reported that their Program Delivery Plan was extremely important. They noted that it was very helpful for them to understand their role and that they referred to it frequently. It appears to be a valuable record of responsibilities and expectations negotiated between the Department and host organisations.

Few facilitators knew the DELWP Landcare program staff, and they were not aware of any specific links (aside from administrative functions) between their roles and the DELWP staff.

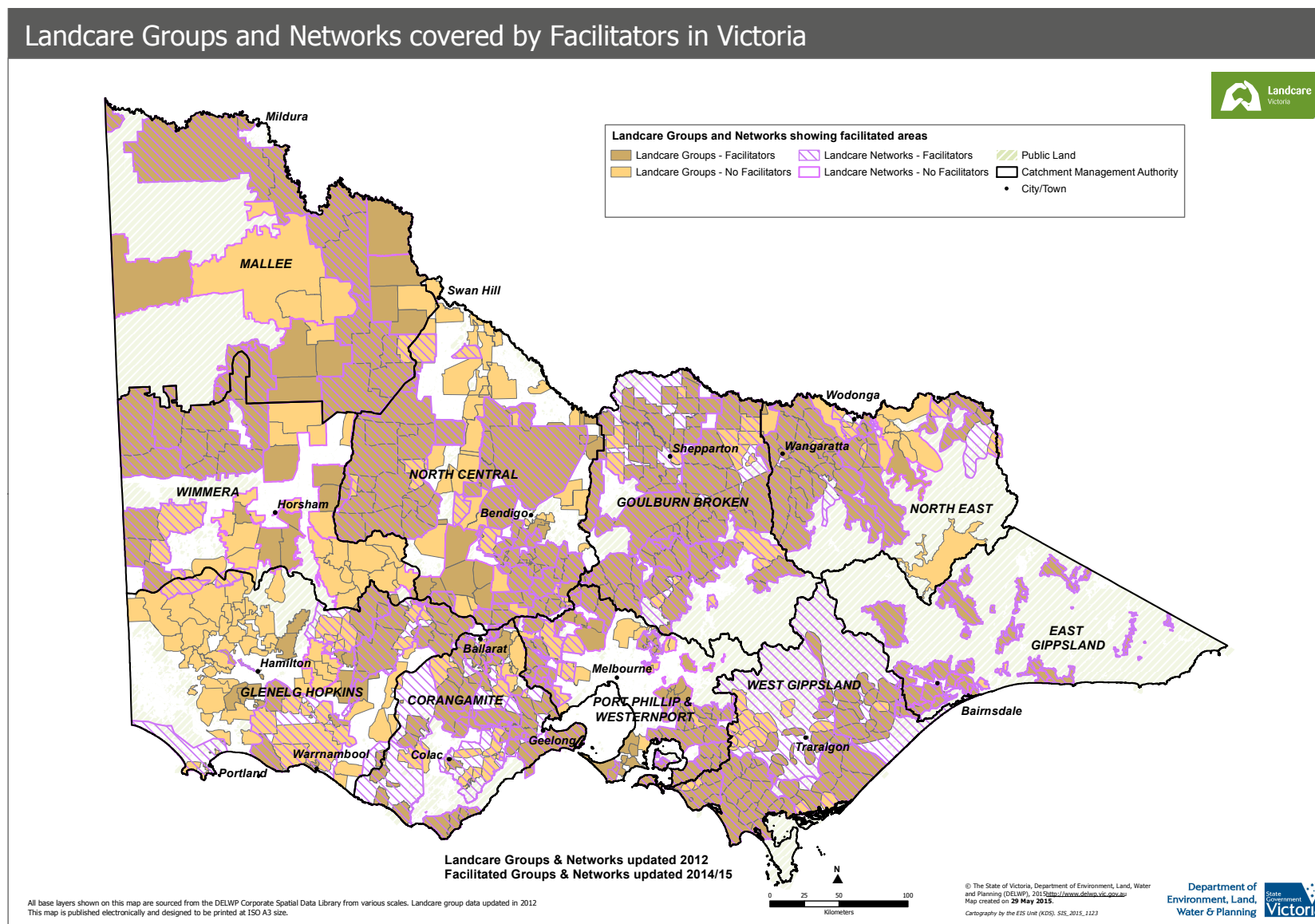
Though supportive of the need for reporting, many facilitators expressed frustration at the reporting required for the VLLFI. They noted that they did not receive feedback on how the reporting data was used. Most facilitators said that they did not use the data collected themselves because they didn't consider it useful for monitoring their own project delivery. Several facilitators commented that they were frustrated by a recent request to provide totals for reporting data for the four years of the initiative, when they believed they had already provided annual data to DELWP.

Recommendations

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

Revise reporting approach for the VLLFI. If data that facilitators are required to provide is not used in any subsequent reporting then consider removing it from reporting.

Figure 5-6 Landcare groups and networks - with and without facilitators



5.7 Review of alternative models

A review of alternative models of Landcare across other states and territories was undertaken in addition to evaluating the VLLFI components. The review was completed to further inform the development of options and recommendations for future iterations of the VLLFI.

A total of eight Landcare representatives from across the country were contacted by telephone and a semi-structured interview used to record responses. The focus of the consultation was to understand what support is available to the Landcare community and the benefits and challenges of current models.

These interviews found that no other State or Territory had an equivalent centrally administered state funded facilitator model in place. There is however overwhelming support for such a model.

New South Wales are in the process of establishing such a model and several other states are mounting a case to apply for funding for local facilitator positions. In Western Australia there are some Landcare groups that have independently employed local facilitators and it was noted that these groups are by far the most effective at engaging volunteers and getting on-ground works delivered.

Overall respondents indicated that current levels of support for Landcare are not fully meeting the needs of groups and networks. There are gaps in the coverage of support and this means some groups are not very active and it is more difficult for them to attract membership and sustain the interest of current volunteers.

In summary, the Victorian local facilitator model is applauded by other states and territories and seen as an effective way to deliver support and improve the ability of the Landcare community to deliver environmental and social outcomes.

6 Summary of recommendations

6.1 Work Areas

Recommendations from evaluation of Work Areas are

Work Area 1: Supporting on-ground NRM delivery:

- xv. Continue to focus on the support functions described in this Work Area, particularly planning and development of local projects, and assistance and support for delivery of on-ground projects.
- xvi. Implement a quality assurance process to ensure the data collected for this Work Area can be confidently reported. Providing each facilitator with a copy of the reports that incorporate their data should be a component of this quality assurance process.
- xvii. Convene a short-term reporting project with representatives of the VLLFI facilitators (e.g. three meetings over four weeks) to revise the performance measures being used to monitor Work Area progress, reducing the focus on on-ground works and increasing the focus on the support functions.

Work area 2: Building local community capacity to enable groups/ networks to be self-sustaining

- xviii. Retain the focus on local capacity building and particularly on the facilitators' role in information provision and the identification of opportunities for learning and development of the skills of Landcare members.
- xix. Reconsider whether there continues to be a need to build community knowledge and understanding of NRM policies and programs and priority setting processes, and whether the facilitators are well positioned to achieve this objective.
- xx. Remove reference to groups or networks becoming 'self-sustaining' as the main goal of the Work Area title and re-focus on building local capacity.
- xxi. Develop more specific measures of the impacts of capacity building. Many CMAs are developing measures of capacity change (e.g. specific changes in knowledge and skills following participation in activities) to aid in their reporting. Measures should be developed in consultation with facilitators (see recommendation iii) and CMAs.

Work Area 3: Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships

- xxii. Continue the focus on basic engagement of the local community as a key foundational activity of facilitators.
- xxiii. Ensure the new groups that have been established recently, continue to be supported in their early phases.
- xxiv. Continue to support the establishment of 'non-traditional' Landcare groups, especially those that form around shared interests (rather than locales), in order to reflect the evolving nature of Landcare as a community-led movement.
- xxv. Refine the performance measures for this Work Area focussing on measures of community engagement (e.g. clarification of partnerships) or the results of that engagement (e.g. measures of changes in knowledge and awareness). (Also refer to Recommendation iii regarding the process for refining these measures.)

Work Area 4: Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- xxvi. Continue to reinforce the understanding that the facilitators are to focus on supporting groups in planning and reporting.
- xxvii. Review and, in the light of experiences over the first phase of the VLLFI, revise information on the roles and purpose of Landcare facilitators that has been provided to host organisations. Providing a more prescriptive 'rules' on facilitators' duties is not necessary.

Work Area 5: Securing project grants and other funding

- xxviii. Improve the collection of external funding data in order to be able to accurately and confidently report on the leveraging impact of the facilitator initiative. This would include clarifying the specific types of funding data that is to be collected (e.g. cash co-investment, in-kind, private funding etc.) and the rationale for collecting and reporting it.

6.2 Program design and delivery

Recommendations from the evaluation of the program design and delivery are:

Distribution of facilitators across the state

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. The initial process could involve a region-by-region engagement and discussions, which would be followed by a statewide assessment.

At the regional level, three strategies should be considered to adjust current arrangements:

- facilitators add new groups to their existing workload
- facilitators reduce the number of groups they currently support
- new facilitator positions are created

Estimating the number of new positions that would be required depends on:

- 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 are any other barriers in the gap areas that might weigh against employing a facilitator (e.g. some areas may not have local capacity to employ 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. Responsibility for this could be shared between DELWP as the funding body and VLC/FTLA as the peak body.

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. There is no need for the initiative to be more prescriptive regarding the facilitator's duties.

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.

DELWP and VLC/FTLA should jointly convene an annual gathering specifically 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.

Overall program development, delivery and management

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

In considering how to allocate the resources available for facilitators, consider capacity of local Landcare as one of the factors used to determine need.

Revisit the reporting approach for the VLLFI. If data that facilitators are required to provide is not used in any subsequent reporting then consider removing it from reporting.

Appendix 1: Profile of respondents to the on-line survey

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 and smaller numbers of other interested individuals. Figure A1 illustrates the proportion of each stakeholder group.

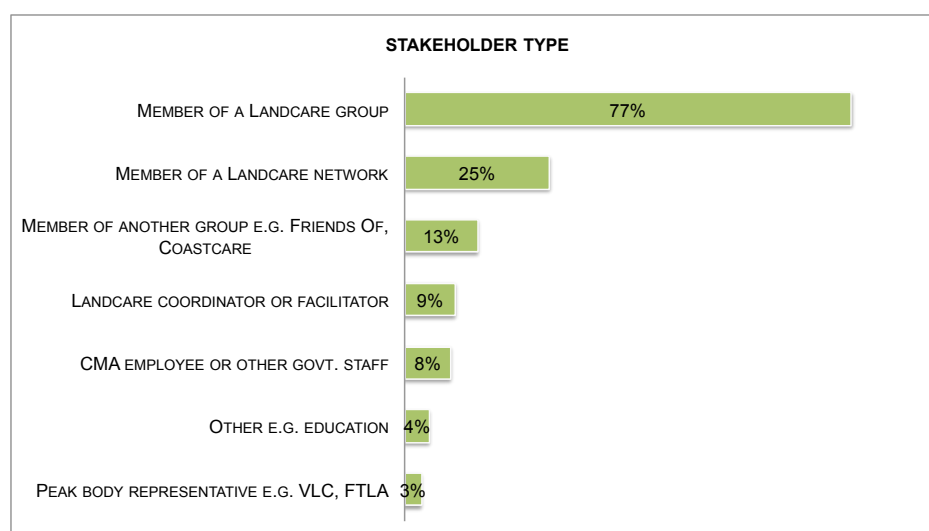


Figure A1. Respondents profile by stakeholder type

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 A2. This reflects the age profile that is evident amongst a lot of volunteer based organisations. A small majority of respondents were female (52 per cent).

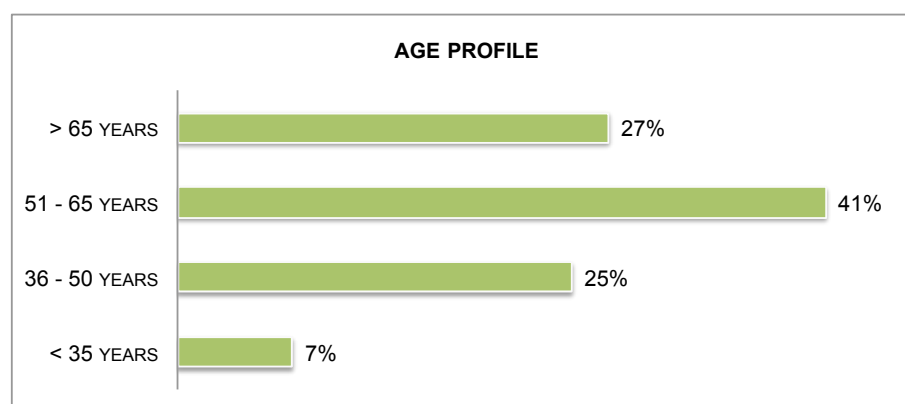


Figure A2. Respondent's age profile

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 beginning. Figure A3 illustrates the profile of respondents with respect to years of involvement in Landcare.

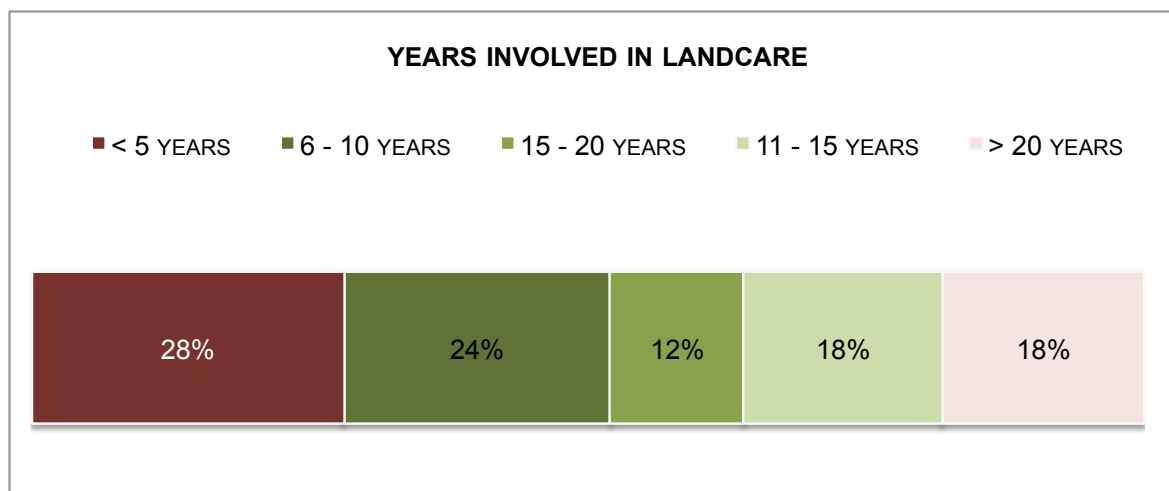


Figure A3. Number of years of involvement in Landcare

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 A4. Port Phillip and Westernport 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.

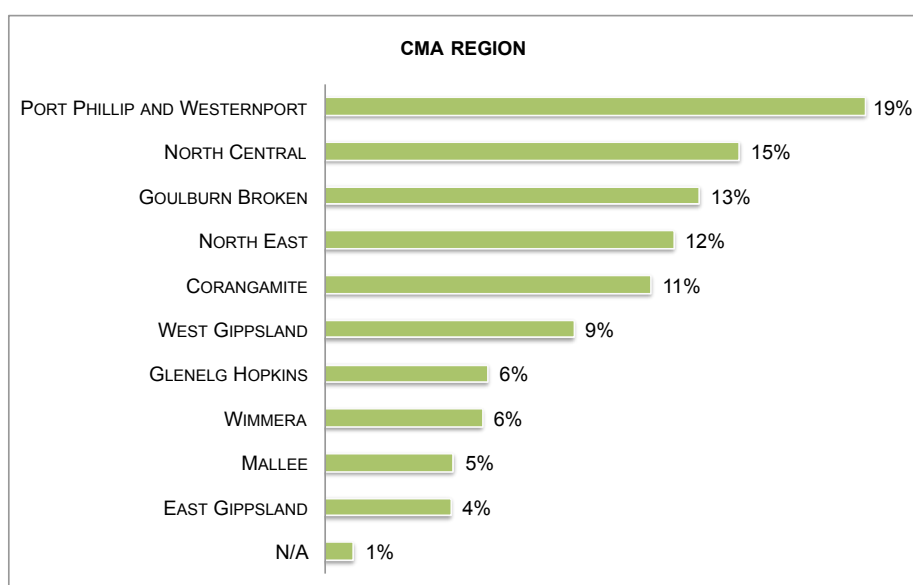


Figure A4. Respondents by CMA region

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 A5).

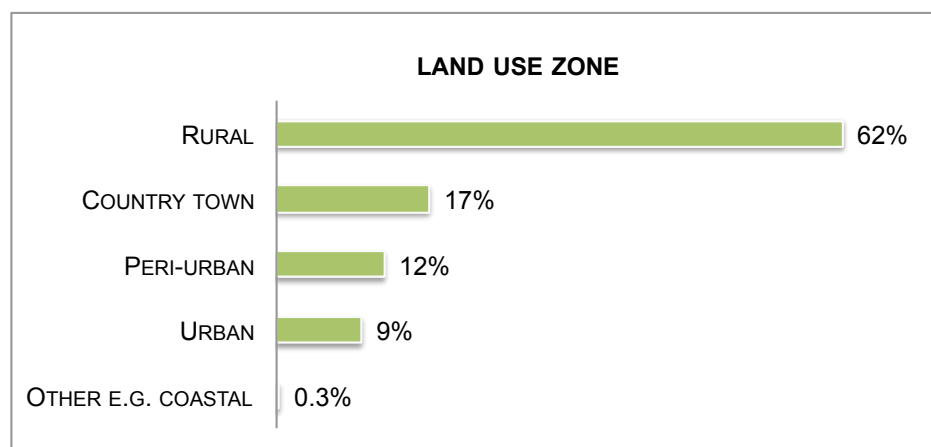


Figure A5. Respondents' local environment

Land use type

There was a good spread of land use types amongst respondents (Figure A6). 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.

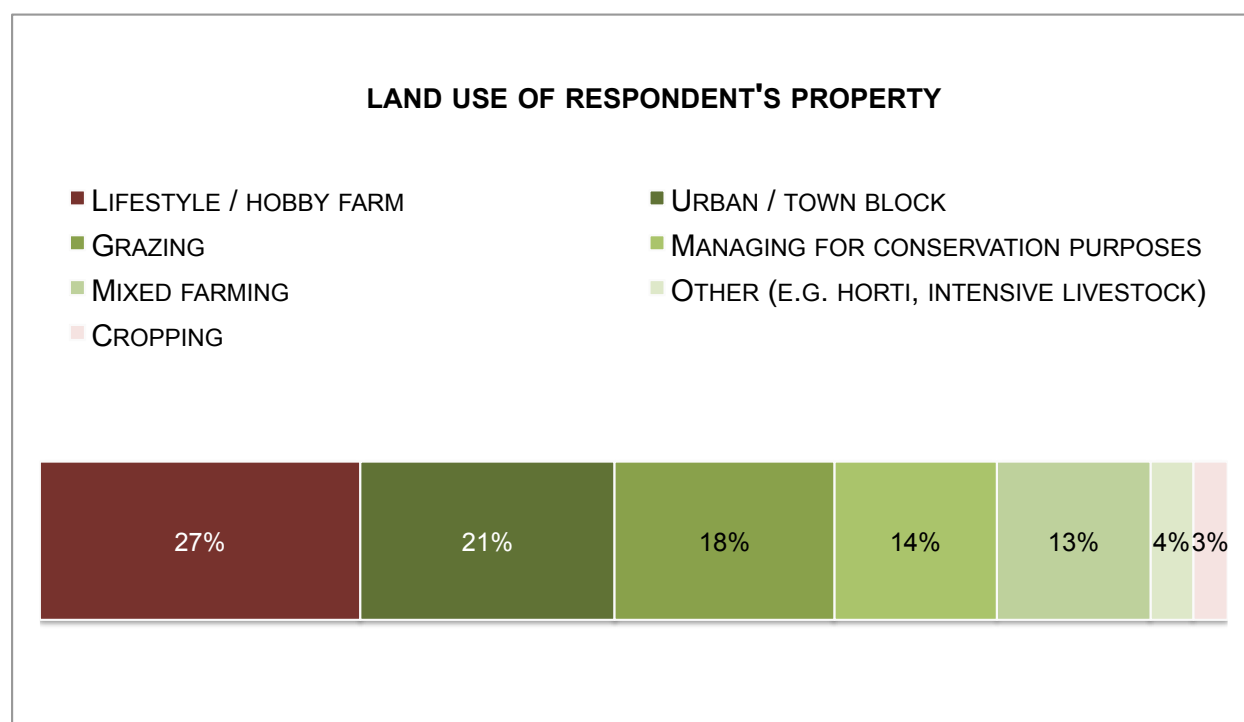


Figure A6. Main land use of respondent's property

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 A7. 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.

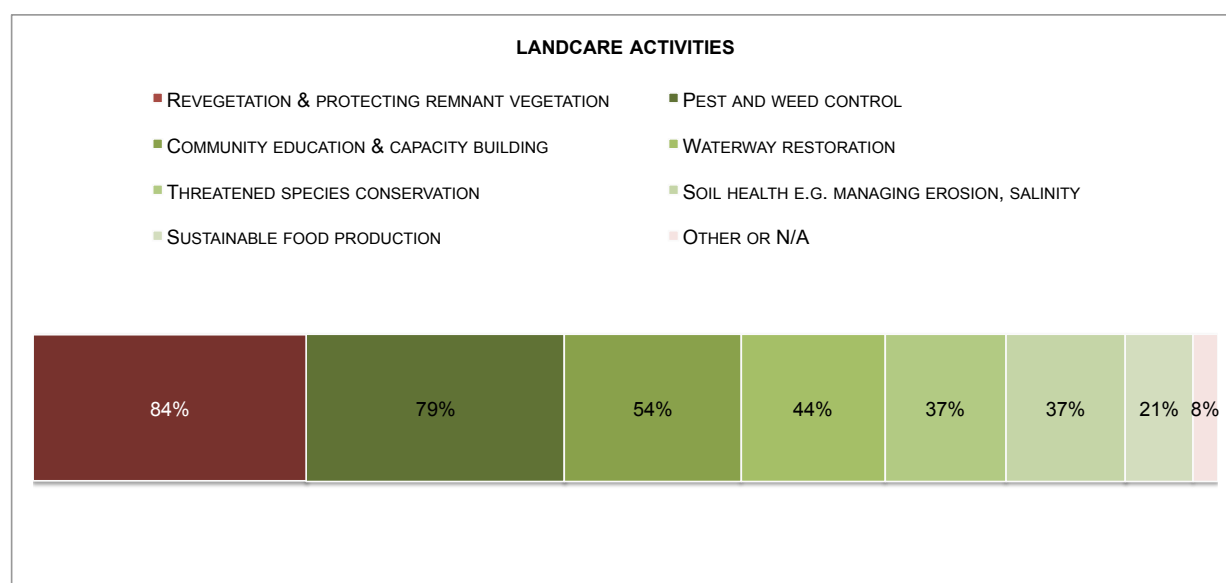


Figure A7. Main focus areas for Landcare activity

Facilitator access

Over three quarters of respondents indicated that their groups had received some level of support from a facilitator funded under the state government's initiative (Figure A8).

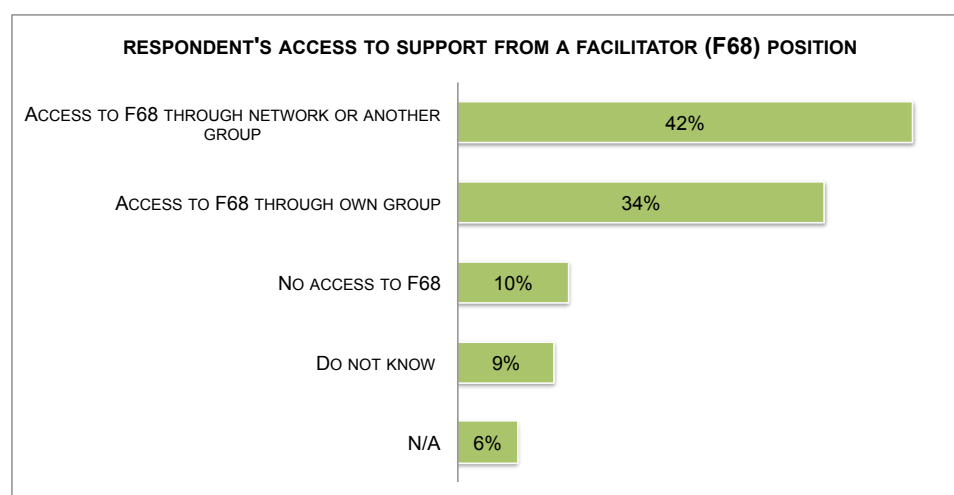


Figure A8. Main focus areas for Landcare activity

Ten per cent (or 71 respondents) indicated that their group didn't 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.