The Landcare movement in the Port Phillip and Western Port region began close to 25 years ago and since then has grown into a substantial and valuable player in natural resource management (NRM).

The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA) values the contribution of Landcare towards achieving beneficial outcomes for our natural environment, local communities and sustainable land management, and is committed to supporting Landcare groups and networks to continue their important work.

The PPWCMA Landcare Support Plan guides the PPWCMA’s support for Landcare in this region, and this plan is a regional expression of the 2012 Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan.

The PPWCMA will provide targeted support to help Landcare groups and networks in this region to continue to play an effective and valued role in natural resource management (NRM), with a clear focus on helping groups and networks operate effectively, engage with their communities, collaborate with partners, do on ground works and tell their Landcare stories.

With this continued support, the PPWCMA hopes to see the Landcare movement in this region continue to develop and grow such that together we achieve great results for our land, natural environment and communities – now and into the future.

Neville Goodwin
Chair
The Port Phillip and Western Port region
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Landcare began when farming neighbours recognised that they could be more effective and have a greater impact if they addressed common natural resource management concerns together. The first Landcare group was formed at Winjallok near St. Arnaud in Victoria in 1986.

Over the decades since its inception, Landcare has become part of the social fabric of Victoria. It has achieved success in nurturing a more sustainable land management ethos and practice.

There are now more than 750 Landcare community groups and networks, and more than 500 other community-based natural resource management groups in Victoria. In total, these community-based natural resource management groups include around 60,000 members and an additional 45,000 volunteers that contribute their time and energy each year to undertake local action to care for the land.

Over time, Landcare has become more connected. While Landcare groups are embedded and continue to operate at the local community scale, over half of these groups are now linked to and represented by Landcare networks that tie activities together at a landscape scale. Other community-based natural resource management groups are part of Landcare networks too. Presently, there are more than 60 Landcare networks in Victoria.

Landcare is many things to many people but it is still about a simple idea; people organising to come together to discuss shared issues, and to design and implement practical solutions. People see results and want to be part of it.

From its perennial roots in production agriculture, Landcare has branched out to encompass environmental citizenship as practiced via different land uses and management practices on both public and private land – in the bush, along the coast, and in urban and peri-urban areas.
Victorian Government support for Landcare

(extract from DSE’s 2012 Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan)

Landcare is community-based leadership in action. Landcare groups and networks develop their own priorities, organise community activities, and source support and funding from entities including federal, state and local governments, catchment management authorities, private businesses, non-profit organisations, and individuals. Key activities include engaging people, building partnerships, doing on-ground works, sharing experiences and celebrating success.

Victoria is fortunate to have such an enthusiastic volunteer community and the Victorian Government wants to help these volunteers and landholders undertake actions that improve the condition of our environment and the sustainability of farming.

The Government, in partnership with communities, has a role in maintaining a healthy natural resource base for current and future generations. A key priority for Government is to promote local action on the environment – to empower people with information to make well-informed choices and to bring about outcomes on the ground. The Government is also responsible for using public resources in an efficient and effective way, for the benefit of society as a whole.

One of the ways the Government assists environmental volunteers and landholders is by providing support to Landcare. The Government has developed and put in place a program of support for Landcare called the Victorian Landcare Program. The program is a catalyst. By supporting Landcare in a strategic way – that includes the delivery of services and initiatives – it helps Landcare groups and networks to be more powerful as they work to stop the decline and improve the health of our natural resource base.

Victorian Landcare Program activities have historically included:

- State-wide and regional coordination – investing in regional and state-wide coordination services, and focused engagement with Victorian Aboriginal people and communities, and corporate stakeholders
- Investment – administering the Victorian Landcare Grants and other one-off grants e.g. the 25th Anniversary of Landcare Grants
- Communications – coordinating the production of the Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine, and the Victorian Landcare Gateway website
- Connections – coordinating Landcare conferences and awards, facilitating stakeholder meetings and other networking opportunities and activities
- Initiatives – implementing fixed-term Government initiatives such as the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitators Initiative
- Training – providing information and training to Landcare groups and networks on topics such as group governance, information management, and other important requirements including monitoring, evaluation and reporting

To ensure public value is being delivered, the mix of these activities will be adjusted over time to align with the new direction as outlined in this Strategic Plan.
Landcare in the Port Phillip & Western Port region

The Port Phillip and Western Port region covers an area of 1,279,095 hectares, of which 695,066 hectares is privately owned rural land.

Collectively the 78 currently active Landcare groups cover an estimated 686,364 hectares, or 53.7% of the region, including 470,626 hectares, or 67.7%, of the privately owned rural land. 64 of these groups have joined with neighbouring groups to form 11 Landcare networks.

Each Landcare group has on average an estimated 30 members managing 20 properties, meaning there are an estimated 2310 people actively participating in Landcare on 1540 properties across this region*.

In addition, there are an estimated 300 other community environment groups operating across the region, with the majority working on public land in urban areas. Assuming a conservative estimate of 10 members per group, this means a further 3000 people participating in voluntary environmental activity in this region.

Landcare groups and networks are all independent organisations comprised of local people voluntarily getting together to care for their land and environment locally. As such, they are highly variable in terms of their organisational ‘health’ (or strength) and capacity, as well as their priorities, focus and activities.

The average ‘health’ of Landcare groups in the region has been relatively steady over the past twelve years.

Strong, capable, clear-focussed and well-connected Landcare groups play a valuable role in natural resource management. They can be valuable allies for NRM policymakers and program providers who need local NRM action on private land, and for private landholders who wish to manage their land sustainably.

* 31 Landcare groups provided data to the PPWCMA during 2012. The average total membership figure from these groups was 61, and the average number of member properties per group was 37. Assuming this sample (38% of all Landcare groups in the region) is probably skewed towards the stronger groups, the average membership of all Landcare groups is conservatively estimated at 30, and the average total number of member properties is estimated at 20.
Landcare provides great value environmentally, socially and economically.

It delivers practical on-ground environmental works that improve and restore native habitats, waterways and soils, and develops landholder capacity to manage their land well. It connects local people to each other that strengthen the social fabric of local communities, and contributes voluntary time towards coordination, administration and labour of NRM projects that make Landcare a cost-effective delivery partner.

The Landcare community in the Port Phillip and Western Port region is currently supported by several positions:

- **Regional Landcare Coordinator** – this position is funded through the Victorian Landcare Program and is hosted by the PPWCMA. Its role is to provide strategic leadership, direction and coordination for Landcare in the region;

- **Community NRM Coordinators (CNRMCs)** - there are currently 5 full time equivalent (FTE) positions in the region funded through investments secured by the PPWCMA from Melbourne Water and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry’s Regional Landcare Facilitator Initiative. 3.6FTE of these positions are hosted by the PPWCMA, and the remaining 1.4FTE are hosted by the Western Port Catchment, South Gippsland and Bass Coast Landcare Networks. The CNRMC role is to provide leadership, support and capacity building services to key sectors of the community in sub-regional areas, aimed at improving the engagement and participation of the community in NRM;

- **Local Landcare Facilitators (LLFs)** – there are currently 10 part time (0.4 – 0.6FTE) LLFs in the region funded by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative and hosted by a mix of Landcare networks, groups or partner organisations. The LLF role is to support the work of local Landcare communities to protect, enhance and restore our natural environment, and

- **Other local facilitators** – there are at least 4 other part time facilitators in the region funded through different sources (eg local government, bushfire recovery) also supporting Landcare groups.

The investment in these positions however, can be affected by changes in government and changes in investment priorities, and is therefore subject to fluctuation over time.

The PPWCMA also supports the Landcare community by providing funding through its annual Community Grants program, using funds from the Victorian Landcare Grants Program.
Landcare Groups of the Port Phillip & Western Port Region

This map depicts the location of Landcare groups operating in the region as at January 2013, and uses boundary information as supplied by the groups.

Legend
- Landcare groups not in a network
- Bass Coast Landcare Network
- Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork
- Middle Yarra Landcare Network
- Moorabool Landcare Network
- Nilumbik Landcare Network
- Northern Yarra Landcare Network
- South Gippsland Landcare Network
- Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network
- Western Melbourne Catchments Network
- Western Port Catchment Landcare Network
- Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network
- Public Land
- Urban area
- Waterways
- PPWCMA region boundary

www.ppwcma.vic.gov.au
Landcare Groups of the Port Phillip and Westernport Region

This map depicts the location of Landcare groups operating in the region as at January 2013, and uses boundary information as supplied by the groups.

www.ppwcma.vic.gov.au
Catchment Management Authorities are designated by the Victorian Government to support Landcare.

The PPWCMA designs its support with the aim of helping the Landcare community to fulfill an effective role in NRM such that landholder action is contributing to achieving regional NRM priorities.

Importantly we don’t do it alone. DEPI, Melbourne Water, Councils, Parks Victoria and other agencies also play important roles.

The PPWCMA is committed to:
- helping at group, network and regional level, and contributing to coordination at statewide and national level;
- helping Landcare groups and networks engage in developing, understanding, planning for and contributing to achievement of regional-level and state level NRM goals;
- promoting the value of Landcare to Governments and funders;
- publicly recognising and rewarding Landcare contributions and successes;
- working together rather than in competition in an enduring and productive relationship, and
- recognising and accepting differences, open and regular communication, and striving for continual improvement.

The PPWCMA Landcare Support Plan articulates the nature of support for Landcare that the PPWCMA plans to provide into the near future.

The PPWCMA will focus its support on the following Landcare functions:
- **Operating** effectively and efficiently as organisations
- **Engaging** landholders in environmental stewardship
- **Collaborating** with other groups and agencies to enhance sharing and possibilities
- **Doing** on-ground works that contribute to broader environmental objectives
- **Telling** people about the successes and lessons learned.

This is expected to lead to beneficial outcomes for Landcare, which in turn will have beneficial public outcomes, which ultimately will lead to long term environmental, social and economic benefits. This logic is outlined further in the following diagram, followed by more detailed descriptions of the PPWCMA's support actions.
The logic behind the PPWCMA’s support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landcare functions</th>
<th>Operate</th>
<th>Engage</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Tell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups and networks having clear direction and plans, good governance, skilled leaders, access to resources and skilled support to other groups and NRM agencies and decision-makers</td>
<td>Groups applying an understanding of landholder motivations to tailor NRM messages, and using respected communication channels to deliver information, events and projects that support landholders to take the required action</td>
<td>Networks and groups maintaining mutually-respectful relationships with other groups, networks, NRM agencies, and the private sector, and through these share knowledge, collaborate with planning and coordinate action</td>
<td>Networks and groups translating regional and higher level NRM priorities to local and property scales, providing pathways for landholders to be effective land stewards, and coordinating action across multiple properties</td>
<td>Groups and networks having the skills to tell their stories, and access to the communication vehicles to share their stories widely</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

which leads to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landcare outcomes</th>
<th>Landcare fulfilling a valued and effective role in achievement of regional NRM priorities</th>
<th>Landcare having widespread landholder participation and influence</th>
<th>Landcare being sought after and valued as a key ally in both NRM delivery and policy and program design, by public agencies</th>
<th>Priority on-ground improvements to the environmental condition of private land being achieved</th>
<th>Landcare telling its stories widely and well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups and networks functioning efficiently, effectively and strategically</td>
<td>All rural landholders having access to a Landcare group, and the majority engaging with their local group</td>
<td>Landcare networks and groups partnering with agencies around NRM decision-making and program delivery</td>
<td>Landcare being a primary influencer of landholder decisions resulting in the best land management practices occurring in the right places at the right time</td>
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<th>Priority on-ground improvements to the environmental condition of private land being achieved</th>
<th>Landcare being respected and receiving widespread recognition and public support</th>
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<td>Landcare telling its stories widely and well</td>
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which leads to...

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<tr>
<th>Long term benefits</th>
<th>Shared responsibility for a healthy environment</th>
<th>Landcare having widespread landholder participation and influence</th>
<th>Strong local communities that can respond to opportunities and emergencies</th>
<th>Priority on-ground improvements to the environmental condition of private land being achieved</th>
<th>More profitable farms and local communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The PPWCMA capacity to help Landcare

Why establish capacity?

The variety of support activities the PPWCMA intends to provide for Landcare are dependent upon having the human and other resources to deliver them. A regional team of coordinators providing strategic support and leadership is considered a sound model to pursue.

Support by the PPWCMA

The PPWCMA will:

**Action 1:** Seek funding for a network of coordinators across the region
The PPWCMA helping Landcare operate well

Why help Landcare operate?

Landcare groups and networks can be most effective when they are smooth running and efficient organisations. This is typically achieved by having a clear plan with realistic goals, a motivated and skilled leadership team, access to peer support and learning opportunities, good governance processes, efficient business systems and access to funds that cover basic operating needs.

Support by the PPWCMA

The PPWCMA will undertake the following to help groups and networks operate well:

**Action 2:** Offer small grants to Landcare groups and networks to assist with meeting basic operating costs*

**Action 3:** Conduct a regular regional Landcare forum that enables groups and networks to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance and membership recruitment.*

**Action 4:** Identify and promote training and development opportunities for groups and networks covering matters such as strategic planning, group health assessment, leadership development, governance, financial management and business systems*

**Action 5:** Assist networks and groups to seek and secure funds for staffing that improves their operation and puts their planning into effect*

* Subject to funds being secured that enable the action to be implemented.
The PPWCMA helping Landcare engage with communities

Why help Landcare engage?

The strength, effectiveness and influence of a group is increased when the group is well connected and respected in its local community, understands the motivations and aspirations of landholders, has a strong and diverse membership, communicates well at the local level and regularly delivers locally-beneficial information, events and projects.

Support by the PPWCMA

The PPWCMA will undertake the following to help groups engage with their communities:

**Action 6:** Assist groups to enhance their local profile and interact with local landholders by partnering with groups to design and run various events such as field days, property planning workshops, expos, river walks and seminars, that appeal to local landholders*.

* Subject to funds being secured that enable the action to be implemented.
The PPWCMA helping Landcare collaborate

Why help Landcare collaborate?

The activities and effectiveness of a group or network are usually enhanced when it has partnerships with other organisations that boost its knowledge, planning, funding, capacity, etc. Regular partners with Landcare include Councils, Victorian and Australian Government agencies, non-government organisations, industry groups, local and/or major businesses and philanthropic organisations. Being a good collaborator requires groups have networking opportunities, strong relationships, common objectives and negotiation skills.

Support by the PPWCMA

The PPWCMA will undertake the following to help groups and networks collaborate and form partnerships:

| Action 7: | Provide regular opportunities for groups and networks to interact with their local representatives of Victorian Government agencies, Councils, environmental organisations and other groups by, for example, convening Catchment Action Round Tables* |
| Action 8: | Create one or more opportunities that can assist groups and networks connect with business and philanthropy. Eg develop a Landcare ‘prospectus’ and promote it to the private sector, showcase Landcare projects to potential sponsors* |
| Action 9: | Create opportunities for Landcare groups and networks to connect with relevant industry groups to assist uptake of sustainable agriculture initiatives* |

* Subject to funds being secured that enable the action to be implemented.
The PPWCMA helping Landcare do local projects

Why help Landcare do?

Landcare is renowned as a movement that harnesses local communities to undertake local projects and achieve on-ground improvements for sustainable production and the environment. Landcare is well placed to help landholders become effective land stewards. To be most effective in its local work, a group will benefit from good planning and on-ground advice, funding opportunities, help with the logistics of running projects, and showing that their projects are contributing to the ‘bigger picture’ priorities.

Support by the PPWCMA

The PPWCMA will undertake the following to help groups and networks plan and conduct successful local projects:

**Action 10:** Provide advice to groups and networks on translating regional NRM priorities into local scale plans, project design and project delivery*

**Action 11:** Provide advice to groups and networks on helping landholders become effective land stewards*

**Action 12:** Provide community grants for projects that contribute to regional priorities*

**Action 13:** Assist groups and networks to seek and secure funds for projects. For example, Melbourne Water programs (Stream Frontage Management Program, Community Grants, Corridors of Green), Caring for Our Country Community Landcare and Community Environment Grants, DEPI's Communities for Nature, Grow West, Yarra4Life, local government incentives*

* Subject to funds being secured that enable the action to be implemented.
The PPWCMA helping Landcare tell its stories

Why help Landcare tell?

Telling the Landcare story is important to recognise volunteers and landholders for their leadership and contributions, and to ensure Landcare has a strong public profile. It is equally important to encourage more people to join Landcare and to be accountable to funders. To be effective at telling their stories, groups and networks need strong communication skills and access to relevant communication mechanisms.

Support by the PPWCMA

The PPWCMA’s support will focus on helping Landcare groups and networks across the region to tell their stories by:

**Action 14:** Conduct a major event every two years that recognises and celebrates the role and achievements of Landcare in this region (eg Landcare awards)*

**Action 15:** Regularly showcase and promote Landcare in PPWCMA communications including through media releases, articles in the Victorian Landcare Magazine, via the PPWCMA website and via the regular PPWCMA enewsletter*

**Action 16:** Annually collect Landcare-related data from across the region and prepare a regional Landcare ‘report card’*

* Subject to funds being secured that enable the action to be implemented.
Monitoring Landcare health and success

On an annual basis, the PPWCMA will collect data from Landcare groups and networks to report at the regional level on such aspects as:

- Number and geographical coverage of Landcare groups and networks
- Membership numbers, including new members
- Group ‘health’
- Funding sources and amounts
- Status of strategic and action planning
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Case studies of successful examples

This data will be presented in an annual Port Phillip and Western Port Landcare Report Card, and some of this data will also be fed into the annual Victorian Landcare Report Card.

Groups will also be asked to identify their particular challenges and support needs to assist with adapting the plan to remain relevant.

Monitoring PPWCMA performance

The PPWCMA will review and assess delivery and success of the actions in this plan on an annual basis, adapt the plan as required, and report each year in the PPWCMA Annual Report.
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