

Mallee Regional Landcare Support Strategy 2013-18



Acknowledgements

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners past and present within the region, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in land and natural resource management.

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Images front cover

Left: Information workshop at Neds Corner Station;
Middle: Buloke woodlands;
Right: Planting a seedling. Photos: Mallee CMA.

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Mallee Regional Landcare Support Strategy 2013-18

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Foreward



Landcare in the Mallee has evolved over the years to become a highly active and committed network of volunteers working together to improve outcomes for our land and environment.

In addition, to the region's 24 Landcare groups, a number of other community-based groups undertake natural resource management (NRM) activities across the Mallee region.

The pattern of population varies greatly throughout the region, ranging from large areas where the population density is less than 0.2 people per square kilometre, across much of the dryland farming area and national parks, to parts of Mildura with a density over 2,000 people per square kilometre. The total area of dryland and irrigated agricultural land that is covered by these community-based NRM groups is around 2.3 million ha or 90% of total agricultural land, of which over 60,000 ha is now irrigated. Membership levels in the region range from 40% to 80% of landholders in a given area and number more than 700 active members.

Most community-based NRM groups also include non-farmer members such as local town residents, small business operators, teachers and students. Groups that are close to the Murray River have members who are irrigators or are residents from the towns and rural residential blocks along the river corridor.

The Mallee Regional Landcare Support Strategy (MRLSS) 2013-18 provides a five-year strategic planning and investment framework to support the development of Landcare groups, consortiums and the overall network health (including community-based NRM groups) by improving a number of targeted skills throughout the Victorian Mallee region.

The Strategy recognises that Landcare groups and the community are key stakeholders in NRM delivery. It aims to support capacity building within these much-valued organisations, and strengthen the partnerships that exist between community-based NRM groups and government.

The MRLSS is based on five key areas which are designed to:

- Support groups and networks to operate effectively;
- Engage with their communities;
- Collaborate with partners;
- Do on-ground works; and
- Tell their Landcare stories.

It is reflective of state and regional policies and plans that address NRM and community capacity building, and will support and promote regional outcomes and targets that contribute to regional, state and national NRM outcomes.

The MRLSS will play an important role in helping Mallee communities work towards their vision of:

“Informed and active communities balancing the use of resources to generate wealth, with the protection and enhancement of our natural and cultural landscapes”.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sharyon Peart'.

Sharyon Peart

Mallee Catchment Management Authority Board Chair

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Background



Landcare in Victoria

Australia's first Landcare group formed in 1986 in Winjallock (near St Arnaud) when farming neighbours recognised that they could be more effective and have a greater impact if they addressed common NRM concerns together.

Since its inception, Landcare has become part of the social, environmental and economic fabric of Victoria, and indeed Australia, achieving success in nurturing a more sustainable land management ethos and practice.

Landcare encompasses environmental stewardship 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. Key activities include engaging people, building partnerships, doing on-ground works, sharing experiences and celebrating successes.

Today, in Victoria, there are over 750 Landcare community groups and networks, and more than 500 other community-based NRM groups consisting of 60,000 members and an additional

45,000 volunteers who contribute their time, resources and energy each year to undertake local action to care for the land.

Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan

The Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan (DSE, 2012) guides the Victorian Government's key program of support to strengthen Landcare.

The Victorian Landcare Program (VLP) is managed by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and is the Government's program of support for Landcare. By supporting Landcare in a strategic way – that includes the delivery of services and initiatives – the VLP 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.

The purpose of the VLP Strategic Plan is to ensure that the VLP is more effective in supporting Landcare. The aim is to provide targeted support to help

Landcare groups and networks achieve five key functions – operate effectively, engage the community, collaborate, do on-ground works, and tell the Landcare story.

The strategic plan has been designed to allow flexibility in the operational delivery of the VLP to ensure that the program responds to changing circumstances and the needs of the Landcare community in Victoria.

The VLP Strategic Plan will be reviewed in five years to make sure the focus remains current, responsive and successful in effectively supporting the Landcare community.

The goal of the Victorian Landcare Program is: '*Shared Responsibility for a Healthy Environment.*'

A downloadable PDF version of the Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan is available at:

www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/landcare-policy/victorian-landcare-program-strategic-plan-1/victorian-landcare-program-strategic-plan/view

Introduction



Landcare and other community-based groups play a key role as a partner in NRM delivery across the Victorian Mallee region. These groups also play a major role in harnessing and promoting the interests of local communities in NRM issues.

Each group provides a connection between the individual managers of separate properties and the wider community; increasing awareness of conservation issues, encouraging coordinated effort, and providing access to shared resources. It is through these connections that these groups strengthen the social fabric of local communities.

The Mallee boasts a high number of volunteers involved in NRM activities. Currently, the Mallee's 24 Landcare groups have an active membership of over 700 members.

Community-based groups such as 'friends of', special interest, industry and recreational groups also undertake a range of NRM activities and sustainable

land management activities on both private and public land. Many of these groups also have long-standing involvement in major public events such as the Swan Hill Field Days, Mallee Machinery (Speed) Field Days and Mildura Field Days.

Membership of the Mallee's Landcare and community-based NRM groups is diverse, and includes landholders, land managers, non-farmer members such as local town residents, small business operators, teachers and students, and groups that are close to the Murray River include irrigators, town residents and people who live on rural-residential blocks.

There are a number of factors that influence these groups, including changes in policy and legislation, and shifts in regional demographics. The MRLSS aims to increase the capacity of these groups to adapt to these changes and in turn provide strengthened social networks, increased community co-operation, and an enhanced skill set.

Purpose

The MRLSS provides a five-year framework for supporting Landcare groups and networks as a step towards building capacity in line with five key areas outlined in the Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan (DSE, 2012). This includes supporting the development of group and network health by improving skills in:

- Planning;
- Leadership;
- Accessing financial, people and information resources;
- Governance; and
- Project design and management.

Aligning the MRLSS with the key functions of the Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan provides targeted support to help Landcare achieve these functions by operating effectively, engaging community, collaborating, doing on-ground works and telling the Landcare story.

Landcare in the Mallee

The precursor to Landcare in the Mallee started in 1985 with the formation of a number of 'action groups' in the central and southern regions. These groups tended to be singularly-focused, usually on either revegetation activities or pest plant and animal control.

The Mallee's first Landcare group, Millewa–Carwarp was established in 1989, three years after Australia's first Landcare group was launched at Winjallock. Other Landcare groups soon followed right across the Mallee region.

Initially, most Landcare groups in the Mallee grew from and operated in parallel with Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Branches or District Councils, later becoming independent entities in their own right.

The first Mallee Regional Landcare Conference was held in Sea Lake in 1991, organised by the then Land Protection Regional Advisory Committee (LPRAC).

Landcare Today

The Mallee now has 24 Landcare groups, the newest being formed in early 2013. These groups work across a diverse landscape and membership ranges in age from school children through to an active older generation into their 80's. Landcare has grown to cover around 90% (2.3 million ha) of total agricultural land in the Mallee and group membership levels range from 40% to 80% of landholders in a given area.

With a combined, active membership of over 700 members, these groups are strengthened by a membership with a wide diversity of backgrounds and skill-sets that when combined contribute to the many tasks and activities the groups undertake.

While the Mallee's 24 Landcare groups are embedded and continue to operate at the local community scale, the majority of

these groups are now linked to Landcare Consortia that tie activities together at a landscape scale. Each Landcare Group has an elected Executive that also represents the individual group at the Consortium level. Five Landcare Consortia service 23 of the Mallee's Landcare groups, while Murrayville Landcare Group operates independently of the consortium arrangement.

Landcare groups and consortia develop their own priorities, organise community activities, and source support and funding from a variety of sources including federal, state and local governments, Catchment Management Authorities (CMA), private businesses, non-profit organisations, and individuals.

Under current arrangements, all groups have access to a local Facilitator or Coordinator to assist them with their operational requirements.

Achievements in the Mallee

Historically, Landcare groups in the Mallee concentrated on rabbit control and sustainable agriculture. Rabbit control in many cases was a primary stimulus for

group action. It continued as a universal priority for all groups until rabbit numbers plummeted in 1996 due to the success of the biological control agent, rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD). More emphasis was then placed on weed control and sustainable agriculture, and later expanded to include biodiversity and capacity building.

The Victorian Second Generation Landcare Grants was introduced in 1999 as an integrated state program and was prioritised in the Mallee to target pest plants and animals.

An early and highly successful initiative in the Mallee was the use of shared equipment. Major capital items were purchased by many groups such as Grader Boards to reshape eroded dunes reinstating hundreds of hectares of degraded cropland, and heavy duty multi-tyred rippers to rip rabbit warrens and aid in tree planting. The concept of machinery loan schemes and shared equipment was subsequently adopted across Australia and incorporated into Commonwealth Landcare funding guidelines.



Strategy linkages

Operate



Engage



Collaborate



Do



Tell



The Government, in partnership with communities, has a role in maintaining healthy natural resources for current and future generations; and strong, capable, clear-focussed and well-connected Landcare groups play a critical role in NRM.

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 MRLSS recognises that Landcare and community-based groups are valuable allies for NRM policy-makers and program providers who need local NRM action on private or public land and for private landholders who wish to manage their land sustainably.

Landcare provides great value environmentally, socially and economically through the delivery of on-ground practical works, development of improved capacity in land management, and strengthened social networks.

A number of state-wide and federal policy directions influence the operating environment within which the MRLSS will operate over its five-year period (2013-2018). Therefore, the MRLSS has been developed as a flexible document that is able to adapt to changing circumstances and the needs of Landcare in the Mallee.

The MRLSS for Landcare and community-based NRM groups provides an agreed plan of action along with regional deliverables for the Mallee CMA region. The development of strategies such as the MRLSS and those outlined following helps Landcare groups and networks to become more successful as they work to improve the health of our natural resources.

Policy directions that relate to Landcare include, but are not limited to:

1. Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan

The Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare (VAPSGSL) ended in 2012. The purpose of the new Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan is to ensure that the Victorian Landcare Program (VLP) is more effective in supporting Landcare and outlines the priorities for the Victorian Government to support Landcare into the future. The development of Regional Landcare Support Plans by each of the state's ten CMAs was identified as an action in the Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan. The five areas of support are:

- **Operate** – effectively and efficiently
- **Engage** – communities in environmental stewardship
- **Collaborate** – with others to enhance skills and possibilities
- **Do** – on-ground works that make a difference
- **Tell** – people about the successes and lessons learned.

The goal of the VLP is: *'Shared responsibility for a healthy environment'*.

Further information on the Victorian Landcare Program and support activities provided by the Victorian Government can be found on the Landcare Gateway website:

www.landcarevic.net.au

2. Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy

The Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-19 (RCS) sets NRM priorities in line with the State's

objectives across the Victorian Mallee. Landcare Groups are a key partner in the delivery of the RCS over the next six years.

The vision of the Mallee RCS is:

'Informed and active communities balancing the use of resources to generate wealth, with the protection and enhancement of our natural and cultural landscapes.'

Long-term objectives and strategic actions, particularly for community capacity have played a key role in the development of the MRLSS.

The Mallee RCS can be found on the RCS website:

rcs.malleecma.vic.gov.au

3. Australian Framework for Landcare

The Australian Landcare Council Secretariat which is part of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) developed the Australian Framework for Landcare 2010-2020. A reference group of Landcare community members was involved in its development.

The framework has seven key position statements which have been taken into account during the development of the MRLSS.

- i. Opportunities to be involved – all people are inspired to participate
- ii. Effective information and knowledge sharing – mechanisms are available for generating and sharing knowledge and information.
- iii. Acknowledging change – the differences Landcarers make are measured and acknowledged.

- iv. Links to plans at all levels – the Landcare approach is intrinsic to the big picture of sustainable resource management in national, state, regional and local planning.
- v. Succession planning – the vitality of people involved is maintained into the future by engaging all generations and cultures.
- vi. Celebration – the achievements of Landcarers are recognised and celebrated by all Australians, together with the potential of the Landcare approach to meet future environmental challenges.
- vii. Professional credentials established – individuals, groups, support staff and networks involved in the Landcare approach achieve high standards of governance and professionalism.

The Framework states the national vision for Landcare: *'All Australians will take responsibility for the way they live in the landscape to ensure a healthy environment that supports a sustainable future'*.

Support for Landcare

Support structures for Landcare have changed over time and we know that no Government program, including the VLP, is eternal or unchanging.

Strategies at the national, state and regional level have been developed to ensure the ongoing support of Landcare groups and the enhancement of a range of skills for the many thousands of volunteers involved in NRM activities.

In the Mallee, all Landcare groups currently have access to state-funded Local Landcare Facilitators (LLF) and the Mallee Regional Landcare Coordinator (RLC) to assist them with their operational requirements.

The federally-funded position of Mallee Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) adds to this support by assisting Landcare and community-based groups to adopt sustainable farm and land management practices and in turn, protect Australia's landscape.

Table 1: Current regional support provided for the Landcare community

Position title	Role details
Regional Landcare Coordinator	Provides strategic leadership, direction and coordination for Landcare in the region. Funded through the Victorian Landcare Program and employed by the Mallee CMA.
Local Landcare Facilitators (LLFs)	Each LLF provides support to the work of local Landcare communities to protect, enhance and restore our natural environment. Funded through DEPI's Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative and the Mallee CMA. There are currently 4 full-time LLFs in the region which are hosted by the Mallee CMA.
Other Local Facilitators	Several Landcare Groups host their own LLFs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murrayville Landcare Group: 1 part-time LLF funded through the Victorian Landcare Program; Mallee Landcare Consortium: 1 part-time Group Co-ordinator funded independently by the Consortium; Kooloonong-Natya Landcare Group: 1 part-time Group co-ordinator funded independently by the Group.
Mallee Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF)	Supports Landcare and production groups to adopt sustainable farm and land management practices and to protect Australia's landscape. Funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and hosted by the Mallee CMA.

The Mallee CMA also provides funding support through its annual Community Grants program, utilising funds from the Victorian Landcare Grants Program.

A Strategic Alliance – Mallee Regional Landcare and the Mallee CMA

The MRLSS is one of a number of regional plans that sit under the Mallee RCS 2013–2019. The MRLSS is designed to assist community-based NRM groups, identify ways and means in which they can help achieve some of the targets in the Mallee RCS; while harnessing and promoting the interests of local communities in NRM issues.

Landcare Groups provide an important connection between individual private land managers, the wider community and public land managers, and contribute to NRM through a number of important roles, including:

- Increasing awareness of conservation and broader environmental issues;
- Promoting and encouraging

coordinated community participation in land management;

- Developing expertise and providing access to shared resources; and
- Identifying local priorities and emerging issues and pass this information on to government agencies.

Landcare plays a vital role in promoting the adoption of improved ways of doing things that should benefit the environment, but it is important to recognise the boundary of what is reasonable to expect Landcare to achieve.

The Mallee's Landcare Groups are often small and vulnerable to the wider changes affecting the region. Identified issues facing rural communities such as decreasing farm viability, population decline and ageing of landholders are all impacting on Landcare's capacity to address NRM issues at a local level.

During 2012, the Mallee CMA assisted community-based NRM groups to identify, document, implement and report on local NRM priorities in the region through the development of Group Action Plans. These plans for action, were completed

by the majority of the region's Landcare Groups with assistance from the Mallee Regional Landcare Coordinator and Local Landcare Facilitators. The MRLSS sits above these Group Action Plans.

The future

The independence of the Mallee's 24 Landcare groups (and associated consortiums) provides opportunities for a diverse range of local people to come together to work towards common goals in caring for their land and the environment at a local level. 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 MRLSS has been developed to provide support to these Landcare Groups.

The Mallee RCS 2013-2019 vision identifies local communities at the heart of the future management of the region's natural resources. Achieving the goals of the RCS requires well-informed communities with the skills and confidence to identify, direct and implement change.

The Mallee CMA is committed to working in partnership with community organisations, Landcare groups and

government agencies to ensure the region's natural resources are enhanced and protected in the most responsible and cost-effective way. In order to achieve this, the CMA's Business Plan for 2012-17 clearly articulates projects that are specifically designed to deliver multiple benefits across the areas of biodiversity, river and wetland health, salinity and water quality, soil health and community capacity building.

At every opportunity, the Mallee CMA will draw on its strong working relationships with community groups such as Landcare, and partner agencies to deliver optimal efficiencies in the delivery of projects, while always remaining committed to transparent and accountable operations.

The Mallee RCS defines community capacity for NRM as:

'The inherent knowledge, understanding and willingness that the community has for effective sustainable resource management.'

It recognises that local knowledge and effort is fundamental to the current and future management of our natural, cultural and productive landscapes. Our communities' capacity is defined by their

characteristics and resources which, when combined determine their ability to identify, evaluate and address key issues.

Importantly, a Mallee community with the capacity to identify, direct and implement change provides a number of positive outcomes including:

- Landscape scale improvements in the condition of our natural assets and in the environmental, social and economic services they provide;
- Strengthened social networks;
- Increased community cooperation and mutual respect; and
- Sense of place.

The long-term (20 year) objective for the Mallee's community capacity for NRM, as identified in the RCS is:

'To increase community capacity for, awareness of, and participation in efforts to protect the Mallee's natural, cultural and agricultural landscapes.'

To support this objective, the Mallee RCS identifies a number of Strategic Actions that will be undertaken during the six year life-span of the RCS. Identification of these actions and delivery partners can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Strategic Actions (6 year) and Delivery Partners to support increasing Community Capacity (Mallee RCS)

Action	Partners
9.1.1. Continue to support the development and implementation of community education programs to increase awareness of the Mallee's natural, cultural and agricultural assets; and to encourage actions which contribute to their protection and enhancement.	Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), Parks Victoria (PV), Local Government, Water Authorities, Trust for Nature (TfN), Indigenous Community, Community & Industry Groups.
9.1.2. Continue to support the development and implementation of programs which support land managers to act as responsive and effective stewards of our natural, cultural and productive landscapes.	CMA, DEPI, PV, Local Government, Water Authorities, TfN, Indigenous Community, Community & Industry Groups.
9.1.3. Continue to develop and implement programs which support land managers to identify, and where appropriate respond to emerging threats and opportunities.	CMA, DEPI, PV, Local Government, Water Authorities, TfN, Community & Industry Groups.
9.1.4. Continue to support the development and review of whole farm and landscape scale management plans which consider natural, cultural and productive landscapes.	CMA, DEPI, PV, DTPLI, Local Government, Water Authorities, TfN, Community & Industry Groups.
9.1.5. Continue to develop and implement programs which support Indigenous communities to promote and apply traditional ecological knowledge.	CMA, DEPI, PV, Community Groups, Indigenous Community.
9.1.6. Continue to support, enhance and participate in regional NRM partnerships to plan, deliver and report on the Mallee RCS and associated management plans.	CMA, DEPI, PV, DTPLI, Local Government, Water Authorities, VicRoads, VicTrack.

Strategy implementation

The ongoing enhancement of group and network health is a key aim of the MRLSS. With this in mind this document has been developed to be flexible and adaptable to changes in policy and legislation as required.

Through the implementation of this strategy groups will be able to align their actions and activities to the overarching Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan and operate within the five key areas of:

- 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 the bigger picture;
- Telling people about the successes and lessons learned.

By abiding by these five basic principles the MRLSS provides a foundation for investment decisions aimed at building community capacity, and provides

Landcare groups, their members and coordinators with a strategic framework for five years. And it provides the Victorian Government with a clear understanding of the shared vision for Landcare in the Mallee and how Landcare will be supported.

Government and the Mallee CMA recognises that Landcare belongs to the community, and respects Landcare's independence and autonomy, and its partnership. They want to support, not direct Landcare. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to articulate and communicate the five functions that Government, through the Victorian Landcare Program, wants to support Landcare to undertake. These five functions are based on an underpinning 'Program Logic' for the VLP and take account of the challenges and opportunities facing Landcare.

The Landcare Support Strategy also provides stakeholders (both private and public investors) with a vehicle to affirm their commitment to supporting Landcare, and to spell out how that commitment

will be translated into resources, namely funding. The strategy also provides community input to ensure this direction is clear and shared.

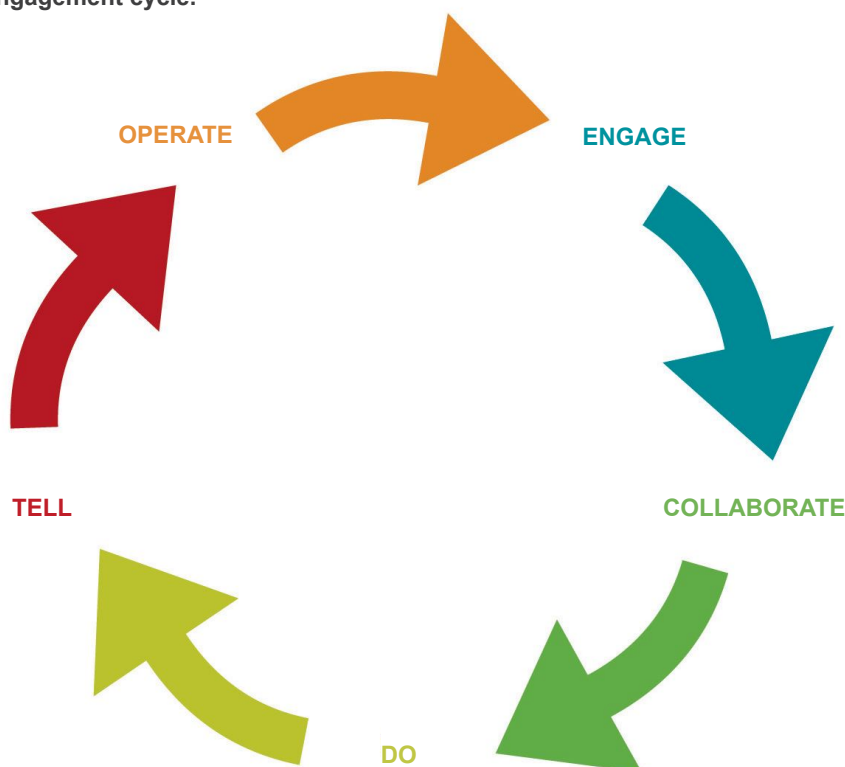
Ultimately, the Landcare Support Strategy allows interested members of the community to understand how Landcare operates in the Mallee and how it is helping to protect and improve the natural environment and the sustainability of farm businesses.

Program Logic

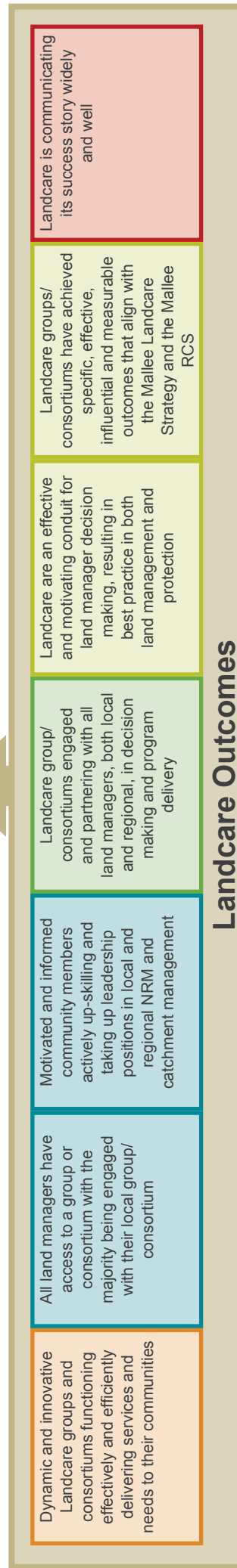
Defining a clear program logic is an important part of the strategy and planning phase. The MRLSS aims to improve the group health and skills so they can continue well into the future. The following VLP logic, located on page 10, will be applied through the previously stated five key areas:

- Support groups and networks to operate effectively;
- Engage with their communities;
- Collaborate with partners;
- Do on-ground works; and
- Tell their Landcare stories.

Figure 1: Community engagement cycle.



Program Logic





KEY AREAS

Operate

A key role of the VLP is helping Landcare groups and networks function well. The government recognises that Landcare would like a solid operating base, and at the same time knows that no government program, including the VLP, is eternal or unchanging.

To function at their best, groups and consortiums alike benefit from dedicated and supported voluntary leaders, and the facilitation and coordination services of professional Landcare support staff.

Objectives						
Establish	Maintain	Train	Grow	Facilitate	Coordinate	Streamline
Assist the establishment of new or lapsed groups and consortiums	Help maintain existing groups and networks by assisting them to meet basic operating requirements	Assist in training and development to build the operational skills of groups and networks	Support groups and consortiums to strengthen and/or grow to meet the needs of their community	Provide support to professional Landcare staff working as coordinators or facilitators at the local and landscape scale	Manage the delivery and coordination of core services and initiatives at the local and regional scale	Streamline administrative requirements and other interactions between the Mallee CMA, the VLP and Landcare
Supportive Actions by all Partners						
Assist in establishing regular group and consortium meetings to build momentum and capacity	Offer small grants to Landcare groups to assist with meeting basic operating costs.*	Identify and promote training and development opportunities for groups covering matters such as strategic planning, grant writing and reporting, leadership development, governance, financial management and business systems.*	Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance, membership recruitment, etc.*	Assist groups and consortiums to seek and secure funds for staffing that improves their operation and puts their planning into effect.*	Assist groups and consortiums to engage and enlist the services of group facilitators and project coordinators	Reduce the amount of excessive 'red tape' where possible while ensuring that all legal and ethical responsibilities and obligations are being met

* Subject to funds being secured that enable the action to be implemented.

Landcare Functions

Consortiums and Groups develop clear direction, plans, good governance, skilled leaders, access to appropriate resources and skilled support.

Landcare Outcomes

Dynamic and innovative Landcare groups and consortiums functioning effectively and efficiently delivering services and needs to their communities

Public Outcomes

A resilient Mallee Landcare community fulfilling a valued and effective role in achievement of local and regional NRM priorities.



Engage

A key strength of Landcare lies in its close connection with local communities. Landcare is a way of bringing people together around common NRM issues; facilitating stewardship of the local landscape in an inclusive way. This local stewardship in turn builds more connected and resilient communities.

To engage people successfully, Landcare groups and networks need leadership, resources and skills to engage volunteers and landholders in lasting, productive and constructive relationships. Acknowledging that a few people can make a huge difference; a few more can often increase the impact.

Retaining and attracting volunteers is becoming more challenging. Increasingly, people are busy, and want to interact with Landcare and other volunteer organisations in ways that address their particular needs, circumstances, and preferred way of communicating.

Objectives					
Research	Recruit	Inform	Innovate	Include	Seek
Provide advice in respect to current research and information, and commission research to fill gaps where appropriate	Support Landcare to connect with, and recruit and retain volunteers including people for leadership and office bearer positions	Assist in raising people's awareness and level of understanding of local landscapes and associated NRM issues and management practices	Promote innovative thinking to help people engage with groups and networks	Emphasise the inclusive nature of Landcare in all communications and promotions	Support Landcare in seeking help from new sources of volunteers
Supportive Actions by all Partners					
Provide groups with relevant, up to date information in multiple forms as it becomes available and assist groups to implement and adopt any recommendations or actions that will assist groups in remaining current, influential and innovative within their local communities	Assist groups and consortiums to engage and enlist the services of group facilitators and project coordinators	Identify and promote opportunities where groups and consortiums can enhance their local profile and interact with local landholders	Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance, and membership recruitment*	Provide regular opportunities for groups and consortiums to interact with their local representatives of Victorian Government agencies, Councils, environmental organisations and other groups*	Assist in providing opportunities that can enable groups to connect with business and philanthropy and non-traditional community based NRM volunteers e.g. Grey Nomads

* Subject to funds being secured that enable to action to be implemented.

Landcare Functions

Pro-active Landcare groups positively influencing and supporting land manager motivations in NRM. Develop and implement appropriate communications methods to inform the wider community and to conduct events and projects that support Land managers to take effective action.

Landcare Outcomes

All land managers have access to a group or consortium with the majority being engaged with their local group/consortium. Motivated and informed community members actively up-skilling and taking up leadership positions in local and regional NRM and Catchment Management.

Public Outcomes

Increased community capacity and awareness of, and participation in the protection of natural, cultural and productive landscapes in the Mallee. Landcare having widespread landholder and community participation and influence



Collaborate

Landcarers recognise that partnerships are central to Landcare's success, providing a means to share knowledge, skills and resources. To collaborate effectively, Landcare needs to be able to locate organisations with common objectives and identify ways of developing partnerships that can add value to each other's work. Collaboration can include sharing information, seeking financial and other support, and participating in planning. Landcare can be a driver for change in communities, as well as being the people who do the on-ground works.

Objectives				
Listen	Nurture	Cooperate	Share	Guide
Encourage agencies at all levels of Government to listen to Landcarers when developing planning, priority-setting and policy	Develop the relationship between Landcare, the Mallee CMA, the VLP, and other Government NRM and sustainable agriculture programs	Support groups and networks to find linkages with other organisations to collaborate on planning, and coordinating action	Assist Landcare groups and networks to share information on, and experiences of, best practice at the local and landscape scale	Provide guidance on Potential collaborators for Landcare, and information on, how to negotiate and undertake partnerships
Supportive Actions by all Partners				
Identify and promote opportunities where groups and consortiums can enhance their local profile and have direct input into local and regional NRM policy and planning	Foster activities by rural Landcare groups to adopt sustainable production systems, and provide linkages between this activity and the incentives provided under the regional action plans	Foster strong communication between all Landcare groups and consortiums to further develop the sharing of knowledge and skills via regional conferences and local network events	Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance, membership and recruitment*	Provide regular opportunities for groups and consortiums to strengthen partnerships with local government, corporate and industry groups

* Subject to funds being secured that enable to action to be implemented.

Landcare Functions

Promotion and fostering of a mutual respect for all community NRM groups and consortiums across all community boundaries.

Landcare Outcomes

Landcare group/consortiums engaged and partnering with all land managers, both local and regional, in decision making and program delivery.

Public Outcomes

Landcare is sought after and valued as a key ally in NRM policy, program design and delivery by all land managers.



Do

The common goal of Landcare groups and networks across Victoria is to enhance and protect the environment, including cultural heritage assets, by building environmental awareness, encouraging sustainable farming and land management practices, and undertaking on-ground works.

As land is a productive asset for many people involved with Landcare, improved agricultural productivity can also be an important driver for, and result of, environmental action. Common activities and achievements include the management of priority weeds on public and private land; rabbit control; protecting, enhancing and/or establishing native vegetation; improving the health of soil and waterways; awareness raising; and the facilitation and coordination of field days.

Landcare provides very good value for public investment. On-ground improvements to the condition of the land are the key public outcome the Government wants from its investment in Landcare.

Objectives			
Strategise	Design	Act	Scale
Support the development of regional Landcare support strategies and local action plans	Encourage Landcare groups and networks to design appropriate solutions to their priority issues	Support Landcare groups and consortiums to undertake actions to improve the condition of the environment	Where the capacity and desire exists, encourage Landcare groups and networks to work on large-scale landscape change
Supportive Actions by all Partners			
Provide advice and identify and promote opportunities where groups and consortiums can have direct input into local and regional NRM strategy development and action planning	Create opportunities for Landcare groups and consortiums to connect with relevant industry groups and expertise to assist in the uptake of sustainable initiatives and to help landholders become effective land stewards*	Assist groups to seek and secure project funding through multiple agencies be they public, private or philanthropic and continue to support Landcare on-ground operations in the Mallee through use of labour support programs and training of community members*	Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other and to develop more landscape scale projects involving several Landcare groups e.g. combined group funding proposals and opportunities*

* Subject to funds being secured that enable to action to be implemented.

Landcare Functions

Sharing of knowledge, collaboration of planning and cooperative coordination of on-ground actions with all associated land managers. Alignment of local and property scale NRM priorities with regional NRM priorities therefore assisting and facilitating pathways for land managers to become effective land stewards.

Landcare Outcomes

Landcare are an effective and motivating conduit for land manager decision making, resulting in best practice in both land management and protection. Landcare groups/consortiums have achieved specific, effective, influential and measurable outcomes that align with the Mallee Landcare Strategy and the Mallee RCS.

Public Outcomes

The productive capacity of Mallee agricultural landscapes is optimised, while minimising adverse impacts associated with farming practices. Priority protection and enhancement to the environmental assets on private land is achieved.



Tell

Because there are many separate groups and networks across the state, it is difficult to tell the overall story of Landcare's achievements. However, telling the story is important to reward volunteers and landholders for their efforts, make sure Landcare is recognised and valued with a good public profile, to encourage more people to join Landcare, to be accountable to funding providers, and to grow the investment from sources beyond government.

Improving the ability to tell the story of Landcare will require a focused effort up front. This will mean that in the short term, streamlining information collection, and evaluation and reporting processes will be a priority. In the longer term, improved systems and processes will save both Landcarers and the VLP time and money, and put Landcare in a better position to maintain widespread public recognition and support.

Objectives					
Simplify	Collect	Store	Publish	Celebrate	Publicise
Ensure that the monitoring, evaluation and reporting interactions between the VLP and Landcare groups and consortiums are as simple yet effective as possible	Support groups and networks in collecting the information needed to tell Landcare's story	Retain data and information so that it can be accessed, and easily interpreted and shared	Publish the story about the performance of Landcare	Enjoy success and reward effort with recognition events	Promote the work done by Landcarers and others to tell the Landcare story
Supportive Actions by all Partners					
Provision of Group Health Scales to assist groups to self-evaluate their performance, relevance and influence within their local communities and to identify areas of focus for improvement. Minimise reporting requirements to lessen 'red tape' but maintain the integrity and quality of the data required and collected.	Provide groups and consortiums assistance and access to publicly available computer and Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and software for the recording and reporting of identified priority works and on-ground projects as identified under the groups action plans.*	Increase the use of a GIS as a mapping and recording tool for all completed works, and assist groups to ensure that project coordinators have the required skills and resources to use it	Regularly showcase and promote Landcare in the Mallee region using communications including media releases, articles in the Victorian Landcare Magazine, via the Mallee CMA website, the Victorian Landcare Gateway and via the regular newsletters and local media outlets.*	Provide regular opportunities for groups and consortiums to interact and socialise through celebratory events and functions*	Annually collect Landcare-related data from across the region and prepare a regional Landcare 'report card'.*

* Subject to funds being secured that enable to action to be implemented.

Landcare Functions

Consortiums and groups develop and implement skills and abilities to tell their stories and access the communication tools to share them.

Landcare Outcomes

Landcare is communicating its success story widely and well.

Public Outcomes

Landcare is universally recognised and respected and receives widespread community support.

Figure 2: Strategy actions and objectives.

Actions	Objectives				
	Operate	Engage	Collaborate	Do	Tell
Assist in establishing regular group and consortium meetings to build momentum and capacity.	✓	✓		✓	
Offer small grants to Landcare groups to assist with meeting basic operating costs.	✓			✓	
Identify and promote training and development opportunities for groups covering matters such as strategic planning, grant writing and reporting, leadership development, governance, financial management and business systems.	✓	✓	✓		
Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance, membership recruitment, etc.	✓		✓	✓	
Assist groups and consortiums to seek and secure funds for staffing that improves their operation and puts their planning into effect.	✓	✓		✓	
Assist groups and consortiums to engage and enlist the services of group facilitators and project coordinators.	✓	✓		✓	
Reduce the amount of excessive 'red tape' where possible while ensuring that all legal and ethical responsibilities and obligations are being met.	✓				
Provide groups with relevant, up to date information in multiple forms as it becomes available and assist groups to implement and adopt any recommendations or actions that will assist groups in remaining current, influential and innovative within their local communities.	✓	✓			✓
Assist groups and consortiums to engage and enlist the services of group facilitators and project coordinators.		✓		✓	
Identify and promote opportunities where groups and consortiums can enhance their local profile and interact with local landholders.		✓		✓	✓
Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance, membership recruitment, etc.*	✓	✓	✓		
Provide regular opportunities for groups and consortiums to interact with their local reps of Vic Govt agencies, Councils, environmental organisations and other groups.*	✓	✓	✓		✓
Assist in providing opportunities that can enable groups to connect with business and philanthropy and non-traditional community based NRM volunteers e.g. Grey Nomads.		✓	✓	✓	
Identify and promote opportunities where groups and consortiums can enhance their local profile and have direct input into local and regional NRM policy and planning.		✓	✓		✓
Foster activities by rural Landcare groups to adopt sustainable production systems, and provide linkages between this activity and the incentives provided under the regional action plans.		✓	✓	✓	

Actions	Objectives				
	Operate	Engage	Collaborate	Do	Tell
Foster strong communication between all Landcare groups and consortiums to further develop the sharing of knowledge and skills via regional conferences and local network events.		✓	✓		✓
Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other with a focus on matters such as strategic and action planning, governance, membership recruitment, etc.*	✓	✓	✓		
Provide regular opportunities for groups and consortiums to strengthen partnerships with local government, corporate and industry groups.		✓	✓	✓	
Provide advice and identify and promote opportunities where groups and consortiums can have direct input into local and regional NRM strategy development and action planning.		✓	✓	✓	✓
Create opportunities for Landcare groups and consortiums to connect with relevant industry groups and expertise to assist in the uptake of sustainable initiatives and to help landholders become effective land stewards.			✓	✓	✓
Assist groups to seek and secure project funding through multiple agencies public, private or philanthropic and continue to support Landcare on-ground operations in the Mallee through use of labour support programs and training of community members.*	✓	✓		✓	
Provide opportunities that enables groups to learn from each other and to develop more landscape scale projects involving several Landcare groups e.g. combined group funding proposals and opportunities.*		✓	✓	✓	
Provision of Group Health Scales to assist groups to self-evaluate their performance, relevance and influence within their local communities and to identify areas of focus for improvement. Minimise reporting requirements to lessen 'red tape' but maintain the integrity and quality of the data required and collected.	✓	✓			✓
Provide groups and consortiums assistance and access to publicly available computer and GIS technology and software for the recording and reporting of identified priority works and on-ground projects as identified under the groups action plans.*	✓			✓	✓
Increase the use of a geographic information system as a mapping and recording tool for all completed works, and assist groups to ensure that project coordinators have the required skills and resources to use it.	✓	✓			✓
Regularly showcase and promote Landcare in the Mallee region using communications including media releases, articles in the Victorian Landcare Magazine, via the Mallee CMA website, the Victorian Landcare Gateway and via the regular newsletters and local media outlets.*	✓	✓		✓	✓
Provide regular opportunities for groups and consortiums to interact and socialise through celebratory events and functions.*		✓	✓	✓	✓
Annually collect Landcare-related data from across the region and prepare a regional Landcare 'report card'.*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* Subject to funds being secured that enable to action to be implemented.

Monitoring, Evaluating, Reporting and Improving Delivery

As illustrated in this Strategy, Landcare contributes to be more than just landscape change. It also builds social capital. There is an assumption made that improved land use practices will have some economic returns. Therefore it will be important to monitor and evaluate environmental, social and economic outcomes.

To ensure that the MRLSS continues to assist the Mallee Landcare community to remain Capable, Resilient, Supportive, Skilled and Motivated, the VLP and the associated RLC representative will review and assess the delivery and achievement of the actions in this Strategy on an annual basis. Thus ensuring that the Strategy remains current, adaptable and successful.

This strategy outlines the principles for Landcare support in the Mallee and for monitoring and evaluating the success of the strategy once implemented. The monitoring and evaluation framework should link the management actions with the objectives of this Landcare Support Strategy and the Mallee RCS 2012–2018.

Community consultation will be a key component of the review process. Review activities include:

- Monitoring Landcare health and success – the VLP 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;
- Mallee CMA - The Mallee CMA 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 Mallee CMA Annual Report.

Data will be presented in an annual Mallee Regional Landcare Report Card, and some of this data will also be fed into the annual Victorian Landcare Report Card.

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

References

Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan

Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-19

Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy Website: www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

Landcare Gateway Website: www.landcarevic.net.au

Further information

Victorian Landcare Gateway
www.landcarevic.net.au

Mallee CMA Website
www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

Department of Environment and Primary Industries (VIC)
www.depi.vic.gov.au

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) focuses on boosting productivity in Victoria's world-class food and fibre sector, managing our natural resources, protecting our environment and responding to fire, flood and biosecurity emergencies.

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
www.environment.gov.au

Volunteering Victoria
www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au

Buloke Shire Council
www.buloke.vic.gov.au

Gannawarra Shire Council
www.gannawarra.vic.gov.au

Hindmarsh Shire Council
www.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au

Swan Hill Rural City Council
www.swanhill.vic.gov.au

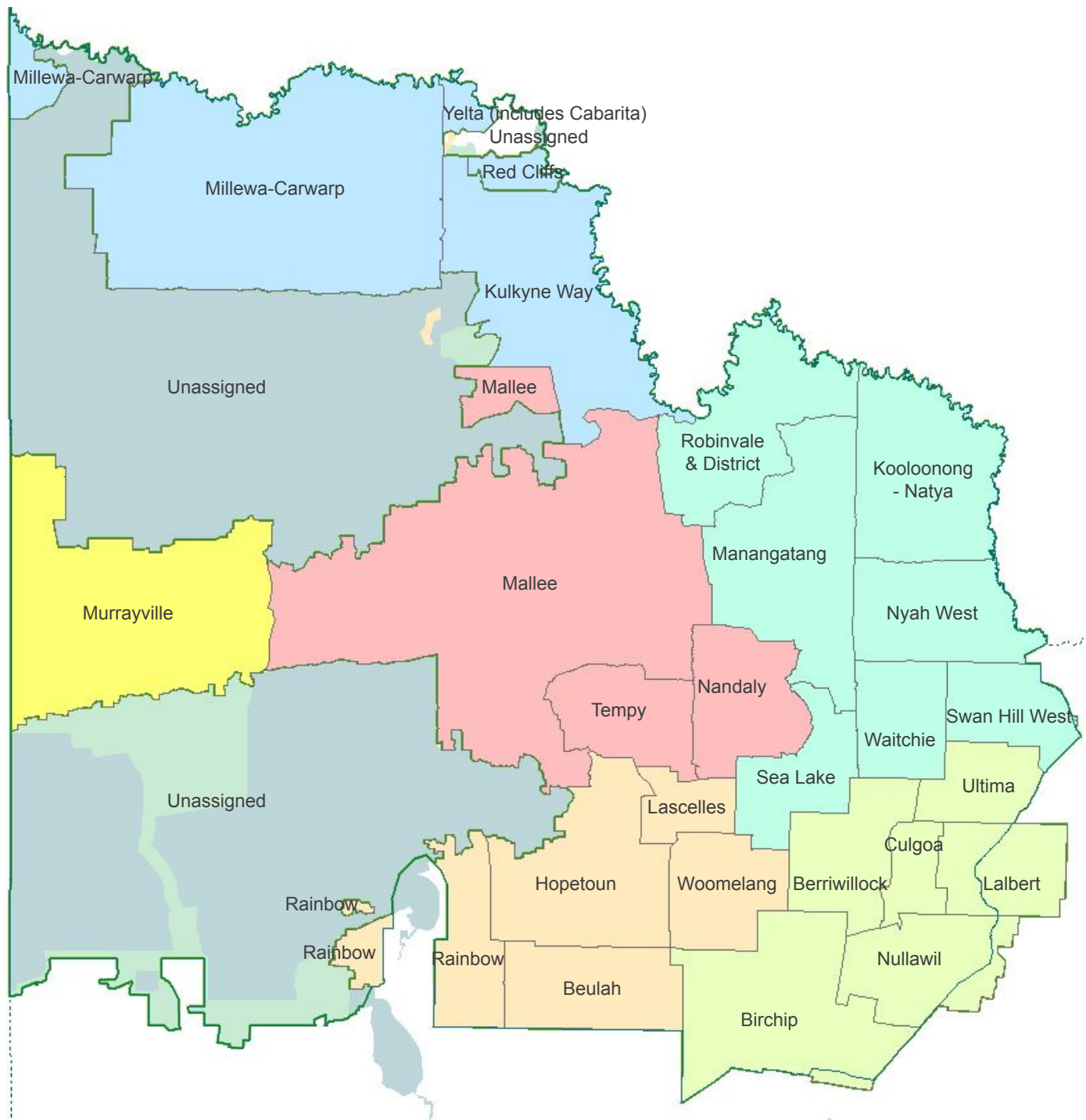
Mildura Rural City Council
www.mildura.vic.gov.au

West Wimmera Shire Council
www.westwimmera.vic.gov.au

Yarriambiack Shire Council
www.yarriambiack.vic.gov.au

Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of Mallee Landcare groups



Appendix 2: List of Mallee Landcare groups

Northern Mallee Consortium

Red Cliffs
Cabarita
Yelta
Kulkynne Way
Millewa-Carwarp

South Eastern Mallee Consortium

Birchip
Nullawil
Berriwilllock
Culgoa
Lalbert
Ultima

Eastern Mallee Consortium

Swan Hill West
Waitchie
Nyah West
Kooloonong-Natya
Manangatang
Robinvale-Annuello
Sea Lake

South Western Mallee Consortium

Hopetoun
Beulah
Woomelang-Lascelles
Rainbow

Independent Consortium

Mallee
Nandaly
Tempy

Independent Group

Murrayville

Appendix 3: Roles and responsibilities

The Landcare program in the Mallee is supported by the State Landcare Program through the provision of a Regional Landcare Coordinator (RLC) based with the Mallee CMA in Irymple.

The role of the RLC is to assist and guide community based volunteer NRM groups to function and flourish as effective and influential entities within their local communities and to have direct input into the strategic management of the regions natural assets.

Under the current (2013) Landcare program there are five Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative (VLLFI) positions located throughout the Mallee region. Their role is to provide assistance and support to individual local NRM groups to help them become fully autonomous volunteer community groups that are self funded through both government and non-government programs by 2015. Continuing support for these positions, post June 2015, is dependant on current and future government policy and associated funding decisions.

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www.depi.vic.gov.au