

Regional Landcare
Support Plan
2024-2029



Regional Landcare Support
Plan: 2024-2028

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Cover image:
Belah seed for direct
seeding at Meringur North
Road, Meringur



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Acknowledgement of Country

Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges and respects Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations. We recognise the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with Victoria's lands and waters. We value partnerships with them for the health of people and country. Mallee CMA Board, management and staff pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the primacy of Traditional Owners' obligations, rights and responsibilities to use and care for their traditional lands and waters.

Landcare in the Mallee

Victoria has a strong history of environmental volunteering, with volunteers contributing enormously to improving our environment, our local communities, and our economy.

The precursor to Landcare in the Mallee started in 1985 with the formation of several 'action groups' in the central and southern regions. These groups tended to be focused 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 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.

Landcare is currently the largest mechanism for environmental volunteering in the Mallee CMA region. The Mallee now has three Landcare consortiums and 25 Landcare groups, the newest group being formed in 2021, as well as several community-based natural resource management groups. These groups work across a diverse landscape and membership ranges in age from school children through to an active older generation into their 80s. Landcare has grown to cover around 97% (2 million ha) of total agricultural land in the Mallee, with a combined, active membership of over 500 members. These groups are strengthened by a membership with a wide diversity of backgrounds and skillsets that when combined contribute to the many tasks and activities the groups undertake. While the Mallee's 25 Landcare groups are embedded and continue to operate at the local community scale, most of these groups are now linked to Landcare Consortiums that tie activities together at a landscape scale.

To obtain a simple snapshot of how groups feel they are performing, Landcare groups have been completing a 'group health survey', as part of the Victorian Landcare Grants delivered by Mallee CMA. Groups are asked to nominate a term that they feel best describes their status: trail blazer, rolling along, moving forward, struggling along and just hanging on. The survey data is used to develop a 'group health score' out of 5 for each year (**Table 1**).

Over the past 12 years, the group health score is consistent with a difference of only one between the highest score of 3.7 in 2023/24 and the lowest score of 2.7 in 2015/2016. The percentage of groups reporting between "moving forward" and "trail blazers" has peaked and troughed across the 12 years, with a range from 56% to 100% on a given year. The lowest number of groups between "moving forward" and "trail blazers" was 56% in 2015/2016 with the highest amount of groups between "moving forward" and "trail blazers" being 100% in 2023/2024.

*Table 1: Landcare group health scores in the Mallee region from 2012 to 2023
(Note that no group health surveys were undertaken across the state in 2016/17 or 2020/21)*

Year	5 Trail blazer	4 Rolling along	3 Moving forward	2 Struggling along	1 Just hanging on	Total responses	Average group health score
2012/13	2	5	8	2	1	18	3.3
2013/14	3	5	4	5	0	17	3.4
2014/15	0	6	8	5	1	20	3.0
2015/16	0	7	7	7	4	25	2.7
2016/17	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2017/18	1	5	5	2	1	14	3.2
2018/19	6	2	8	5	0	21	3.4
2019/20	4	0	6	0	2	12	3.3
2020/21	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2021/22	6	4	8	2	1	21	3.6
2022/23	3	2	10	2	1	18	3.2
2023/24	4	6	10	0	0	20	3.7

Supporting Landcare in the Mallee

Outcome	Activity	Timeframe
Strategic collaboration	Build understanding and links between local, regional, state priorities	Ongoing
	Support strategic landscape scale planning	Ongoing
	Build consortium capacity (including support for formation of new consortiums)	Ongoing
	Organise learning and development to build consortium capability	Ongoing
	Organise meetings of consortium chairs (or Chairs of groups in areas where no consortiums exist) (at least three per year) with the intention of facilitating networking, information sharing, strategic collaboration and partnerships. Invite DEECA to attend these meetings	Three times a year
	Foster partnerships and new approaches	Ongoing
	Identify and align new funding and resources to support implementation of landscape and consortium strategic plans	Ongoing
	Support initiatives that engage new and diverse community participation	Ongoing
	Foster knowledge and delivery that supports Traditional Owner aspirations and self-determination	Ongoing
	Work collaboratively with the Australian Government's Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator to deliver complementary programs that avoid duplication of effort and resources	Ongoing
	In regions with Landcare for Country pilots, provide support to the Landcare for Country Officer role	Ongoing
Capacity building and support for Landcare facilitators	Induct new Landcare facilitators to help them understand their role, get established and understand the state, regional Landcare and environmental volunteering context (meet individually with each new Landcare facilitator)	As required
	Connect new Landcare facilitators with another Landcare facilitator in the region who they can seek advice and support from as needed as a 'buddy'	As required
	Organise regional meetings of Landcare facilitators (at least three per year), to facilitate networking, information sharing, peer learning, collaboration, and to foster a 'regional Landcare facilitator team'. Invite DEECA to attend meetings	Three times a year

Outcome	Activity	Timeframe
	Organise cross-regional meetings of Landcare facilitators for outcomes including but not limited to learning and development, networking, workshoping and collaboration. Invite DEECA to participate in these meetings	Ongoing
	Foster peer to peer learning and support, and provide learning and development opportunities	Ongoing
	Provide support to Landcare facilitators in times of natural disasters	As required
Delivery of Victorian Landcare Grants	Project Grants support on-ground actions that are strategic, and deliver local, regional, state priorities including delivery of Protecting Victoria's Environment Biodiversity 2037, Victoria's biodiversity strategy and other plans and strategies as outlined in Context (Attachment 1)	Ongoing
	Efficient, accountable grants management that meets probity requirements	Ongoing
	Timely grant administration (to meet agreed timelines for each round of VLG)	Ongoing
	Standard output data collated and submitted to DEECA, including spatial data	As required
Knowledge sharing and communication	Share information to support community delivery including funding and capacity building opportunities	Ongoing
	Collect data and case studies (including high resolution photos) to communicate Landcare and environmental volunteering delivery, including stories of success, priority outcomes (e.g. threatened species management, engaging diverse communities), innovation and learnings (three case studies per year)	Three times a year
	Support delivery of Victorian Landcare Awards by encouraging quality nominations and providing assistance to individuals, groups/consortiums, and organisations with their nominations (support at least three nominations)	As required
Statewide strategic priorities	Actively participate in Victorian Landcare Team (VLT) meetings	Ongoing
	Actively participate in Victorian Landcare Team (VLT) working group/s delivery (participate in at least one VLT working group)	Ongoing
	Collaborate with other RLCs and DEECA's Victorian Landcare Program staff to develop an annual Work Plan for the VLT	Ongoing

Outcome	Activity	Timeframe
	Work collaboratively with staff from DEECA's Victorian Landcare Program, Landcare Victoria Inc., Landcare Australia Limited, and the Victorian Environment Friends Network to provide strategic statewide support for Landcare and environmental volunteering	Ongoing

Opportunities and challenges for Landcare

At a professional development activity held in 2024, Landcare Facilitators were involved in a workshop where, using the example of a sailboat to represent Landcare, they were given the task of trying to find how to get the boat to smooth sailing. As illustrated below in **Figure 1**, there are several things working well in Landcare, helping the sailboat head in the right direction, with some challenges slowing the sailboat down.

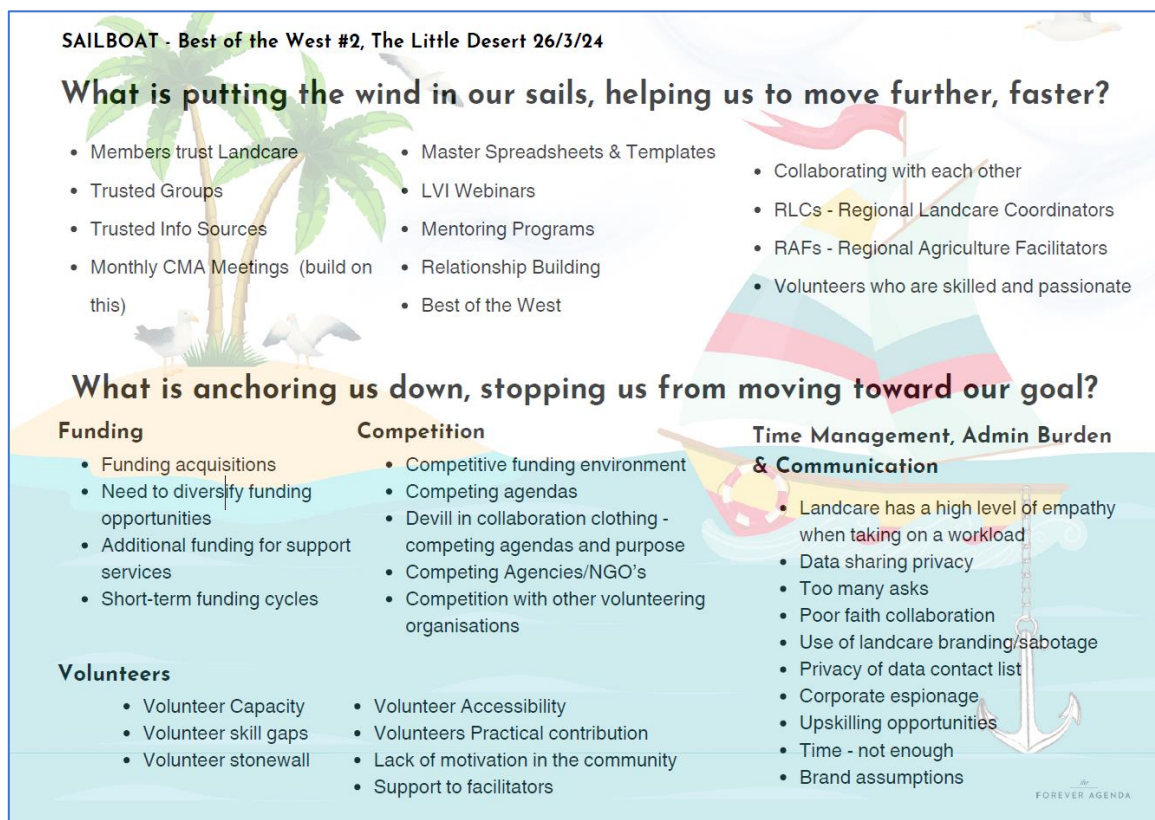


Figure 1: Notes from a 'Sailboat' workshop directed at Landcare Facilitators, where the sailboat represents Landcare.

Facilitators highlighted funding, competition, volunteer management and retention, time management, administrative burden and communication as the key 'anchors', preventing them and the Landcare groups they support moving to their goal. In contrast, some of the positive features that 'put the wind in their sails' are the strong branding and reputation of Landcare, good relationships, skilled and passionate volunteers, and the support from CMA-based Landcare positions funded from State and Commonwealth funding.

This Plan will support groups and the Victorian Landcare Team in addressing the challenges currently faced by Landcare and enhance what is working well. Along with supporting groups and consortiums to achieve their priorities and meet the needs of their members, group executives and Local Landcare Facilitators will be provided with appropriate training opportunities to build capacity and confidence in undertaking their roles.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

To ensure that this Plan continues to support the Mallee Landcare community, the Mallee CMA will review and assess delivery and success of the actions in this plan on an annual basis and adapt the plan as required.

The monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) framework is based on the following principles:

- Community consultation will be a key component of the review process.
- The success of MER for the Plan will require strong partnerships to ensure data and its interpretation is up to date and available.
- Various standards (for example DEECA output data standards) are or will be available to support MER.
- Group health surveys assist with monitoring.

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