

Australian Framework for Landcare



Prepared for the Australian Landcare Community by the
Australian Framework for Landcare Reference Group



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The Landcare approach comprises:

- a philosophy, influencing the way people live in the landscape while caring for the land – the Landcare ethic
- local community action putting the philosophy into practice – the Landcare movement founded on stewardship and volunteers
- a range of knowledge generation, sharing and support mechanisms including groups, networks from district to national levels, facilitators and coordinators, government and non-government programs and partnerships – the Landcare model.

The Landcare approach in Australia

Landcare is a unique community-based approach that has played a major role in raising awareness, influencing farming and land management practices and delivering environmental outcomes across Australian landscapes for many years. Largely, local group involvement has been the catalyst for voluntary community engagement, understanding and action in the development and adoption of sustainable land management practices and the acknowledgement of our shared responsibility for conserving biodiversity.

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There are numerous ways in which people apply the Landcare philosophy. Farmers and pastoralists have direct responsibility for managing the majority of Australian landscapes while others contribute to the stewardship of public land and water. These landcarers can participate by joining Landcare or related community-based groups. Groups may describe themselves as Bushcare, Coastcare, Rivercare, 'Friends of', Indigenous or farm production as well as Landcare, but they all have a common approach and purpose — that of actively engaging with their local community, learning about their local environment, conserving and protecting biodiversity and correcting unsustainable approaches to the management of soil, water and vegetation.

More broadly, the Landcare philosophy can be applied by all Australians in their daily lives, in the way they live and work. For example, in making decisions about purchases at the supermarket about where and how a food item has been produced or by avoiding damage to plants and animals when visiting a national park.

Landcare achievements

When the National Landcare Program was launched nationally in 1989 it was envisaged that there would be some 2000 Landcare groups by the year 2000. There are now over 5000 community-based groups operating across Australia, however, given that a number of production and conservation groups are not included in this figure, the number is possibly closer to 6000. They include people of all ages from school children to retirees, from many cultures and across all environments, including agricultural, Indigenous, urban and coastal lands.

This army of volunteers and stewards has changed the face of Australia's rural and urban landscapes. It has planted millions of trees, shrubs and grasses; repaired riparian zones and restored water quality by reducing erosion and fencing out stock from riverbanks; protected remnants of native vegetation; regenerated areas to provide habitat for native wildlife; improved ground cover, grazing methods and soil management; and rehabilitated coastal dunes and recreational areas.

The environmental focus of the Landcare approach evolved to incorporate a strong social aspect. Communities have understood the benefits of joint action to analyse and solve local problems, including many that are beyond the capacity of individuals to solve. This has been vital in providing social cohesion and support structures in rural communities struggling to survive in the face of drought and market pressures. In this sense, the Landcare approach has contributed to the health and welfare of local communities.

Landcare — the future

Australia's natural environment and productive landscapes are central to our national identity. They provide for our own basic needs and for our nation's wealth through agriculture, mining and tourism. The economic and social welfare of all Australians depend on a healthy, well-

managed and resilient natural environment — indeed, it is vital to the survival of future generations.

Australia, like all nations, faces major environmental challenges imposed by increasing populations and associated food security concerns, increasing energy and production costs, climate variability and change. The impacts on productivity and biodiversity caused by well-recognised problems such as dryland salinity, reduced water availability, depletion of soil fertility, and weeds and animal pests must be managed if these challenges are to be met.

There is great potential for the health, productivity and resilience of Australian landscapes to be enhanced by more efficient use of water, more effective management of climate variability and in creating sinks for greenhouse gases by conserving and expanding areas of vegetation and improving soil fertility.

Along with the governments' responsibilities, much of the hard work is being done on-the-ground at the local level by people thinking about and developing an understanding of how they can live, work and play in their landscapes sustainably. Small and incremental gains can produce big results and the Landcare approach can be the catalyst.

The original caretakers of this land, the Aboriginal peoples, have much to teach us. Indigenous Landcare shows how traditional practices in land management remain appropriate today.

The Landcare philosophy is about looking to the future. It is also about building on twenty years of experience and accumulated knowledge. In working with governments, regional bodies, non-government organisations and other stakeholders, landcarers can take advantage of the strategic natural resource management planning that has been undertaken at all levels. To do this effectively, Landcare groups and networks would benefit from stronger support and training in governance and professionalism.

The Landcare movement can play a central role in meeting resource use and environmental



challenges by raising awareness, engaging people and communities and encouraging action through leading by example. In planning this future, the flexibility and diversity of landcarers and their capacity for local action and innovation will be vital.

Community Call for Action

The Framework was developed to support the resilience and growth of the Landcare movement to 2020. The Framework sets out the Landcare approach in Australia and the achievements to date. It also provides a vision as aspirations for the future. The Framework represents the a first stage – it provides the ‘what’. The *Community Call for Action* is the

‘implementation’ plan that supports the Framework.

The *Community Call for Action* is a guide to stakeholders and prospective partners, including industry, corporations, governments at all levels and regional and catchment organisations, as to how they can engage with Landcarers and support Landcare into the future.

The *Community Call for Action* has taken the key elements identified in the Framework and presents community identified strategies to further support and improve the Landcare approach over the next 10 years. It also provides strategies for how Landcarers can contribute to the critical sustainability and environmental issues facing the community.

Landcare groups, partners and stakeholders have been invited to identify the actions and activities that they will undertake to help achieve these goals.

The document includes an 'invitation for stakeholders and partners' to respond by committing to supporting and engaging with the Landcare movement in addressing sustainable resource management and production issues.

A mid-term review of the Framework and *Community Call for Action* should take place in 2015 to make any necessary changes and to start the process for the next decade 2020-2030.

The next decade — 2010 to 2020

The Landcare approach is based on the philosophy that people from all communities and cultures can actively take responsibility for the health of Australia's environmental assets. This philosophy combines learning about landscape function and adopting actions that are more suitable for managing the way we live, work and play in our landscapes, with the ultimate aim of a sustainable future for all Australians.

Australians have pioneered, and developed and refined the model over the past two

decades both nationally and overseas, so that the Landcare approach brings people together across local communities to more effectively tackle their particular issues. These landcarers are the local drivers of on-ground change.

For landcarers to more effectively achieve their aims they collaborate with government and non-government organisations for both the sharing of, and assistance with, knowledge and resources. The landcarers, their partners and those providing a range of services make up the Landcare community in Australia.

The Landcare community contributes significantly to raising the awareness and understanding of landscape function and the impact of inappropriate practices, and encourages the adoption of suitable methods of management to enhance the health of Australia's land, water and biodiversity.

With twenty years of knowledge, experience and achievements to build on and a range of current and emerging environmental challenges, the Australian Framework for Landcare provides a foundation on which to base the further development and growth of the Landcare approach.



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.

The Landcare approach incorporates:

- a locally-driven approach to local issues
- active participation and leadership by individuals, groups and networks
- appreciation of our natural environment and promotion of ecologically sustainable development
- respect for local knowledge
- research and development
- access to technical knowledge and expertise
- integrated management systems — economic, social, cultural and environmental
- treatment of the causes of environmental degradation as well as the symptoms and measuring outcomes
- local action on global problems

- communication of Landcare internationally
- contribution to the development of government policies and programs.

Guiding principles:

- Self determination
- Inclusive, collaborative — working in partnerships
- Apolitical with bipartisan support
- Flexible, adaptable and innovative
- Responsive to different needs and cultures
- Clarity of purpose.

Key elements

The following elements are central to the future development of the Landcare approach and to the contribution the people involved can make. These key elements are directly related to the critical sustainability and environmental issues in the next section. The way in which these elements are addressed has significant implications for the maintenance of the ongoing Landcare effort as well as its enhancement.

Opportunities to be involved:

- All people are inspired to participate.

Effective information and knowledge sharing:

- Mechanisms are available for generating and sharing knowledge and information.

Acknowledging change:

- The differences Landcarers make are measured and acknowledged.

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.

Succession planning:

- The vitality of people involved is maintained into the future by engaging all generations and cultures.

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.

Professional credentials established:

- Individuals, groups, support staff and networks involved in the Landcare approach achieve high standards of governance and professionalism.

Critical sustainability and environmental issues

Critical sustainability and environmental issues for Australia are of particular concern to landcarers. The Landcare approach will be a significant factor contributing to the analysis of these issues and to the development and implementation of action plans to address them.

The key issues are:

- strong Landcare and related groups and involved individuals
- the engagement and participation of all Australians
- sustainable management systems (covering land, water and marine areas)
- a healthy natural environment — encompassing the physical environment and the plants, animals and ecosystem services it supports
- climate change variability and adaptability
- food security
- monitoring of progress and reporting on achievements.



Stakeholders and partnerships

All Australians have a place in the Landcare vision. Partnerships add enormous value to the capacity and scope of the outcomes ultimately achieved and they are an essential feature of the Landcare approach.

Individuals can participate by:

- taking Landcare principles into account in day to day decision making
- improving their awareness of sustainable resource use and conservation
- joining a Landcare or related group and helping to sustain its efforts
- taking an active part in local, regional, state and national networks and advisory committees.

Communities can act through:

- local group action
- encouraging the Landcare philosophy in schools and throughout their communities
- local involvement in public and Indigenous land management
- forming networks at all levels, from local to national
- developing partnerships.

Land owners and managers can take action by:

- applying sustainable approaches to soil, water and vegetation management
- meeting the challenge of integrating the needs of food and fibre production with environmental management
- improving their understanding of landscape function
- improving management skills
- becoming involved in Landcare or other management groups
- developing and implementing farm plans based on sustainability principles
- taking action to protect and conserve biodiversity and critical habitats.

State and national Landcare organisations can assist by:

- representing and promoting the Landcare approach
- celebrating Landcare achievements
- supporting and coordinating Landcare activities in their jurisdictions
- contributing to government policy and program development.

Corporations/Industry can participate by:

- applying Landcare principles in their day to day operations and demonstrate this through advertising and promotions
- encouraging employees to become engaged in Landcare activities
- forming partnerships with Landcare groups/networks and other Landcare stakeholders
- providing financial and other support to Landcare operations.

Non-government, farming and indigenous organisations can act by:

- participating in achievement of the Landcare vision
- forming partnerships with Landcare groups or networks
- engaging Landcare related groups in their activities
- helping to champion the Landcare partnerships, engagement with land managers and community awareness.

Governments at all levels (national, state and local) have a role through:

- recognising the Landcare approach as a contributor to the achievement of sustainable landscapes locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- acknowledging the contribution to the health and welfare of local communities

- coordinating national, state, territory and local government approaches
- providing a suitable institutional and legislative framework which allows the Landcare community to operate effectively
- providing financial and human resources for Landcare activities
- generating and communicating research and development.

Regional or catchment organisations have a role through:

- acting as service delivery agencies
- execution of strategic plans
- engaging with Landcarers in planning, decision making and delivery
- forming partnerships with Landcare groups and networks to undertake on-the-ground delivery of projects
- providing resources to support local groups and networks.



A Framework for action

The Framework has been prepared by the Australian Framework for Landcare Reference Group which is made up of Landcare community members. In preparing the Framework, the Reference Group were guided by comments made and views expressed during an extensive community consultation process with the Landcare community and stakeholders during 2009 and 2010 and discussions at a National Landcare Forum held in Adelaide in March 2010. The process for the development of the Framework was fully supported by the Australian Government.

The Framework is a guide for landcarers and the Landcare community. With two decades of knowledge, experience and achievements to build on and a range of current and emerging environmental challenges, the Australian Framework for Landcare provides a foundation on which to base the further development and growth of the Landcare approach.

The Framework is also a guide to stakeholders and prospective partners, including industry, corporations, governments at all levels and regional and catchment organisations, as to how they can engage with landcarers in addressing sustainability issues of common concern.

Useful contacts

Australian Landcare Council — a national advisory body which provides advice to the Australian Government on Landcare and matters concerning natural resources management.
www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/council

National Landcare Facilitator — provides a communication link between 'grass roots' Landcare and national primary industry and community organisations and Australian Government agencies.
www.landcarefacilitator.com.au

National Landcare Network — a coalition of a number of state and territory organisations representing Landcare — Victorian Landcare Council, Tasmanian Landcare Association, Queensland Water and Land Carers, Landcare South Australia, Landcare ACT and Landcare NSW Inc.
www.nln.org.au

Landcare Australia Limited — a not-for-profit company that raises awareness and sponsorship support for the Landcare and Coastcare movements.
www.landcareonline.com.au

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry — provides support through Caring for Our Country — Landcare.
www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare

