

Developing an Indigenous Landcare Group

The first Indigenous Landcare group was established in North East Victoria in 2010. Bidja Bila Landcare Group supports the revival of traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge and provides its members with an opportunity to reconnect with the land.

Establishing an Indigenous Landcare group is a unique way of engaging the Indigenous community in natural resource management. This Landcare Note will provide you with guidance on establishing an Indigenous Landcare group in your local area.

Why do Indigenous people engage with Landcare?

Landcare provides many Indigenous Victorians with the opportunity to reconnect with the land. This results in many other benefits including:

- practicing traditional ecological knowledge
- revitalising spiritual and physical wellbeing
- looking after ancestral land
- engendering pride through personal development
- addressing the social aspects of contemporary society i.e. health
- highlighting cultural values and Indigenous aspirations in land management, and
- passing on knowledge and skills to youth, other nations and the broader community.

Why form an Indigenous Landcare Group?

Natural resource management is often low on the agenda for many Indigenous communities where health, education, employment, and housing are higher priorities.

Due to the differences in priorities between traditional Landcare groups and Indigenous communities, in certain cases the best way to accommodate these differences is to start a new group.

An Indigenous Landcare group offers its members the opportunity to plan and prioritise actions which meet their needs.

Primarily these actions relate to land management, but often, the group focus is also around preserving cultural heritage, building knowledge and skills for employment and improving member health.

Who should you talk to about starting an Indigenous Landcare Group?

Indigenous Community

The first step is to establish support within your local Indigenous community for starting a Landcare group. It's important during this phase to consult as widely as possible with a range of people within your local area. Encourage everyone who has shown an interest in establishing the group to help promote the idea to increase your impact.

Make sure that during this phase people are being asked what they see as important issues to them.

Keep a list of all the ideas people identify, these will become important as your group begins to develop a plan for the future.

Support Organisations

Forming partnerships with lead agencies in your region with a responsibility for Indigenous issues is also an important step. These may include Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) or



Landcare Notes



Victorian
Landcare
Program

Landcare Note 1.6

Local Indigenous Networks (LINs) and Traditional Owner Groups. This will help you identify the Indigenous structure in the area and whether there are Indigenous staff employed in natural resource management who may be able to assist you. If there are Indigenous organisations operating in the local community, the first question to ask them is: are they currently involved with any environmental or natural resource management work?

It may also be beneficial to make contact with the local natural resource management agencies including the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Parks Victoria (PV) and your local Catchment Management Authority (CMA). These agencies should be able to provide you with information about the Indigenous staff and organisations operating in your region. The Regional Landcare Coordinator from your CMA and/or an established local Landcare group or network, should also have knowledge of who within the local community could potentially assist you in establishing the new group.

How to form the group

Once you have consulted widely and you are confident there are enough interested individuals, groups and organisations, you will need to organise a meeting on the formation of the new group.

The initial discussion at the meeting should focus on whether those present are interested in setting up an Indigenous Landcare group and if so what they would like the new group to achieve. The meeting needs to encourage open discussion about what the Indigenous community's aspirations are for the new group. These discussions may take time, but you need to be patient. It may be useful to provide examples of what other Landcare groups have worked on as projects.

It's also important to have clarified the types of support that are available for the new group, both during its establishment and on an ongoing basis.

During and at the conclusion of the meeting it may be useful to reiterate what has been agreed upon and the actions that should be taken forward.

Establishing the Indigenous Landcare Group

If there was agreement at the community meeting around establishing the Indigenous Landcare group, there are a number of things which now need to be considered. These include:

- forming an executive committee
- naming your group
- establishing a membership list
- determining what area your group will cover
- becoming incorporated
- insuring the group and members
- suitable sites for workshops and projects
- where meetings should be held and how often
- skills required by the group
- interested in traditional ecological knowledge.
- any licenses required

When establishing the group it is also important to use the ideas that emerge from the discussions at the community meeting to provide the framework for the group's action plan.

Other options you may consider

Forming a sub-group

To reduce the administrative burden on the community members who are interested in forming an Indigenous Landcare group, you may like to consider forming the group under the auspices of another Landcare network or other organisation which shares similar goals.



Landcare Notes



Victorian
Landcare
Program

Landcare Note 1.6

If you chose to use this method to officially establish, the new Indigenous group would form a sub-group of the existing organisation. This means that the Indigenous group would be incorporated and insured under the umbrella organisation.

Finding a mentor

Explore joint projects with other groups which may create opportunities to share resources and community knowledge. This may also provide an opportunity to establish a "sister" group relationship. This type of mentoring relationship is beneficial for any new group during its formation and development, and even beyond that, where the two groups can support and assist each other when needed.

Developing a management agreement with a landowner

It may be a possibility to enter into a management agreement with a landowner such as Parks Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment or your local government. This provides a great opportunity to focus on future projects, especially when few of your group members are landowners themselves.

If you would like to establish a land management agreement, it is important to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the Landcare group and land owner. This document will outline the responsibilities of all parties involved and also identify any relevant regulations that need to be followed. For example, it should cover Occupational Health and Safety requirements, license conditions and what activities can or cannot be carried out on the land.

Case Study: Bidja Bila Landcare Group

The Bidja Bila Landcare Group formed in North East Victoria in 2010. Bidja Bila means 'men of the river'. The Bidja Bila Landcare Group currently has 14 members. The members are of many different tribal groups and are

working in cooperation for the betterment of the community in general.

The Bidja Bila Landcare Group has been supported by the Albury-Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service to establish appropriate governance arrangements. The Albury-Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service is also providing the group with access to the facilities at their complex, including meeting space, work-rooms, lunch room and storage. Group members will also have access to training opportunities and the Health Service will assist the group with access to grants related to improving members' health.

The Bidja Bila Landcare Group has negotiated a co-management agreement with Parklands Albury Wodonga for 13.6 hectares of land along the Murray River. Parklands Albury Wodonga is an independent organisation responsible for managing areas of crown land on behalf of DSE.

The Indigenous community, in partnership with this Landcare group, will run land management activities that support threatened species, pest plant and animal control, revegetation and fencing within the area while supporting the revival of traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge. The Indigenous Landcare group also provides its members with an opportunity to reconnect with the land.

Further References

McTernan, R. and Scully, M.A (2010): *Finding Common Ground Report: A Review of Indigenous engagement in Landcare in Victoria*, Department of Sustainability and Environment.

New Landcare Group Start-up Kit
<http://www.landcarevic.org.au>



Landcare Notes



Victorian
Landcare
Program

Landcare Note 1.6

Farm Tree and Landcare Association
(03) 9207 5500 or 1300 882 833
<http://www.landcarevic.org.au>

Related Landcare Notes

Landcare Note: *Forming a Landcare Group*

Acknowledgements

Compiled by Richard Kennedy, Landcare Indigenous Involvement Officer, North East Catchment Management Authority, and Karen Brisbane, Landcare Corporate Partnership Facilitator, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

© The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2016



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISBN 978-1-76047-248-1 (pdf/online)

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone DELWP Customer Service Centre 136 186, email landcare@delwp.vic.gov.au via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au

This document is also available on the internet at www.landcarevic.org.au

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.