



Landcare Notes

Committee function

Your Landcare group needs to decide the best way for your committee to work in order to minimise any conflict or misunderstanding and maximise the success of what you do.

This Landcare Note sets out the committee's functions and responsibilities.

What is a committee?

A committee is a sub-group within your Landcare group that has been elected by your members in order to manage the group's affairs.

There are usually a number of distinct roles on the committee – president, secretary, treasurer – as well as other members. This group is small enough to allow informal discussions and decision-making on matters where the wider membership has delegated responsibility.

The size, membership and operational details of the committee are set out in the constitution you adopt when the group is established (see Landcare Note 7.2: *Incorporation for Landcare groups*).

How does it work?

Establishing the committee

The committee is usually appointed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the time members will serve is set down in the constitution. For information about electing committee members, and running committee meetings, refer to Landcare Note 1.4: *Meeting types*.

Committee responsibilities

The committee has a range of responsibilities when it comes to managing the group and its projects. There is some administration required in order to run a group that accepts membership fees and other public funding. Administrative tasks of the committee include

creating invoices, managing the money in and out of the group, incorporation and insurance, running meetings and taking minutes. Details on what specific committee roles usually entail can be found in Landcare Note 1.3: *Committee roles*.

1. Planning and goal setting

The committee should lead the strategic planning for the group with input from all members. This process could involve several meetings but is important to help the group make decisions on where it wants to get to over a number of years (see Landcare Notes: 2.1 *Planning*; 2.2 *Strategic planning*).

2. Communications

The committee needs to communicate effectively with the rest of the group as well as the wider community, other community groups, government agencies and funding bodies (see Landcare Notes: 6.2 *Key principles for effective communication*; 6.4 *Raising the group profile*).

3. Finances

The committee also manages the group's finances including funding submissions, project expenditure and insurance, as well as making sure any legal requirements are met (see Landcare Notes: 4.1 *Financial management*; 4.2 *Keeping financial records*; 7.2 *Incorporation for Landcare groups*).

4. Membership

Another key role is developing and maintaining membership and the motivation of members. Having a strong, happy and effective group will mean your members will keep returning and your group will grow (see Landcare Notes: 8.1 *Effective leadership*; 9.2 *Managing volunteers*).

5. Celebrating success and hard work

It's also a committee responsibility to ensure that conflicts are minimised and successes maximised. Celebrating and rewarding the



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group's work will keep all members motivated. This includes the work of your committee! Landcare Note 9.4: *Celebration and recognition* will give you some ideas.

6. *Sharing the load*

Delegating tasks will be important to share the workload and minimise the risk of members becoming overworked and stuck in a rut (see Landcare Notes: 8.4 *Beating burn-out*; 8.5: *Sharing the load – delegation*).

Filling committee positions

Continuity is important in a committee but so is some change. Ideally each year, some experienced members should remain on the committee and be joined by new members. This allows for a balance of experience and new ideas to guide the committee forward.

Your group should decide what works best for you. It's not a good idea for one person to stay in the same position for more than three or four years because it prevents the emergence of fresh ideas from new people and may also lead to people dealing with 'burn-out'.

Committee members need the skills and resources to carry out their duties and it's important that potential office bearers know exactly what the job entails. If they understand how much time is involved, the tasks that need doing and how long they will be in the position, it will make it easier to find the right person for that job.

Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway – Resources for groups: www.landcarevic.org.au

Our Community - Building Stronger Communities:

www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_main.jsp

This website contains a wide range of material including Help Sheets on the responsibilities of committee members and advice on the effective operation of community groups, some of which is available for downloading. A

number of detailed guides including *Finding the Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups – Over 400 Tips on Running a More Effective Community Group and School* (by Rhonda Galbally) are available.

Chamala, S and Mortis, P D (1990) – *Working Together for Landcare*; Australian Academic Press, Bowen Hills, Queensland; See Chapter 5, *Defining Rules, Roles and Responsibilities*.

McFarlane, G, Carpenter, J. and Youl, R (1996) - *Group Skills and Community Action*: http://web.archive.org/web/20050315170751/www.neon.net.au/community/environment/grp_skills/

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 1.1: *Starting up a Landcare group*

Landcare Note 1.3: *Committee roles*

Landcare Note 1.4: *Meeting types*

Landcare Note 1.5: *Effective meetings*

Landcare Note 2.1: *Planning*

Landcare Note 2.2: *Strategic planning*

Landcare Note 4.1: *Financial management*

Landcare Note 4.2: *Keeping financial records*

Landcare Note 6.2: *Key principles for effective communication*

Landcare Note 6.4: *Raising the group profile*

Landcare Note 7.2 *Incorporation for Landcare groups*

Landcare Note 8.1: *Effective leadership*

Landcare Note 8.4: *Beating burn-out*

Landcare Note 8.5: *Sharing the load - delegation*

Landcare Note 9.2: *Managing volunteers*



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Landcare Note 1.2

Landcare Note 9.3: *What skills and knowledge does the group have?*

Landcare Note 9.4: *Celebration and recognition*

Acknowledgements

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