



Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program

Member Survey 2021

Survey Report

Background

Applications for future funding for the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program opened in February 2021.

This program is widely regarded as having made a very important contribution to the success of Victorian landcare over many years. It is equally regarded as vital for the ongoing success of landcare.

In announcing the program the DELWP Victorian Landcare Program advised of a number of key changes to the existing program and other key matters for applicants to be aware of. These include:

- A requirement that the applicant be the employer of the facilitator if the application is successful. DELWP is not willing to permit sub-contracting to another organisation.
- A requirement that applicants demonstrate that they are effectively governed, including a requirement for a code of conduct, complaints policy and OHS policies.
- A requirement that applicants demonstrate their ability to effectively employ a facilitator.
- A DELWP preference that facilitators be employed, rather than engaged as a contractor.
- A broadening of the scope of the program to allow for application from environmental volunteering organisations that would not be regarded as landcare groups.

Landcare Victoria members expressed concern about some of these changes and other aspects of the program. Landcare Victoria decided to survey members to discover the extent and nature of member concerns. It was anticipated that the results of the survey would assist with Landcare Victoria engagement with DELWP, and would help determine future priorities for member support.

The Survey

Landcare Victoria developed a survey with input from the CEO and three members of the Landcare Victoria Board. It was circulated on Friday 19 February with a closing date of Monday 1 March. The survey form is attached.

The Survey was circulated to 561 Landcare Victoria member contacts with a request that it be passed onto others in their group/network who could contribute, including facilitators and other paid staff.

Survey analysis is based on the 217 results received up to 9.00am Monday 1 March 2021. Multiple responses were received from some groups. One hundred and sixty-eight (168) groups provided one or more responses.

Results

Results and some basic analysis of survey results follow.

2. To which catchment management region does your Group/Network belong?

- 217 survey submissions were received from all CMA regions.

CMA Region	Number of submissions
Corangamite	10
East Gippsland	19
Glenelg Hopkins	23
Goulburn Broken	38
Mallee	8
North Central	32
North East	12
Port Phillip and Westernport	39
West Gippsland	16
Wimmera	16
Not stated	4
Total	217

3. Please indicate what best describes your role in landcare

- Respondents were asked to identify their role. Where respondents chose 'other' the raw data were recoded to allocate the role to the primary classification. In a few cases this was not possible, or no choice was provided.

Source	Number of submissions
Committee Member	170
Landcare staff	42
Not stated	5
Total	217

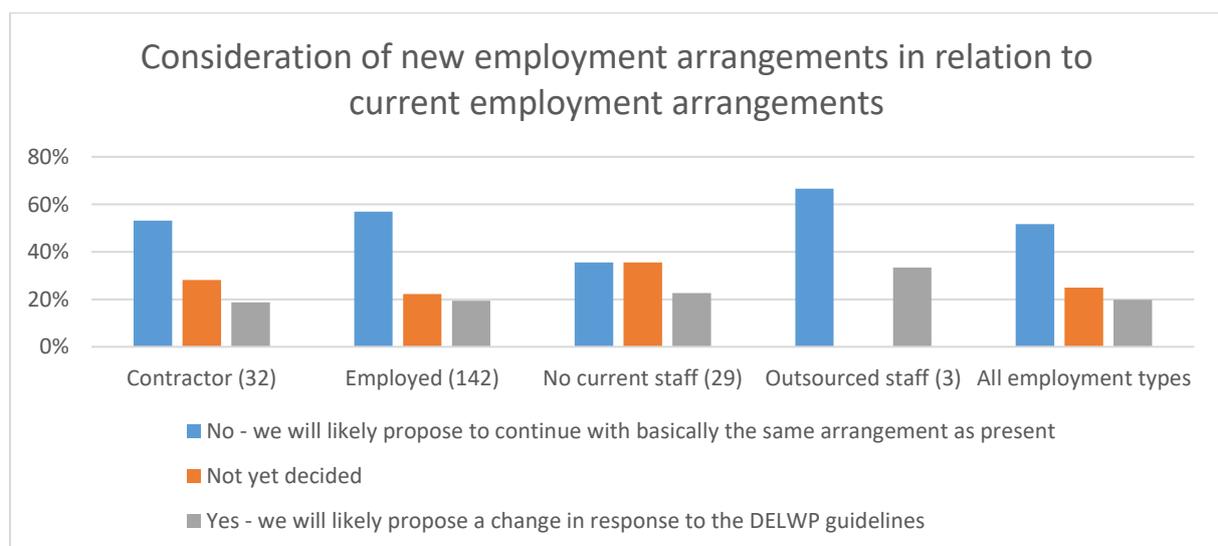
4. Under what arrangement is your current facilitator employed?

- The survey asked respondents to describe the employment arrangement of their current facilitator. Raw data were recoded as required based on the description provided into three employment classes: employed, contracted or outsourced (i.e employed by another organisation).
- 32 respondents reported that they presently have no access to a facilitator. Six respondents offered no response to this question.

Current employment arrangement	Number of submissions
Contractor	32
Employed	144
No Facilitator	32
Outsourced	3
No response	6
Total	217

5. Have you considered a new employment arrangement for your facilitator in response to the changes in the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program?

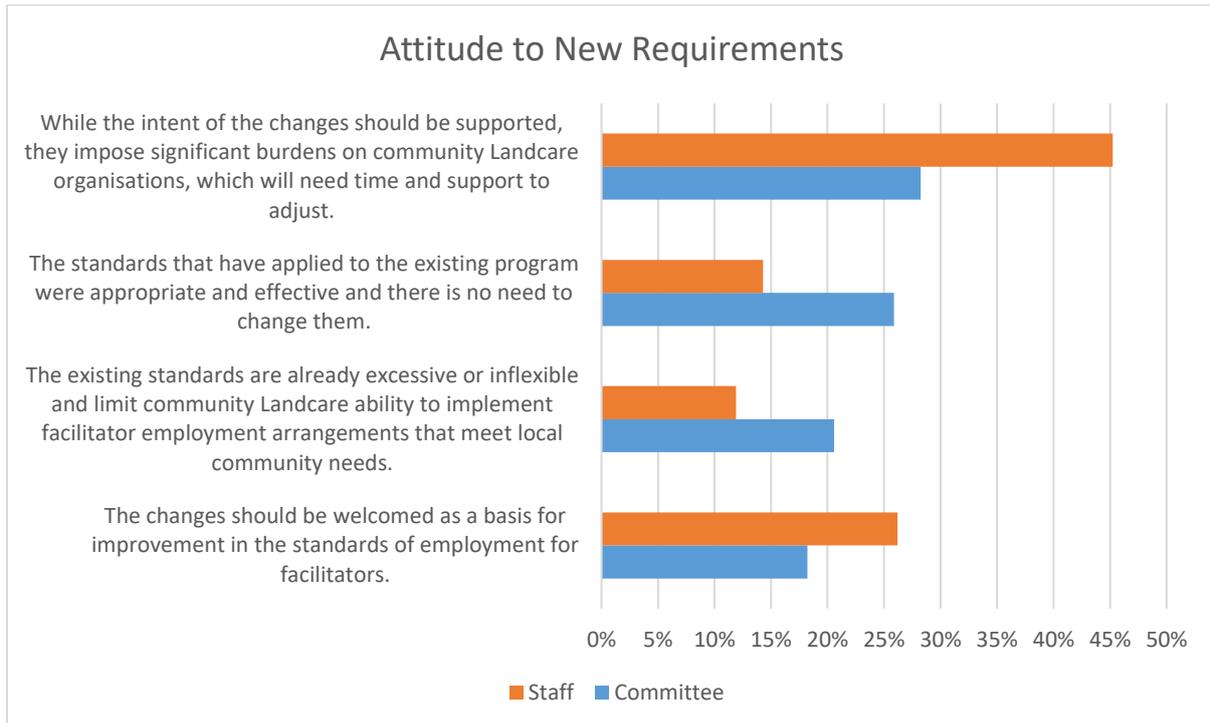
- Around half of the groups and networks that currently have access to a facilitator intend to develop proposals that are basically the same as in place at present.
- Around one fifth of the groups and networks that currently have access to a facilitator intend to develop proposals that will change as a result of the new DELWP guidelines. A little over a fifth of respondents have yet to decide.
- DELWP has indicated a preference for facilitators to be employed, rather than contracted but there is little difference in the intent to change between those groups that presently employ or contract their facilitator.



206 responses

6. Which of these statements best describes your attitude to the employment and governance changes required by DELWP for the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program

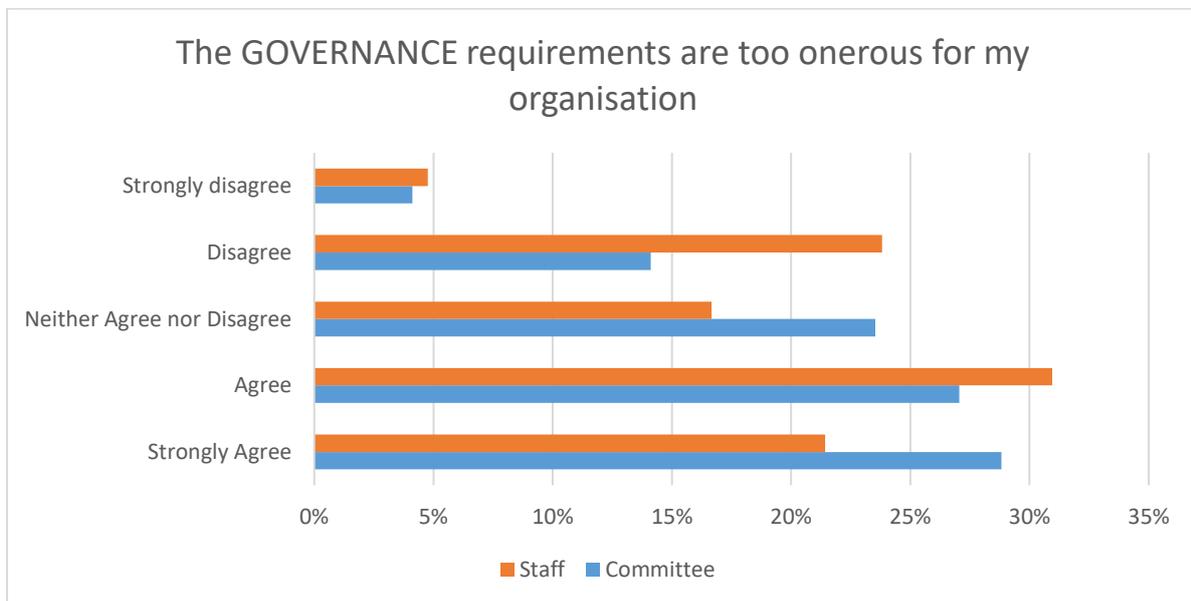
- Just under half (46%) of committee respondents either welcome the changes or support the changes subject to the need for time and support to adjust.
- Paid landcare staff are more inclined to support the changes than committee members, although most recognise that community landcare organisations will need time to adjust.
- 20% of respondents believe that the established standards are excessive or inflexible.



201 responses

7. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following question. The GOVERNANCE requirements that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have outlined in the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program are too onerous for my organisation

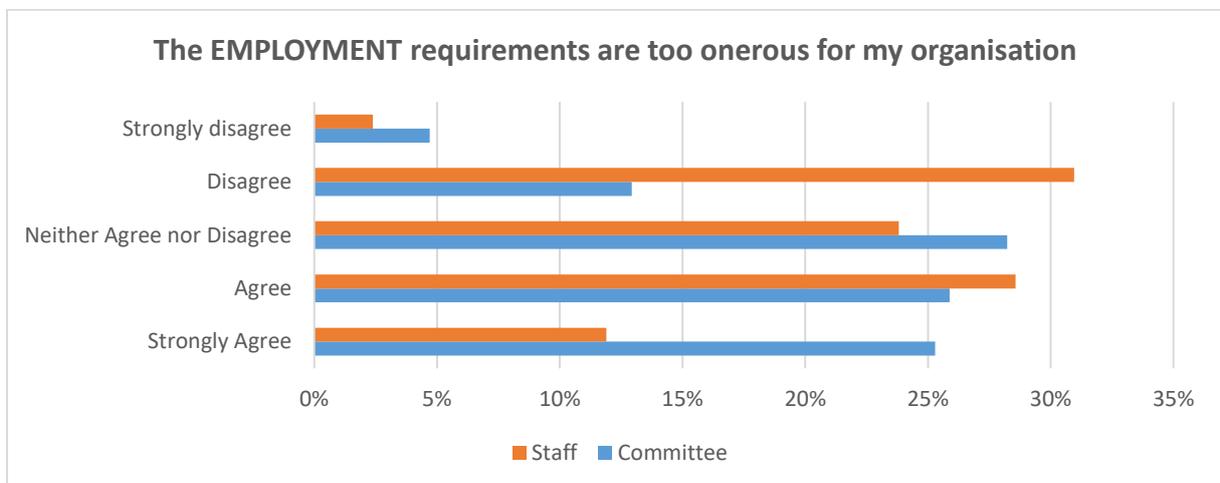
- A little over half (54%) of respondents believe that the governance requirements required by the new program are excessive. The remainder are either neutral (22%) or disagree (21%) with the proposition (4% did not respond).
- Staff are much more inclined to disagree with the proposition that governance requirements are excessive than are their management committees.



207 responses

8. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following question. The EMPLOYMENT requirements that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have outlined in the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program are too onerous for my organisation

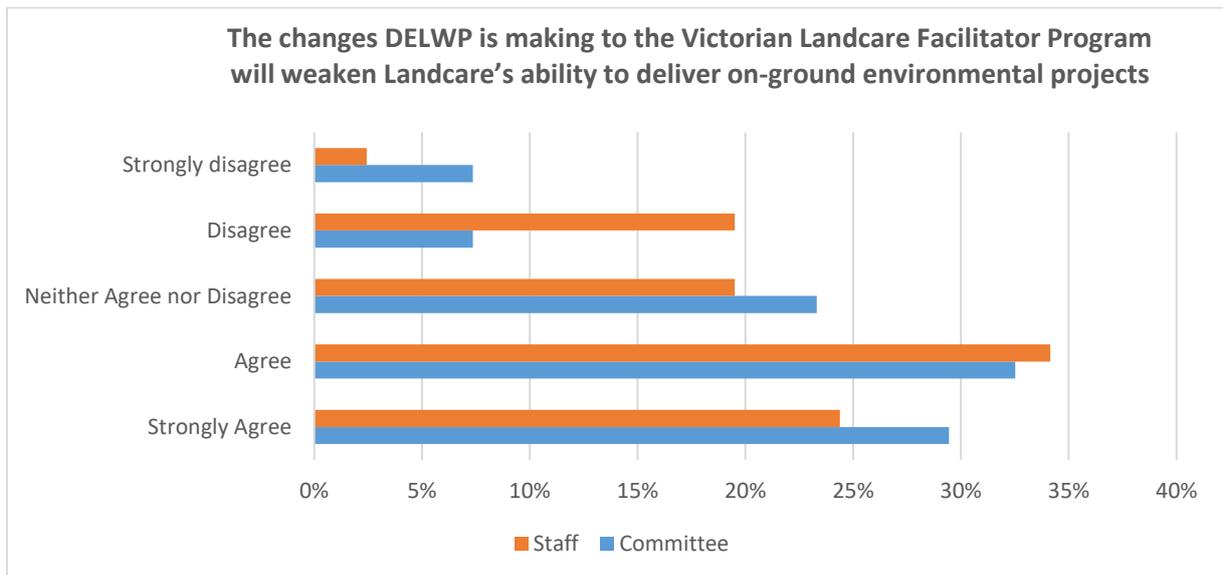
- A substantial proportion of respondents (27%) neither agree nor disagree that the employment requirements in the new program are excessive.
- Of those that did express a view, just under half agreed or strongly agreed that the employment requirements established by DELWP are excessive.
- Paid landcare staff were less inclined to agree that the employment requirements are too onerous, compared to their committees.



206 responses

9. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement: The changes DELWP is making to the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program will weaken Landcare’s ability to deliver on-ground environmental projects in my region and across Victoria

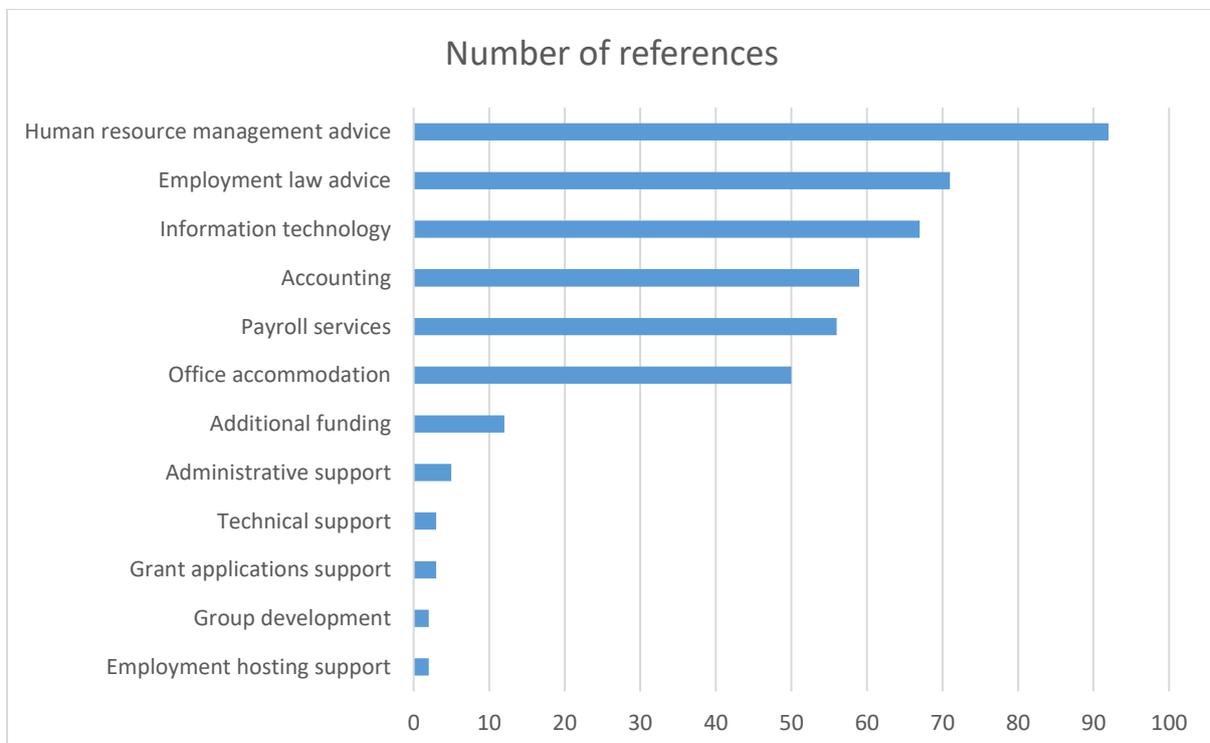
- The proposed changes to the facilitator program are of concern to the Victorian landcare community. Sixty-one percent of respondents believe that the changes will weaken landcare’s ability to deliver on ground environmental projects.
- While the majority of landcare staff (59%) indicate agreement that the new program will weaken community landcare, their level of concern is a little less than that of their management committees.



205 Responses

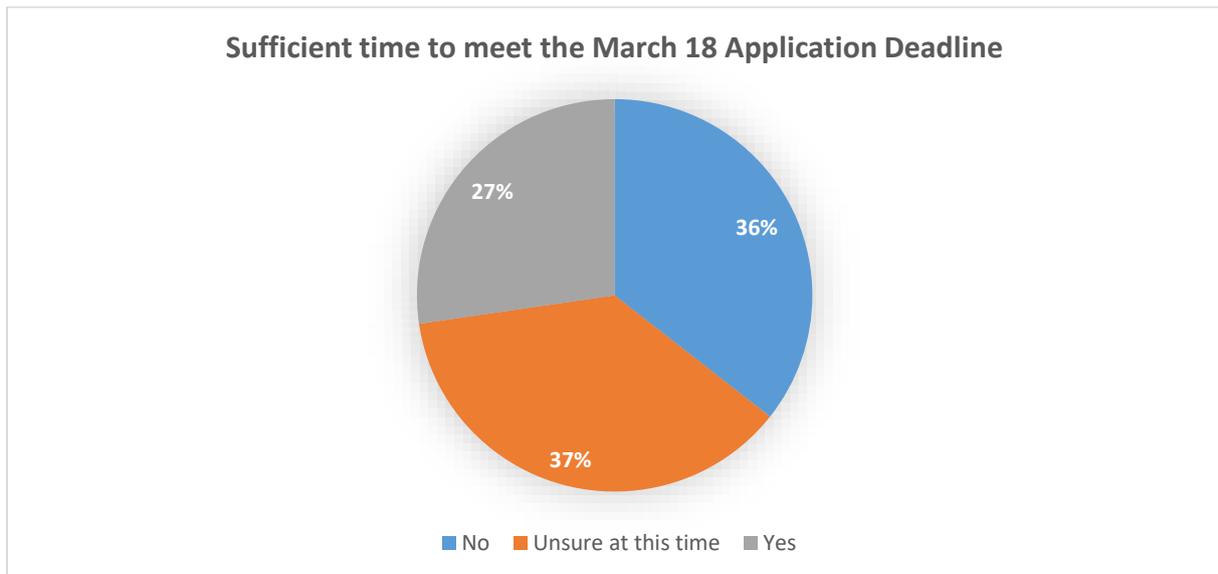
10. With respect to employing a Landcare facilitator please select which areas you may require additional assistance with.

- The chart below shows the total number of references to various forms of support requested by respondents. Multiple topics were permitted so the numbers reported tally to more than the total number of responses.
- Numerous 'other' responses were received in addition to the choices offered. Data were recoded into the categories shown in the graph below.
- Human resource management and employment law advice are dominant areas for support. Combined, 163 out of the 216 responses received sought this type of support.
- Information technology, accounting and payroll services are also significant areas for support.
- A third frequently mentioned topic is support for office accommodation.



11. Do you feel that your group/network has sufficient time to prepare an application that adequately meets the requirements of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program prior to the March 18 application deadline?

- 27% of respondents feel they are able to meet the March 18 submission deadline.
- Around equal proportions of the remainder feel that they don't have sufficient time or are unsure.



205 Responses



12. If you have any brief comments about the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, please provide them below.

Respondents were invited to provide comments on the program. These are provided as received below. Information that might identify groups or individuals has been redacted.

<p>Our local Government area council will be the host this round. For they have the capacity to employ the facilitator and the Landcare groups to form the steering committee to give direction and assist the facilitator with engaging with the local community. We have been working together with the present and past Landcare facilitator position since the funding started, and have developed a strong relationship.</p>
<p>The Landcare Facilitator funding does not allow the Facilitator to support the Network who employs them. Their work is supposed to be solely focused on helping the Landcare groups who are members of the Network. This restriction throws the total running of the Network to the volunteer Board members.</p>
<p>In the [redacted] our group was well supported by the facilitator as was she by the sponsoring council. Group representatives had good opportunity to direct the facilitator on how she could best help them. Volunteer groups seldom have the recourses to be good employers and if council is the direct employer then they would have the ability to dictate direction. It worked so well for our group & network I don't understand how taking this type of employment arrangement away benefits anyone?</p>
<p>I have been a Landcare Facilitator for nearly two years. It's a strange position to be in: I don't have a manager but I report to everyone. I have been talking to other Landcare Facilitators and discovered that everyone is employed in a different way and has different expectations from their committees and members. I'm concerned about inequities across the state for the facilitators and for the Landcare groups.</p>
<p>As a Landcare group we depend and rely on our Network Facilitator to deal with these broader governance issues, and our Network has the capacity to manage this.</p> <p>We can understand there are groups who may be struggling to deal with governance and employment issues and we believe then it is up to DELWP and LVI to work out how to support the Networks. We Landcare groups are VOLUNTEERS.</p> <p>This is the first correspondence we as a Landcare group have ever received from LVI regarding these issues. The above survey is extremely confusing, unclear and circular. This is beyond our capacity to answer and nor do we believe it is our responsibility.</p>
<p>We believe that there should be a more centralised state wide and equitable approach to the employment of Landcare facilitators. We are aware that some network facilitators have a small number of groups and others have a large number of very active groups, which means the support that groups receive is varied.</p> <p>Whilst we support the intent of having Landcare groups/networks to have an input into the location and area covered by employed LC Facilitators - we believe that the new process is too onerous for volunteer groups to undertake. Further we strongly believe that the employment of LC Facilitators should be employed by and managed by the LC organisation, not volunteer groups. The time, knowledge and skill required to effectively and properly manage employees including the legal and tax requirements is considerable and volunteer groups/networks should not be asked to be doing this on behalf of Landcare. This should be the role of Landcare.</p> <p>We have had a very unsatisfactory experience with a Landcare Facilitator ([redacted]) whom assisted greatly with grant applications however they put their own personal business up as the Project Manager (and received a % of the project funding for PM) for the projects - failed to deliver on the PM role responsibilities - subcontracted their responsibilities to other people who also were paid for work they should have been doing themselves thus overspending the PM budget - and when we terminated their PM position due to non reporting to the committee and a whole range of issues we could not resolve, extensive double/triple dipping of project funds and conflict of interest issues (eg also being the head of the organisation that employed people for onground works for which they charged a fee) they withdrew all support to our group as a LC facilitator. It appears they were using their LC facilitator role to further their own personal business, and when we refused that arrangement all communication to us from them was cut.</p> <p>We have since moved to be part of another LC Network ([redacted]) and have been very satisfied with this move, however with large number of groups that facilitator has to look after means that their capacity for support is limited.</p>
<p>Question 6 and 10 i am unable to answer as i am not aware of the DELWP changes.</p>
<p>DELWP seem to have forgotten that Landcare is mainly run by volunteers. It seems that DELWP expect the same standards for volunteers as they do for over-regulated, paid, professionally trained, government employees. This is unrealistic and unreasonable.</p>
<p>Landcarers are volunteer's and don't want to be bogged down administering a facilitator. Local issues are important to us and if a facilitator is a pawn to a government agency then we lose the ability to work with our local issues.</p>
<p>Our group feel that the facilitator positions are being shifted form locally employed and managed positions to DELWP extension officers. We are not prepared to use our volunteer time to do the management as directed rather than as we see as valuable to our group and district. We will not be applying for funding and will conduct further projects ourselves with our own resources allow.</p> <p>[redacted]</p>
<p>We have been asking for the conditions to be made available to us since July last year, and my network is so big we now need to consider more than one position. This could mean a change to two networks to suit DELWP's funding ratio model of 5-12 groups : 1 .5 FTE facilitator. DELWP's time frame does not give us enough time to consult thoroughly with all of our members or the groups in our network.</p>
<p>Our local Council will host our Facilitator as they have the capacity to employ the facilitator. The Landcare groups will from a steering committee to give direction and assist the facilitator with engaging with the local groups.</p>

<p>Our group fully respects that if we are to receive public money it is reasonable that the management, governance, risk and compliance associated with employing a facilitator is properly addressed. However we feel the ever increasing administration involved in meeting these requirements is putting the fantastic work achieved by the Victorian Landcare community at risk. Many volunteer groups and networks simply no longer have the capacity to employ a Landcare facilitator. We believe the whole system needs an overhaul to ensure equity and consistency in relation to Facilitator employment across the state and to allow facilitators and Landcare volunteers to get on with the most important job of all, on-ground action. We feel there is plenty of scope to streamline some of the administration requirements and greatly reduce the ever increasing burden that is being placed on volunteers. It is also making succession planning for groups an increasingly challenging task when other members see the heavy lifting that some executive committee members are currently undertaking. We think it would also be a useful exercise to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in the Landcare space eg. LVI, CMA's DELWP, Landcare Groups etc. This may help with minimising duplication, confusion, current gaps etc within the Landcare community.</p> <p>Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide feedback.</p>
<p>With our existing landcare facilitator being employed by a professional organisation, most of the questions don't apply to us. For this reason I haven't followed the discussion closely, as the employment of our facilitator will be in good hands.</p>
<p>Overall a professional approach to facilitation is welcome.</p>
<p>In my experience I have seen how landcare groups managing Landcare facilitators can go really pear-shaped, it would be great to see the program left as it currently is</p>
<p>I think the current concern with the new VLFP relates to the inherent problems of the program never addressed by the last 2 reviews</p> <p>For a long term program it relies heavily on limited and insecure funding, entrenched part time jobs, no hope for high quality on-going staff development and job progression. Turnover is high. Job classification—to work value has never been examined by the funder—no interest if the funding provided is sufficient to meet community standards—outcomes required.</p> <p>The program offers no funds for establishment, limited funding for on-costs, admin and office space etc....and examples of wage theft to pay on-costs are known.</p> <p>There is a heavy reliance on volunteers, no reimbursements built to funding to allow for genuine volunteer costs incurred etc —no other sector would accept this situation—why should we!</p> <p>Whilst wanting to strengthen governance/employment the individual application process does nothing to help groups to submit say a regional model where facilitators may specialise or work across all groups in some innovative way. They could then support each other—have a shared understanding and a strengthened regional management model. Instead we are forced to break up groups into single applications where its difficult to describe a bigger regional model and we are really just reinforcing the old model...so nothing new here at all.</p>
<p>It is a valuable program that needs adequate funding so that we can retain people in the role.</p>
<p>██████ recognises that changes to the governance and administration requirements for engagement of the VLFP were overdue. The additional rigour that is expected is therefore supported. It needs to be also recognised that the new requirements do impose additional work on host groups, and some groups may not be willing or able to meet these requirements. In this sense the stated objective of empowering local groups may well be jeopardised. For those groups - like the █████ - whose committee and Landcare facilitator are both content with a continuing contractor/contractee relationship, clearer advice should be provided on how to ensure this is appropriately done.</p>
<p>We are unhappy with the proposed changes. The current system works well for our group.</p>
<p>Our landcare facilitator has had to spend too much time applying for funding for their own position. This takes too much time and energy, when the remit of the position is already large. Even without the burden of seeking funds for the job, the position should be full-time to recognise and adequately support its realities.</p>
<p>If facilitators are longer accessible to our group, we cannot see any way to continue as a volunteer group.</p>
<p>Still trying to manage an underspend from 19/20 financial year and due to changing situation within the network haven't even had a chance to really look into or complete the VLFP 2021-2023 funding application.</p>
<p>Feel some groups may need assistance with employment and structure but others operate well under contractual agreements</p>
<p>The Facilitator Program is critical to the successful operation of our group. We need it to continue to function as best as possible.</p>
<p>I think the program has been very beneficial and has allowed our groups to do things they could not otherwise contemplate.</p>
<p>We can always improve, and personally I think better collaboration and professional support for Facilitators would be beneficial.</p>
<p>We are not really aware of the changes that are being made??</p>
<p>I feel the language in this survey focuses on Landcare. It appears to disregard and marginalise smaller groups such as ours which have achieved significant progress in our vision and has been formally awarded in recent times for the same. Moving forward I am feeling very anxious about how our group's management will be overseen by Landcare. This anxiety is based on recent interactions with the local landcare group which demonstrated rigid communication and no inspiration for future collaboration. Thank you for reaching out for my thoughts and I hope they have provided you with some insight.</p>
<p>The need to have defined boundaries will be difficult for us as landholders have a connection to 1of 3 groups in our region and we have managed to satisfy there needs without any problems If it works why change?</p>

<p>The VLFP has, in my opinion, worked satisfactorily for a number of years. Again, in my opinion, both State and Federal Governments have been steadily making it more difficult for Landcare volunteers and Groups to support themselves with their own Expressions of Interest and Acquittal processes, thus rendering them very reliant on having the support of their local Facilitator. The VLFP has undergone at least two reviews which I am certain would have highlighted the dependence of volunteers on the Facilitators' skills. Despite this the State Government through DELWP has indicated a significant reduction in annual funding to the program as well as opening up the number of other "Friends Of" groups (I guess city fringe dwelling green/left groups) to share in that reduced pool of funds. I see this as another attack on rural volunteers (similar to the CFA debacle) by a Socialist city centric Government. Clearly if they starve the program of funds a direct consequence will be the dismantling of local Landcare Groups who will become disillusioned and dispirited with the onerous conditions of their continued existence.</p>
<p>We rely on the facilitator to provide us with information, advice, resources and inspiration to do on ground works. Our group struggles to continue and will simply cease to exist if we dont have the support of a facilitator.</p>
<p>Delivery Model 4 mentions the need for high level standards for governance but does not indicate what those standards are (KPI's). It speaks of appropriate systems and processes but again does not state what they are. In any change to be implemented there must be considerable support from DELWP during a transition period during which recipients that may not meet the new standards are given a grace period in which to meet the standards.</p>
<p>An ongoing structure of secure long term employment is needed, as we lose competent facilitators through the ad hoc nature of their employment terms under the current short term contracts.</p>
<p>- What changes have been made to clauses in the new contract? -The CMA hosted Landcare Coordinator roles - weve never been asked to document whether or not we consider these roles adequately support our needs. We are frequently asked to report on what we do and achieve, but Ive never seen any reports that role sends in about what they and we have achieved. Surely if that role is meant to support ours, we would be privy to what is being said and able to comment on its veracity? The best I see if a comment in the Victorian Catchment and Landcare magazine.</p>
<p>I believe the Facilitators should be employed by a third party expert in IR employment issues who works with the groups to ensure the facilitators are performing to the requirements set out and arranges payment and all logistics for the groups - leaving groups to do the work of focussing on the projects - it is up to the 3rd party to monitor with the groups about how the facilitator is doing their job- the facilitator has to show initiative in working with the groups - the groups-networks should not be the employer- but should guide the facilitator to do what the groups want</p>
<p>In our area we have a very good facilitator. And between the facilitator and local groups/other partnerships/networks we achieve a lot. The time it takes them and the local Landcare groups (volunteers) to fill out the forms/grants/managing etc is ridiculous. We're flat out managing things on ground, especially with Covid and our developing region. Why can't you employ someone who can actually have a look at the massive achievements that have happened? Instead of these endless surveys. And forms and reporting. Usually they're delivered late with short timelines.</p> <p>Our facilitator is essential. Without them, local Landcare groups (all volunteers) would collapse. DELWP forgets that Landcare is made up of volunteers.</p>
<p>You get a lot of bang for your buck.</p>
<p>Our facilitator gives much support to the groups in our network. Areas of support include liaising with landholders and government organisations, organising training events for Landcare members, providing support (eg. making flyers, designing signs, advice on OHS requirements for working-bees etc.) as well as contacts and guidance to groups to help with planning and implementation of their programs. Our facilitator finds it difficult to provide the time to meet the demands put on her by DELWP and the groups in our network within the time fraction of her employment. There are close to 10 groups, each with different needs and priorities. It is a substantial portfolio within a large geographical area comprised of a range of environmentally significant landscapes and land uses.</p>
<p>If it is not broken you don,t need to fix it !!</p>
<p>In our opinion the Vic Government needs to invest more money directly into Landcare to control Noxious weeds, Rabbits ,Deer, and Feral animals NOT having to apply for grants all the time. We are Volunteers .</p>
<p>For every Dollar the Government we receive we return 6 Dollars not a bad investment !!</p>
<p>We are very happy with the arrangement we have in regards to sharing a facilitator employed by the network, this enables us to do the work we need to do without rising to the next level of governance, as a small landcare group, required if we were to employ direct. We are part of the [REDACTED] governance group as a member agency. Building the capacity of the network has assisted all out 11 landcare groups to be functioning at a much higher level than average, with some terrific projects happening in each group. It's a great model. It also means the facilitator has a great team of other like minded workers, great support and proper employment practices at [REDACTED], something we could not offer as a landcare group nor if the facilitator were attached to local government etc.</p>
<p>Many of the aspects required in terms of Governance and Employment are already in place for our Network. There are many things that are required by DELWP with respect to DELWP being accountable to the Government of the day for these funds. Often DELWP requirement to be accountable increases "the cost of doing business" for Networks. Streamlining inputs for final reporting from the beginning of a funding cycle would help cut down Facilitator / Network requirements for final reporting, avoid duplication and provide evidence to the Minister n the value of the Program. The "do it once, do it right" concept.</p>
<p>The control is too stringent. Different areas throughout the Landcare Network have different needs, therefore one size does not fit all. Job security is paramount and the relevance of having a full time facilitator on a 3 year contract seems far more tenable than the current arrangement which does not provide for any security whatsoever. Imagine what can be achieved; we are an active group with some great projects which could reach fruition if we could offer security for our facilitator's position.</p>
<p>[REDACTED] Landcare is lucky to belong to the [REDACTED] who employ our facilitator. They are already a very professional organisation capable of employing facilitators and staff. They should have no problems with the Facilitator Program.</p>
<p>The problem is the huge gaps in line management knowledge left for us to figure out in a vacuum. e.g. There are a myriad OHS proformas & risk assessments out there, as retirees & amateurs we don't know which is most appropriate. DELWP employees and</p>

<p>CMA employees have to have them. We should be able to consult with these bodies and to find out what is most appropriate. At the end of the day we as amateur private citizens may be left facing possible prosecution in a situation where we weren't told and didn't know. At that point our only recourse may be to start legal proceedings against the government body. There needs to be clear training with written/downloadable manuals in all aspects, properly labelled so that we can find what we need to know quickly as unpaid volunteers. By my reckoning the government that dumped this on DELWP with no money to cover training has had 10 years to sort this out so far. There are no fast money saving short cuts to this. We need training events and legal people available to check our work.</p>
<p>Landcare Facilitators have insecure employment conditions which detract from their ability to empower local community groups. Instead they are forced to seek large project funding and manage these projects to ensure ongoing employment.</p> <p>It is beyond the capacity of most Landcare Network Committees, made up of volunteers otherwise busy on farms or in outside employment, to perform anything more than basic governance tasks. Budgeting of projects thus necessarily falls to facilitators, although it may not be strictly their role. Book-keeping and pay-roll services must be outsourced by networks.</p> <p>Facilitators should be employed in a permanent, ongoing capacity by Landcare Networks, or directly by Government, rather than individual Landcare Groups, as there are not enough positions available to ensure equitable distribution of facilitators across the landscape. It is an unfortunate situation to have individual Landcare Groups competing for one of a limited number of Facilitator positions available.</p> <p>In short, I would like to see our Network's Landcare Facilitator (and all facilitators) funded as a permanent, full time employee, either directly by DELWP or by our Network, with full funding for office and vehicle expenses. This would free the facilitator to concentrate on empowering and facilitating local Landcare groups to create and support change on the country they love and are responsible for, thereby returning Landcare to something like the powerful and inspirational grassroots movement it used to be.</p>
<p>The diversity across Victoria (and Australia) indicates the different areas having different needs. Stringent control means certain needs in particular areas are not met in accordance with local Landcare management.</p> <p>Furthermore, the lack of job security for facilitators is less than adequate, given that the funding is rolled out yearly. It is important to offer some continuity to staff. A 3 year period would be considered advisable.</p>
<p>The Program should be measured on outcomes and not micro managed from afar.</p> <p>There is too much red tape and justification around how the facilitator is there rather than why the facilitator is there. Too much focus on micro managing the role when clearly DELWP do not understand employment or taken on the community points of view.</p> <p>No two community's are the same in the state, Victoria is very diverse and should be given that respect. The answer to all of these problems is very simple. Three persons employed by LVI move around the state regularly assisting groups and facilitators, take it back to grass roots level. The Facilitators and their groups can not be ran from an office in Melbourne.</p>
<p>We share a facilitator with other groups. It is very difficult to ascertain if we are getting value for money in regards to the work hours provided for each Landcare group.</p>
<p>The Friends of [REDACTED] does not use a Landcare Facilitator for its activities, so cannot comment on several of the questions above.</p>
<p>It is my opinion that Landcare facilitators operate quite differently in different Networks and that this is due to the requirement of its members and their environment. There are vast differences in biodiversity and farming practices throughout the state and it is these parameters which define the type of projects and hence the role of the facilitator. I therefore believe that the facilitator's role needs to be kept more flexible than that outlined in the VLF guidelines to allow for this diversity across the State.</p>
<p>Our Landcare Facilitator supports 30 active Landcare and Friends groups, an unrealistic workload to cover in just three days per week. Our excellent Landcare Facilitator is overloaded and cannot fully deliver the level of support needed by our network members. However, funding requirements prevent us from seeking funding for additional hours.</p>
<p>We welcome the opportunity for Conservation Management Networks to access Facilitator funding. As the Network has not received Landcare Facilitator funding, questions 6, 7, 8, 9 were answered Neither Agree or Disagree.</p>
<p>The VLF needed to be reviewed but I accept that some of the requirements by DELWP under the new arrangement may be beyond the ability of some Landcare Network Committee. If DELWP intend to broaden the funding to other environmental volunteer groups e.g. Friends of groups and Coastcare groups then perhaps they should rename the program as calling it the Landcare Program implies that the funding is just for Landcare Networks and their members.</p>
<p>The [REDACTED] Inc have been undertaking a lot of work to ensure all policy, procedures and the application are in place. They have been very positive about the process, and it has given us time to really consider how we operate. For us I believe the process has been good, but we have a lot of good people with a range of skills, and are working on having everything completed in the next few weeks. I personally am really happy with [REDACTED] (current employer) and [REDACTED] (the group applying for the next round). I / we believe we can really have a positive community and on ground impact in the future. Happy to chat further. [REDACTED]</p>
<p>Our Network has always had appropriate governance in place and it suits me as Facilitator to be employed as a contractor. If we are to encourage younger people into the role positions with more hours must be offered. This role suits me as I am older and work in other roles in the community as well.</p> <p>I am very happy with my current employment arrangement but am saddened that not all Facilitators enjoy similar relationships with their Networks/Groups.</p>
<p>Our Landcare group is unwilling to take on the role as an employer and is looking at other arrangements</p>
<p>As a past executive committee member for the our network and currently a committee member of our local group only, I have experienced the "employment associated workload" of employing staff directly. The network has now tried 3 models of employment (and possibly a previous one before my time), our preferred method thru the local CMA proved to be exorbitantly expensive and cumbersome primarily due to inflexibility of the CMA overheads and on costs. The outside region model of employing facilitators was</p>

working ok, but not ideal. Direct employment would be the preferred model subject to sufficient funding and support for volunteers responsible for the employment.
The Facilitator Program is very valued by local Landcare Groups. Facilitators help mitigate the burdens of navigating legislation, grant applications, activity & event organisation and disseminating critical information. This role is best executed with flexibility and a minimum of additional controls & regulatory requirements. The Facilitators are well-governed by the local Landcare community and are held accountable, measured by results and feedback from the group.
Will no longer be continuing as a landcare network so do not need facilitation support in the future. The proposed changes are not the only reason for the Network to fold, but were a consideration (could see the changes to landcare facilitators coming 12 mths ago). The landholders have found alternative support (through [REDACTED]) where we will have co-ordination assistance to manage projects and activities rather than this fanciful idea of facilitation and expecting volunteers to do the management!
I applaud the new guidelines and recommendations regarding facilitator employment post June 30 2021 - up to now conditions of employment particularly in relation to contract employment have been exploitative in my opinion. Its a credit to the facilitators involved that they have achieved so much in often adverse employment circumstances which have required putting in many more hours than what they are paid for. The frequency and amount of reporting required and the uncertainty of ongoing employment are critically important considerations going forward. Personally I find the adversarial nature of the funding application process really distasteful and I doubt in the end that it really produces better outcomes for Landcare.
It can only be positive as a relatively new group; we welcome the proposed support opportunity.
In 2019, I completed a survey on the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program (VLFP), and from what I understand the results of that survey informed the VLFP Review Report. In the 2021-24 VLFP Guidelines it is clearly indicated that the recommendations from the 2019 Review Report have informed the changes to the VLFP. The changes to the VLFP employment requirements are nothing radical, instead they long overdue and should have already been in place, as they constitute good employment practice. I wonder why LVI is doing this last minute survey, which includes several overly negative questions on the changes to the VLFP?
We are a volunteer landcare group and our current facilitator is employed by [REDACTED] Landcare Network. We have no specific information/documentation detailing the current governance and employment requirements to compare with any changes required by DELWP.
We are all volunteer members and already are burdened with funding applications and the like. To employ someone would be onerous and wasteful
DELWP does not respect volunteers time and should not continue to try and interfere with changing a system that has worked for a quarter of a century. Every consultants report proves Landcare's worth but the results are ignored and DELWP continue to try and erode this wonderful grass-roots organization!
The funding is insufficient to employ a Landcare facilitator and cover all of the extra add on costs that this entails. How is the funding shortfall going to be addressed.
There has been too much uncertainty around the employment of VLF for too long. We have employed outstanding Facilitators, but the insecurity that comes with the way DELWP is managing the program means the role becomes unattractive for these talented employees.
We welcome the Facilitator Program as it will not only help us support our activities but also build our capacity.
The current program is working fine. Why change it?
The existing program for [REDACTED] is running very successfully and we can't understand the need for change
Because of the autocratic style of our current Landcare Facilitator, our Network would benefit from some of the changes proposed by DELWP.
[REDACTED] were hopeful that DEWLP would have provided support/guidance/templates etc to assist landcare groups meet the new governance/employment requirements prior to having to apply for further funding to employ a facilitator. The new governance/employment requirements will require more time/effort from landcare group members, who are volunteers and not paid positions. There is still uncertainty around if all current facilitator positions will indeed be funded again for the next three years, and some groups may decide that the 'red tape' is not worth it and stop employing a facilitator which would be devastating for those particular individuals.
Not familiar with the role so have opted for "not sure" type answers.
I note this statement in the FAQs from DELWP: 1. 'There is no guarantee all successful applications will be provided funding for the full 2021-24 period.' Does this mean we can employ someone but not pay them? 2. The fact that any network can apply weakens the Landcare movement as it dilutes the available funding for Landcare. This is also reflected in the much diminished Landcare grants that are open to all environmental groups.
FAQs, i.e. Guidelines continue to change. DEWLP is not a reliable partner and needs to learn to delegate and empower groups.
Under current changes the current committee or separate groups will not be directly employing facilitators. The groups want facilitators.
We have found that the inflexibility with the weekly hours has been an issue, at times of the year there is a greater workload and other times the workload is less. It has also made it difficult to adjust employment hours in response to the changing needs of the employee (e.g. flexibility in terms of family leave).
The reporting for the program has been enormous. The amount of time spent on reporting increases the hours required for volunteers to commit to the program and also impacts on the facilitators time to dedicate to other tasks.
The Facilitator Program is very valued by local Landcare Groups. Facilitators help mitigate the burdens of navigating legislation, grant applications, activity & event organisation and disseminating critical information. This role is best executed with flexibility and a

<p>minimum of additional controls & regulatory requirements. The Facilitators are well-governed by the local Landcare community and are held accountable, measured by results and feedback from the group.</p>
<p>Our group will not be individually applying for a facilitator position as it is way beyond our capability to manage the position. Being a small, rural group we liked knowing there was a facilitator focused on our region, who benefited many groups, hence why it was hosted by the [REDACTED] Landcare Network. The role is essential for small groups to keep ticking over, as volunteers are tired & time poor but still wanting Landcare as part of their local communities.</p>
<p>We have found that the inflexibility with the weekly hours has been an issue, at times of the year there is a greater workload and other times the workload is less. It has also made it difficult to adjust employment hours in response to the changing needs of the employee (e.g. flexibility in terms of family leave).</p>
<p>The reporting for the program has been enormous. The amount of time spent on reporting increases the hours required for volunteers to commit to the program and also impacts on the facilitators time to dedicate to other tasks.</p>
<p>Not aware of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. I don't think this survey applies to us. Our involvement with DWELP is mainly to do with insurance cover.</p>
<p>I wish we didn't have to work with DWLWP.</p>
<p>As a member group of the [REDACTED] Environment Alliance we have enjoyed the services of a landcare facilitator for many years. We look forward to participating in a new application process to secure another three years of funding.</p>
<p>Well needed on ground and in office support. Disappointing we are all tangled up in the strings that are attached.</p>
<p>We will provide these separately.</p>
<p>Make sure there's still a facilitator program. Volunteer groups are getting pushed harder and harder every year.</p>
<p>Hello, I'm not sure that our group has access to or been contacted by a landcare facilitator. We are only just on the cusp of being 1 year old group.</p>
<p>In principle the governance arrangements and expectations make sense however the skills and capacity of Network committee members are limited (e.g. farmers who have never worked in a company/corporate environment where this is "normal" practice).</p>
<p>In our case at [REDACTED] the 3 days allocated for our facilitator does limit the ability to meet the demands of our aims and objectives.</p>
<p>Having the security of a three year contract is a welcome development. the reporting requirements have always been over the top and getting worse/</p>
<p>Disappointed that the VLC has not acted earlier on this issue. Why wait until the last minute to react to DELWP taking control of Landcare. Come on VLC support your membership to fight this unjust treatment of Landcare volunteers.</p>
<p>We have had a very challenging period in the last 12 months in relation to exercising our Landcare Facilitators on ground role aspects through the Covid19 restrictions. In the end our engaged person resigned and we have been seeking a suitable replacement since late November 2020. It is extremely difficult to attract suitable applicants to a role that has only three more months to run on current funding and no guarantee of the funding continuing past June 30 2021. We are about to appoint a new facilitator in the next few days after a long advertising and interview process. It needs to be remembered by all that we are a volunteer group at all levels from Committee roles to membership. The need is to be focussed on encouraging the ongoing participation of the thousands of Landcare volunteers and not making the tasks more onerous for those who choose to be committee leaders.</p>
<p>While the program is generally seen as excellent by our organisation, we believe it does little for our audience and partners in our rapidly growing peri-urban community .</p>
<p>Understood are the proposed changes, which our group believe they can cope with. The changes will improve accountability by all involved which many volunteers may not be able to cope with or accept without careful and considered implementation. Any group without experienced volunteers with government and commercial backgrounds, the current situation with our group, will have difficulty in undertaking the governance and regulatory requirements now required. This devolving of the responsibilities for the employment of facilitators on voluntary groups will require very strong support from DELWP or review of the model being proposed.</p>
<p>Facilitator employment should not be based on landcare groups in their area. Facilitators do exceptional environmental work with nrm groups, committees of management, reserve committees etc. They also work with local shires, councils, indigenous communities, numerous landowners and Parks Vic to complete landcare projects. Our facilitator just completed a local weed identification publication with the local council . This valuable work was not for a landcare group but will assist many environmental groups in the area along with community members and council outdoor workers.</p>
<p>It is not feasible for an individual Landcare group to employ or manage Landcare facilitators over a long term period. The management and governance issues are excessive and the uncertainty of year to year funding makes the situation untenable.</p>
<p>The [REDACTED] network has demonstrated what is possible in this area. The [REDACTED] is however something of a unicorn. The network has been successful in spite of the economic constraints and character of volunteer landcare groups. Only a handful of people have been a part of the process from the start and understand how and why this has been achieved. Needless to say - success hasn't been the result of government policy, rules and interference.</p>
<p>You would do well to investigate case studies like this in more detail rather than calling for random comments via an online survey.</p>
<p>Our group has already agreed to accept [REDACTED] offer to host a new facilitator for 2 years if the application gets funded. What happens after that remains to be seen. Our group has committed to playing a role in taking on the management of a paid</p>

<p>facilitator (with several other groups) but there are concerns this will burden individuals in our group with time availability a major factor.</p>
<p>This program is very valuable and is making an enormous contribution to helping landowners and other people carry out natural resource management works and educate the community to better understand environmental issues.</p>
<p>The arrangements need to be flexible, an increase in salaries, representative of a professional in the industry.</p>
<p>Our Landcare Group uses our local Landcare Network Facilitator for advice and to access resources and information. The Network also run informative forums etc. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 restrictions we have not had much face to face contact with the network this year.</p>
<p>My thought is that the facilitators should be employed by a government department not the Landcare groups who have to carry all the legal responsibilities for their employment</p>
<p>The facilitator has not assisted our group at all. This system is not viable for our group. At least one group in our area sadly has ceased to exist since the facilitator was implemented.</p>
<p>having a good facilitator is the difference between life and death for most groups.</p>
<p>Friends of [REDACTED] currently employ staff so do not face the difficulties that organisations without paid staff have to face. However the burden on our volunteer Treasurer is heavy and may not be sustainable in the long term.</p>
<p>It's frustrating that one of the most cost effective conservation stewardship programs that is essential for the function and capacity of Landcare groups is being made increasingly difficult for groups to access and unnecessarily onerous. To insist on groups employing their facilitators with the mandatory administrative complexity creates an additional burden on Landcare COM's to ensure compliance. Many COM's will struggle to manage the complexity and will require outside professional support to do so and a cost. These changes represent a real deterrent to groups considering applying for funding and thus undermine their capacity to initiate projects and engage their communities</p>
<p>[REDACTED] Landcare Network would prefer our current arrangement of apply for VLF funding and the Shire employing the facilitator. This arrangement gives us more control.</p>
<p>[REDACTED] is up to date and completed all reporting requirements from DELWP. These reporting requirements do take up significant volunteer time as well as precious facilitator time. It is aggravating to do the reports.</p>
<p>I have no idea of the changes in place for the LCFacilitator program</p>
<p>Invaluable, time, commitment, keeping groups in the loop, supportive, knowledgeable, respected</p>
<p>We were initially concerned that we wouldn't be able to continue with our contracted arrangements, but after talking with [REDACTED] it appears we can continue on much as we are but with better policies in place around things like grievances and Code of Conduct. Implementing these policies will be a challenge, but should be achievable with good templates to work from. We are nervous about potential increased reporting burdens too, but these are a bit unknown as to how bad they'll be. There is an underlying concern that the value proposition around landcare has been in the ability to deliver on ground action without the beurocratic burden, and that is being eroded. However there are legal obligations that are inescapable. The challenge is that the ability to manage that side of our work is clearly underfunded. We are expected to meet the standards of government without the HR department etc to go with it. Our landcare Network covers similar footprints in Port Philip and Corangamite catchments, but this form didn't allow for that response.</p>
<p>Our Landcare network has been very happy with the facilitator model we have been following since 1994. Although DELWP expresses a desire for community groups to become more self sustainable and resilient, they also seem to be wanting more conformity and control over Landcare in the longer term. The key to our success in the past has been a non-beurocratic approach to NRM. Now we are going to get bogged down with a load of petty rules and regulations.</p>
<p>I feel that DELWP wants to exert greater control over the 'next generation' of Landcare facilitators and Landcare networks committees of management by imposing many rules and restrictions that we need to comply to before receiving a relative small amount of funding.</p>
<p>DELWP IS INVITED TO REMEMBER THAT THE LANDCARE NETWORKS ARE GENERALLY ADMINISTERED BY VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE, IN THE MOST PART, WITHIN THE OLDER AGE BRACKET. CMA ADMINISTRATION CHARGES ARE EXCESSIVE. ACCOUNTING MUST BE AUDITED [AT A FEE] TO COMPLY WITH FUNDING CONTINGENCIES. THERE MUST BE A MORE EFFICIENT SOLUTION TO FUND THE FACILITATOR PROGRAM!</p>
<p>Another organisation will submit an application to the 2021-24 VLFP for a Landcare Facilitator position that will support our group and other groups. The changes to the 2021-24 VLFP are very welcome as they will lift the employment standards for both employers and employees, and will also help mitigate risk. The new employment resources for the VLFP that are being provided by DELWP to support the new program that are on the Landcare Gateway are also very welcome as they will help support groups and networks who take on the role of employers of Landcare facilitators.</p>
<p>The [REDACTED] has never had any interaction with the above program. It doesn't really relate to us.</p>
<p>We are satisfied with the changes to the 2021-24 VLFP, which lift the employment standards and governance requirements of the VLFP, and regard these changes as improvements to the delivery of the program.</p>
<p>As one of the first recipients of the VLLP some 8 or so years ago the program has enabled our groups to grow substantially. While over the last few years there has been uncertainty about whether the program will be continued, we feel to re apply for the program is a good idea. Many people have moved on and certain expactions have changed over the years. One particular improvement is to ensure applicants do not seek auspicing services for employment as in some cases can attract a cost double that of the VLLP. Providing payroll services only is a much more cost effective approach if needed. In the last programs, facilitators were employed by CMA's and/or councils which without prejudice resulted in conditions and restrictions in conflict with the intent of the VLLP. If those networks instead just took on payroll services if needed they would not have had to seek VLLP funding as their budgets would have been able to</p>

<p>support a parttime facilitator. We would also like to see applicants provide their financial statements in the application process which shows a need for the funding. We look forward for the program to continue with the full support of the current offering.</p>
<p>The Landcare Facilitator program should be primarily focused on resourcing and assisting Landcare Groups in initiating and conducting on ground works that are environmentally sustainable. Making this program available to a number of other groups, beyond the Landcare organization, will add layers of administrative complexity and accountability which will reduce the funding available to the tried and established Landcare system.</p>
<p>Our group is very small, with minimal committee organisation sufficient to meet LVI requirements for insurance. In the past we have dealt with LVI directly, mainly seeking auspices for grants from ██████████ Council and as an insurer. While we are associated with the ██████████ Landcare Network and have attended occasional meetings we otherwise have no significant no organisational connection. We do value their role in providing regular networking opportunities with similar groups across the ██████████, as well as seminars and training opportunities. Given the value of their role, particularly for larger Landcare groups, I have always been astonished that the facilitators position seems to be so insecure, depending as it does on frequently renewed short term funding from a very uncertain pool of funds! In the face of such stress it is surprising that our local facilitator Anne has continued to serve, and so well. We are not familiar with the new governance requirements that DELWP is requiring, however if they impose even more bureaucratic form filling for small groups it will be very disappointing and a significant disincentive to future engagement.</p>
<p>Facilitators have become irrelevant as groups are tired and dropping off like dead flies. Before they helped to source funding and organise the groups now they appear to be admin staff and little else. And lets stop pretending that funding facilitators is investing in Landcare. The funding still needs to flow on to real projects and that doesnt mean another round of tree planting or containment areas.</p>
<p>Proper governance and employment standards have not just come about because of the DELWP amalgamation, these have existed for years and Landcare Committees should have been aware of their obligations since inception. Workshops and inductions of Landcare Treasurers should be available to make Landcare groups aware and equip then with appropriate systems.</p>
<p>I am unsure (well lets be frank, reasonably certain) that many respondents to this will have any idea of the proposed governance and employment changes proposed as part of the VLFP funding. However, it is necessary and should be welcomed, although many on committees, members etc may have little to no idea of what say constitutes bullying or discriminating behaviour. As a previous employ in govt it was often a requirement to READ and AGREE to various policies when signing an employment contract. A similar approach needs to be taken not just with facilitators but also committee members employing the facilitator. Also groups will really struggle implementing the policies if it is put to the test and will need assistance, and as for a grievance procedure, if a facilitator is bullied by a committee person, who do they go to and could it jeopardise their job. I deal with 6 committees all are good except for 1 or 2 people, and the other committee members find these 2 hard to deal with and they are on many committees in the area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The dept held a review of the program & delivered recommendations 16 months later. Community has been given only 6-8 weeks to respond.???? - Community is calling out for project management support yet this program doesn't allow pm. Retire facilitators, introduce project managers- groups want relief from admin. - Triple the funding - at state level through to ground level. Support Delwp to better serve the environment, free of short political cycles. - Resource qualified field staff to enforce weed legislation - Better vision for landcare.
<p>Our facilitator is employed by the ██████████ Landcare Network so the changes will not affect our group re employment.</p>
<p>Im not fully familiar with the expectations so will need time to research</p>
<p>Another step by DWELP to take control of Landcare. The strength of Landcare rests with the community ,inclusive , reflecting the aspirations of the grass roots clientele . Too much bureaucracy that stifles the enthusiasm of the base community and invariably leads to less tangible on ground works and community engagement. Enough is enough and the powers that be need to understand they are failing their constituents and destroying the true ethic of community Landcare. More power to the the on ground people who know their issues and have a clear vision of were land are should be headed , FORWARD not REGRESSING.</p>
<p>Not sure about a number of the questions as to my knowledge the issues have not been discussed at a group level.</p>
<p>I believe the positions should go back to the CMA.</p>
<p>The standards indicated by DELWP have been foreshadowed for months now and I don't think we will have any difficulty with them because of the systems already in place. But there are groups and networks which will need to be supported through this more creatively, and I totally get where they are coming from. I also understand the need for improved standards like those proposed. This is a good conversation to be having, but not an easy one. The timing is definitely tricky.</p>
<p>When I'm applying for the program again, my thoughts are we are expected to perform to a high standard, on a minimal wage, whilst only working 0.5days a week and achieving all the requirements of the program.</p> <p>The review survey only captured a proportion of people involved in Landcare. People doing the reviews & running the program, need to be an active member of a regional Landcare group to understand what happens in a group. Groups are struggling and need as much support as they can get.</p> <p>I think in terms of State Budget the Facilitator program is minimal. I've been told every dollar invested Landcare is 6 in return, yet the program and grants associated with it are still getting cut.</p>

<p>Like most government procedures the whole process has been convoluted, poorly put together, and appears to be a way of disheartening the volunteers of landcare.</p> <p>If the money spent on the consultants who already had a charter to fill before they met with us had been spent on LF funding we would be in a better place.</p>
<p>The burden that DELWP has put onto the landcare community with these current guidelines shows a gross lack of respect and lack of understanding of the volunteer base that delivers so much of the governments on-ground environmental works.</p>
<p>I'm currently employed through a Contract with an agreed Work Plan. I personally think this works well and would be happy to continue this arrangement if this is sought by the Network Committee. While I would also be happy to become an employee, there would need to be an adjustment period for the Network to fulfil all necessary obligations.</p>
<p>The program seems to be tailored to the needs of rural communities so that urban communities (particularly those in the west of Melbourne) get little or no support. Maybe there needs to be a separate program to provide regional facilitators for Friends groups.</p>
<p>This is the first time our network is applying to the program.</p>
<p>The VLFP program as currently specified is grossly unfair to community volunteers seeking to do something constructive for the environment. Instead of being able to pursue environmental objectives DELWP is trying to tie any volunteers willing to step forward with endless bureaucratic obligations, all for the employment of 0.5 or so persons. The amount of time required of multiple volunteer organisations across the state to manage these positions according to DELWP's dictates is totally disproportionate to the outcomes achievable, all it does it tie up the most energetic and motivated persons in bureaucracy instead of environmental improvement. The Coastcare model recognises the limitations of individual small volunteer groups and it should be the model adopted for Landcare.</p>
<p>In our region, landcare groups struggle to find sufficient volunteers prepared to put the time and energy into group management. Landholders are already busy enough running their farming business, and volunteering for the local Landcare/ CFA/ football/ netball/ Rotary/Lions/ SES/ church/ school committees becomes a huge time and energy commitment. The burden falls on a dedicated few to run such groups. They can get burnt out, and with few people willing to put their hand up, can lead to group inactivity, and ultimately, demise.</p> <p>Expecting Landcare groups to seek funding for NRM projects, and then manage and implement those projects, is often unrealistic. Most groups simply do not have the time or expertise. Facilitators are professional people who do (should) have the expertise to manage projects which benefit landcare groups, NRM groups, their members and their local community.</p>
<p>DELWPs expectations of small volunteer groups of non-professionals is unreasonable and unfair. Plus DELWP expects that workload to be replicated multiple times across Victoria to in each case employ 0.5 FTE or less in some cases is illogical and impractical. DELWP should take note of its own internal program for Coastcare which supports local groups without imposing onerous obligations on them. We believe that the current program will disable Landcare support across Victoria.</p>
<p>The proposed allocation for each organisation is insufficient to cover the costs of 0.5FTE plus vehicle/allowance, and contribution to overheads. The heavy administration burden that will be transferred to community organisations is fully reliant on volunteers picking up the difference.</p>
<p>Leave as is</p>
<p>In our area - we see no value in what the facilitator does.</p>
<p>I don't feel that I fully understand the situation</p>
<p>Although the release may have been later than expected we have known this was coming for a long time and if we kept up to date not much was unexpected.</p>