



**Buloke and
Northern Grampians
Landcare Network**



Landcare
Buloke and Northern
Grampians

Strategic Plan 2019-2024

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Landcare Network**

CHAIRPERSONS FOREWORD

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Strategic plan 2019-24

It is with pleasure that I write this foreword for the Buloke and Northern Grampian's Landcare Network's Strategic Plan 2019-24. I have been involved with the Network since its launch at Coonoor Bridge late in 2002 and have been its Chairperson since late 2014. In that time I have watched it develop into a highly successful organisation with a strong record of achievement.

This Strategic Plan looks to build on that record and take the Network forward to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next five years.

The Network enjoys a well-deserved reputation within the Landcare and natural resource management sector, earned through its committed support and the leadership it has provided to its 22 member groups. Over this time, it has also worked effectively with all levels of government, with agencies, with individuals, and with numerous and diverse community organisations. Together, these partnerships have delivered enormous environmental and sustainability benefits that are contributing to real and lasting landscape change.

In applauding the Network's achievements, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Steering Committee – most of whom have also been there since the beginning, but all of whom are committed to grassroots Landcare and its ethics.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Network's facilitator. The position is currently held by Kevin Spence, but there is also a strong recognition amongst both Landcare members and government that facilitators and coordinators are a strong and essential component of Landcare support, and that community volunteer groups need ongoing access to professional support to maintain their local capacity into the future.

This strategic plan has been prepared under the auspice of the Steering Committee in collaboration with member groups, and with funding provided through the North Central Catchment Management Authority as part of Victorian Government's Community Landcare Grants Program and the Victorian Landcare Support Strategy.

Apart from general and contextual information, the plan contains key strategies and actions that will contribute to the Network's vision of *capable, well-connected, well-resourced, well-supported independent autonomous groups united in a community of practice, engaged in all levels of natural resource management, and actively bringing about positive resource condition change.*

The plan sets out the organisations priorities and objectives and will be based on the dynamic of remaining relevant, responsive and supportive to our member groups (the grassroots) whilst contributing toward and being guided by the Landcare and Public Outcomes articulated in the Victorian Governments Landcare Support Plan Program Logic.

The plan adopts a risk management approach based on the current and revised Risk Management ISO Standard 31000.2018. This approach facilitates the Network to base our decision making on the risk factors and opportunities that impact directly on meeting our objectives and needs.

Broadly, this would include strategy and planning, resourcing, organizational resilience, stakeholder communication, corporate governance, HR, compliance, quality, health and safety, business continuity, crisis management and security.

However, the plan exists as a living document that allows for adaptation and improvement at the action scale, and so is flexible enough to be able to adjust the organisations direction in response to a changing environment – whether physical, social, economic, regulatory or political.

At its core, the plan is intended to ensure the Network remains an effective service organisation to its member groups and continues to provide essential support these groups.

I look forward to the next five years and the positive changes that the Network and its member groups will continue to make in building resilient landscapes and resilient communities through Landcare and other land management and agriculture groups

Ken Coates

Chairperson
BNG Landcare Network

April 2015

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Chapter title

SECTION 1: WHO WE ARE

Introductory Statement

The BNG Landcare Network has a membership of 20 Landcare and other groups generally located across those areas of the Shires of Buloke and Northern Grampians that lie within the North Central Catchment Management Authority region.

It is roughly centered on both the catchments of the Avon-Richardson River System, and the catchments of the Upper and Middle Avoca River.

The Network's purpose is to support community-based Landcare, and the building of sustainable rural communities and a healthy, diverse and productive environment.

While its primary membership is Landcare groups, the Network works with many other groups, organisations and individuals with their work to undertake and promote

- best practice land, water and resource management
- sustainable and profitable farming
- environmental stewardship and conservation
- community health and well-being

The network provides wide and versatile support, including:

- assisting and providing advice with the preparation of funding/sponsorship applications
- assisting with monitoring, reporting and evaluation.
- facilitating group and network strategic planning
- facilitating and developing new and existing partnerships and collaborations
- assisting access to resources and information
- facilitating group and network training
- advocating for Landcare and regional issues
- providing some executive and administrative support
- acting as a two way conduit between the grass-roots community and government
- promoting and communicating the Landcare ethic
- facilitating volunteer engagement in Landcare
- assisting with the organisation and coordination of events

The Network is overseen by a Steering Committee with its day -to-day to operations carried out by a paid part-time coordinator funded through the Victorian Government's Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.



Photo: Donald Primary School at Little Lake Buloke

Who We Are

Statement of Purpose

Vision Statement

Capable, well connected, well resourced, well supported independent, autonomous groups united in a community of practice, engaged in all levels of natural resource management, and actively participating in bringing about positive resource condition change.

Mission Statement

To provide the structure and pathways that will ensure all member groups within the network area have equitable access to support, information and resources allowing groups to contribute positively to resource condition change and to the development and self-determination of their own communities

Objectives

- To support and coordinate its member groups in effective NRM
- To attract and secure funding from investors (both for the Network and for its members)
- To identify and locate resources (both for the Network and for its members)
- To facilitate knowledge brokering and information exchange (including training and skills development)
- To assist groups and individuals negotiate the regulatory and bureaucratic environment
- To promote and publicise the Landcare message
- Build partnerships and develop the Network, both locally and abroad
- To maintain an alliance of Independent, autonomous groups working collaboratively in an inter-dependent reality
- To deliver programs/projects as intended and/or contracted
- Maintain a paid coordinator

Strategic Context

From a strategic perspective the BNG Landcare Network has an important function in acting as a nexus between grassroots groups, the wider community and government, helping to:

- Maintain essential partnerships
- empower groups
- raising local landscape and natural resource management issues onto regional, State and Federal agendas
- promote and disseminate information on regional, State and Federal programs and initiatives
- align the priorities and intentions of local communities with regional, State and Federal policy and strategy
- encourage and steer increased investment into the region (from both the public and private sector)
- promote best management practice in natural resource management

**CAPABLE, WELL CONNECTED,
WELL RESOURCED, WELL
SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT,
AUTONOMOUS GROUPS**

Who We Are

Background

The BNG Landcare Network includes amongst its member group the Winjallok Landcare Group where, on Tuesday November 25th 1986 on the property of Terry Simpson, the Honourable Joan Kirner, then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands with the Victorian State Government, officially launched the partnership between community and government to protect our natural resources under the Landcare banner.

Originally intended as a program to involve farmers in land protection projects an important foundation partner was the Victorian Farmers Federation led by then President, Heather Mitchell.

From its beginnings at Winjallok, the Landcare Program has grown to become a national and international movement involving millions of people from all walks of life. The stellar growth of the movement has seen it dramatically expand and diversify its focus to cover the full spectrum of issues and opportunities within the social-ecological systems we all rely upon.

Despite this increased sophistication, the strength of Landcare remains its community base – people working together collaboratively at a local scale to shape the future of our land, biodiversity and waterways.

Each group sets its own agenda, independent and separate from any network, department or organisation – though these bodies may provide advice on aligning group activities and plans with wider strategic objectives.

Happily, Winjallok remains one of the Network's strongest and most active groups. Following its official 'birth' many other groups began to spring up across Victoria and within the region. The majority of member groups of the BNG Landcare Network began between 1986 and the early 1990's.

Some began as a single focus group - e.g. rabbits or weeds – or had their origins as cell groups of either the Avoca or Avon-Richardson Implementation Committees. These cells groups were formed in response to the very direct efforts of government and agencies to engage and consult the community in targeted natural resource management programs and the development of catchment plans and strategies.

The greater majority of groups supported by the Network are farm based and a major part of their focus is on land management practices that maintain the resource base while supporting increased productivity.

This has meant that groups have always had a significant focus on pastures, perennality in grazing systems, salt, weeds and rabbits. On the sedimentary slopes, gully erosion has been a major issue and has led to huge investment by groups and the government in protecting susceptible areas through revegetation, exclusion fencing and engineering.

On the plains, rising water tables and wind erosion have been a longstanding concern. Substantial investment by government in the planting of lucerne helped foster the active engagement of many landholders in local groups.

More recently, there has been significant interest in improved cropping practices - including no till, stubble retention, controlled traffic, advances in the capacity and sophistication of machinery and other technology (including information communication technology).

Over time, there has also been an ever increasing awareness and appreciation around the ecological values of water, vegetation and biodiversity in the landscape that has been driven in large part by passionate extension and agency staff, as well as passionate individuals and landcarers.

However, by 2000 it was becoming clear that many groups were in decline and needed support – possibly due in part to changes in investment strategies and priorities, increased accountability and the demands of volunteering.

The BNG Landcare Network came into existence in December 2002 as part of an initiative between the Australian Government, North Central Catchment Management Authority and local government organisations to establish a Shire-based Landcare Support program in the region, funded through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT).

Then, as now, there was recognition that facilitators and coordinators are a strong and essential part of the Landcare support component.

However, as government programs and priorities changed, there has not been a permanency in the way that Landcare Support has been funded. Federal funding for group coordinators or facilitators ended in 2009, and for a period the Network relied on project funding to maintain its activities.

Who We Are

Then, in 2011, the then newly elected Victorian Government announced the *Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative* that provided funding over a three year period for Landcare coordinators and facilitators to support groups and encourage greater participation in Landcare.

Through this initiative, BNG Landcare Network was able to secure funding for a 0.5 FTE position. This funding has been extended by successive Victorian Governments and the program remains funded till June 2019, when it is hoped it will be further extended.

Advocacy by organisations such as Landcare Victoria Incorporated, Landcare Support Networks and the regions various Catchment Management Authorities is aimed at ensuring Government continues to recognise the importance of having facilitators on the ground to support the volunteer, grass-root groups that make up Landcare, and which are so critical to ensuring Government is able to deliver on its natural resource, land management, water quality and biodiversity objectives.

There is a positive change occurring now in the way that the role of facilitators and coordinators are being viewed. Rather than aiming to make groups 'self-sustaining' (and professional support staff obsolete) the aim should be to make groups 'sustainable', and the support of a facilitator or coordinator permanent.

Over the last sixteen years, the network has been a strong advocate for its member groups and worked closely with them to re-invigorate interest and participation in Landcare and natural resource management activities, including sustainable agriculture.

**EACH GROUP SETS ITS OWN
AGENDA, INDEPENDENT AND
SEPARATE FROM ANY NETWORK,
DEPARTMENT OR ORGANISATION**



Photo: Dja Dja Wurrung Ranger talks about Scar Trees

Who We Are

Where Are We Now?

The Network remains committed to providing the structure and pathways that will ensure all member groups within the network area have equitable access to support, information and resources and are able to contribute positively to resource condition change and to the development and self-determination of their own communities.

Our objectives are:

- To support and coordinate its member groups in effective natural resource management (NRM)
- To attract funding from investors (both for the Network and for its members)
- To identify and locate resources (both for the Network and for its members)
- To facilitate knowledge brokering and information exchange (including training and skills development)
- To assist groups and individuals negotiate the regulatory and bureaucratic environment
- Promote and publicise the Landcare message
- Build partnerships and develop the Network
- To maintain an alliance of Independent, autonomous groups working collaboratively in an inter-dependent reality
- To maintain a paid facilitator(s) who can provide professional support to groups

There is wide agreement of the value of the contribution made by the volunteer Landcare movement to NRM - not only in on-ground works but in areas of peer support and interaction, and the health and well-being of communities.

The Victorian Government acknowledges that improvements to the natural environment would not be possible without the dedicated activities of local community groups and that community participation through Landcare is vital to achieving sustainable land management and practical environmental stewardship.

Challenges to effective volunteering include:

- increasingly busy lifestyles
- demand on the volunteer base from numerous and diverse community sectors means that people inevitably have to 'choose their causes' and this will be at the expense of other 'causes; including the environment
- economic pressures and work priorities
- diminishing regional populations
- ageing regional populations
- difficulty in recruiting and maintaining volunteers - e.g., attracting new members, younger generation
- perceived 'greenness' of Landcare and poor recognition of its true agricultural-based heritage
- Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) compliance, insurance liabilities and other bureaucratic/ administrative burden

There is wide agreement that Landcare support staff, through the range of tasks they perform, play a key role in assisting Landcare groups to overcome these and other challenges.

Likewise, the BNG Landcare Network also believes that given conflicting priorities in people's lives and the increasingly complex demands being made on a largely volunteer movement, Landcare support staff have a critical effect on maintaining the participation and engagement of the community in NRM and in helping groups to operate effectively.

Therefore the Network is committed to ensuring each of its member groups, regardless of their circumstances or level of activity, has equitable access to the support that will help them flourish and grow.



Photo: LVI Cultural Heritage tour Avon Plains Lakes

Who We Are

Precis of Landcare Support Activities

Over the years, the BNG Landcare Network has pursued the following activities in providing support to its member groups

Planning:

- Assistance with the development of action plans for groups – new and revised
- Alignment with regional and local priorities and strategies
- Integration with regional projects and programs

Networking: (Build and maintain)

- Attendance at Shire-based Landcare network meetings and events
- Organising and/or participating in Field days and other events
- Developing the relationship of groups with agencies, industry and other community groups
- Providing liaison between groups and both the North Central CMA and the North Central CMA Natural Resources Committee
- Attending Shire-based Landcare coordinator/facilitator meetings
- Promoting and attending regional Landcare gatherings
- Promoting and attending regional networking initiatives – e.g. partnership tours
- Attending the annual (now bi-ennial) Victorian Landcare Network forum
- Promoting and participating in the activities of the Victorian Landcare Council

Training:

- Coordinating training courses
- Running field days and workshops as identified by groups

Partnerships: (Build and maintain)

- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation of projects
- Assisting groups to report to funding bodies, including government, agencies and industry.
- Reporting to Steering Committee
- Reporting to North Central CMA RLC
- Reporting to the North Central CMA Natural Resources Management Committee
- Identifying and developing new joint activities/projects between groups and NRM agencies
- Developing new initiatives with indigenous communities
- Assisting facilitate schools to become involved in NRM/ Junior Landcare activities through new or existing programs
- Assisting/facilitating business and industry to participate in local and regional NRM activities

Assist Groups to operate effectively:

- Acting as an information broker for groups
- Identifying and pursuing funding opportunities with local, State and Federal funding bodies
- Assisting groups identify and locate resources
- Assisting groups with preparation of funding applications
- Assisting with reporting and acquittal
- Assisting with implementation where necessary
- Assisting groups with member recruitment strategies
- Assisting groups with group coordination and governance

THE NETWORK IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING EACH OF ITS MEMBER GROUPS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES OR LEVEL OF ACTIVITY, HAS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO THE SUPPORT THAT WILL HELP THEM FLOURISH AND GROW.

Geographic And Historical Context

Introduction

In the winter of 1836, Major Mitchell stood on the top of Pyramid Hill and looked south over a land that he described as 'Australia Felix; - Australia the Blessed.

His enthusiastic report described the land as ... 'exceedingly beautiful' ... and ... 'inviting', and led to the early pastoral development of the region now covered by the BNG Landcare Network.

Unfortunately and quite mistakenly, his report also described the land as '... still without inhabitants' and initiated - in this region - the displacement of indigenous people from their country.

The early pastoralists rapidly cleared the land and established prosperous and extensive holdings which have been major contributors to the areas economic growth, development and prosperity. It also brought about major ecological changes.

Balancing the conflicting priorities of the dynamic and ever-changing socio-ecological and economic environment is the challenge that the BNG Landcare Network shares with other stakeholders in managing our natural resources in the region.

The BNG Landcare Network covers an area of approximately 7000 square kilometres to the west of the North Central region of Victoria. In the south of the Network area are the northern foothills of the Pyrenees Ranges, to the north the eastern edge of the Wimmera plains.

The two main river systems are the Avon-Richardson and Avoca Rivers (see sections below).

The two primary physio-geographic regions are the West Victoria Uplands and the Murray Basin Plains.

The uplands in the south are characterised by hills of Palaeozoic sandstones, slates and shales, and northerly trending alluvial valleys. Soils are characterised as red, sodic duplex soils which are highly dispersive and have low to moderate fertility and water holding capacity. They are prone to sheet and gully erosion.

The Murray Plains are characterised by alluvial plains, marine sediments, sandy rises and dune systems. Soils are characterised by grey self-mulching clays, calcareous sodic clays and duplex soils with moderate fertility and water holding capacities. They are prone to compaction, water-logging and wind erosion. Topsoil is often weakly structured and hard-setting.

The two primary bioregions are the Western Goldfields bioregion characterised by Box-Ironbark vegetation communities, and the Wimmera bioregion characterised by Buloke woodlands and Black Box/lignum wetlands.

Landscapes across the network area are highly fragmented with the proportion of remaining native vegetation estimated at 4.6% in the Wimmera and 6.9% across the Goldfields. The majority of this vegetation occurs as patches of small size, mostly on private land and valued primarily for stock.

In a landscape context, the existing remnants are extremely significant providing critical habitat for flora and fauna. In the southern end of the Network area (Goldfields bioregion), the landscape includes numerous reserves (including the Kara Kara National Park and adjacent or nearby flora reserves) on which the Kara Kara Conservation Management Network is centered.

The reserves, though large and strategically integral to landscape conservation planning, have limited representation with the better, more productive parts of the landscape all but cleared for agriculture.

Connecting the reserves with other vegetation areas across private land, and protecting and enhancing these areas is a major focus of conservation efforts.

River Red Gum along waterways and Grey Box/Yellow Gum communities are also common. On the plains and alluvial terraces, the last is often described as woodland in association with a grassy understorey. On the slopes, they occur as forests with a more shrubby understorey.

Heathy woodlands are also a common but significant vegetation type.

Grey Box Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands, together with Buloke and Woodlands of the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression are endangered vegetation communities listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Geographic And Historical Context

Land Use

The principle land use is agriculture – specifically dryland, broadacre farming – with over 90% of the land used for grazing (sheep and cattle) and cropping (wheat, oats, barley, oilseed, pulses and legumes).

There are established intensive industries (pigs and poultry) across the network area. Horticulture enterprises are essentially limited to olive and wine grape production.

Townships carry a small manufacturing and service base that is highly dependent on the fortunes of the agricultural sector.

With the major landuse being agriculture and the need for farmers to be able to earn a profitable income from their enterprises, sustainable dryland agriculture and land management is an important agenda item for Landcare groups to consider and pursue.

As well as with agencies, there is also a real opportunity to link closely with economic development staff from local government.

The two relevant local government authorities are the Buloke Shire and Northern Grampians Shire – both of whom have an active role within the Network.

Major towns are St Arnaud, Donald, Charlton, Wycheproof, Birchip, Watchem and Marnoo.

Population across the Network area is approximately 8000, with less than a quarter living outside the major townships – significant because it is from this smaller number that most of membership of Landcare groups is drawn.

The population is both declining in number and ageing - with the average age currently at 48 years. The demographic is generally described as being a typically traditional and conservative one.

Both Buloke (9677) and Northern Grampians (9376) are in the bottom 8 Councils rated on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) and are considered disadvantaged and critically resource-constrained.

Indigenous Cultural Heritage

For many thousands of years Aboriginal people have lived, travelled and traded across the land covered by the BNG Landcare Network, weaving a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and creating places of deep spiritual significance and importance.

The Network acknowledges the unbroken ties that Aboriginal people have with their traditional lands and that these bonds are fundamental to the cultural heritage and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal cultural heritage includes:

- artefacts, objects and skeletal remains
- sites, landscapes or areas of significance
- cultural knowledge, lore, language, stories, song, dance and identity.

Aboriginal people's relationship with their land is at the core of all spirituality – and this relationship and the spirit of 'country' is what needs to be protected during Cultural Heritage Management activities

The BNG Landcare Network has sought to establish a partnership with the indigenous community through the two Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) that operate across the network area. At a local level, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are the voice of Aboriginal people in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The two RAPS are the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. Barengi Gadjin Land Council is an organisation representing traditional owners of the Wotjabaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples. Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation represents the 16 clans known as the Jaara people.

In very broad terms, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation covers the Avon River and upper and middle Avoca River catchment areas, while Barengi Gadjin Land Council covers the Richardson River basin.



Photo: Di Smith - Walkers Lake Cultural Heritage Assessment

Geographic And Historical Context

The Network is committed to working with the RAPs to increase the engagement of indigenous people in natural resource management (NRM) and by identifying indigenous cultural heritage sites or values for protection. In doing so, it is also hoped that this will also provide opportunities for indigenous people to connect with Country.

In order to facilitate this working relationship, the BNG Landcare Network has consulted with its indigenous partners and developed an Indigenous Engagement Strategy.

The purpose of the Network's Indigenous Engagement Strategy is to articulate the protocols, principles and strategies for Indigenous involvement in NRM and land management decisions and on ground works as appropriate.

This strategy recognizes the association between indigenous cultural values and natural resources.

In short, the strategy seeks to

1. Establish a realistic framework for collaboration in the identification, protection and management of cultural heritage values across project sites
2. Establish a cooperative approach to land and water management
3. Develop clear statements of acknowledgement, commitment and intent to further the working relationship between the landcare and indigenous communities
4. Develop processes for open and collaborative dialogue between the landcare and indigenous communities which will foster meaningful involvement and engagement with the traditional owners in the project
5. Share and develop information products that bridge gaps in understanding, gain clarity on what can be achieved and fully exploit synergies between the aspirations, traditions, roles and responsibilities of the two communities
6. Recognize in a positive, respectful and cooperative way that the activities of the two communities comprise many shared interests and that their aspirations and goals for the management of natural resources and cultural heritage are similarly shared
7. Through the project, lower the barriers that limit the capacity and willingness to incorporate indigenous interests in NRM and increased awareness of the legitimacy of indigenous interests in NRM
8. Establish monitoring, evaluation, reporting and review processes for engagement

The Strategy is now due for review.

Post Colonisation Settlement

The area was first settled by Europeans in the late 1830s, with the gold rush of the 1850s and selections of the 1860s bringing many people to the area.

The forests of the upper catchments were heavily cleared for fuel and mine timber, with clearing continuing to the 1940's when two train loads a week left the area for Melbourne.

It was the selectors need for a permanent water supply which led to the development of the Wimmera-Mallee Domestic and Stock Supply Channel System and the building of the Rich-Avon Weir across the Richardson River in the 1880s.

The building of the channels was a magnificent engineering feat that brought water from the Grampians over 770 kilometres of channel and 2.8 million hectares of land, to supply townships such as Marnoo, Donald, St Arnaud, Watchem and Charlton.

Without the channel system, water security would have remained an almost insurmountable barrier to opening up the country and permanent, long-term settlement. This would have severely limited the establishment of successful agricultural enterprises and their access to essential goods and services.

Nowadays, water security is still a critical factor but far more reliable with the channel system being replaced by a piped system. With the challenge presented by a changing and more volatile climate the pipeline is a major infrastructure asset whose value to the region cannot be underestimated.

Geographic And Historical Context

Location and Climate

The catchment has a Mediterranean climate that is essentially temperate in nature, with moderate to hot dry summers and cooler wet winters. Temperature extremes are a feature and high summer temperatures (often associated with strong winds) may exceed 40°C in the shade. Frosts are common in winter.

Annual rainfall ranges from 400-600mm in the upper catchments to 300-400 mm in the lower catchment.

Rainfall is usually higher in winter, with occasional summer downpours. Historically 60 percent of the rainfall occurs between May and October, providing an effective growing season of 5-6 months.

More recently, there has been a trend to less winter rainfall, drier springs and increased and more severe summer storms. The fire season is also extending, commencing earlier and finishing later.

Climate Change

While it is not possible to attribute any single event to climate change, there are credible studies that indicate an increase in climate volatility and risk. Five studies, including research from the University of Melbourne, Australian National University and the University of NSW, report that rising global temperatures have

- Doubled the chance of the most intense heat waves
- Tripled the likelihood of heatwave events
- Made extreme summer temperatures across the region five times more likely
- Increased the chance of hot, dry, drought-like conditions seven times
- Made hot spring temperatures across region 30 times more likely.

In addition, rising temperatures have extended the bushfire season into October and March.

Without being alarmist about climate risk, there is a real need to consider any heightened risk so that communities and their leaders can plan their response and look for appropriate resources.

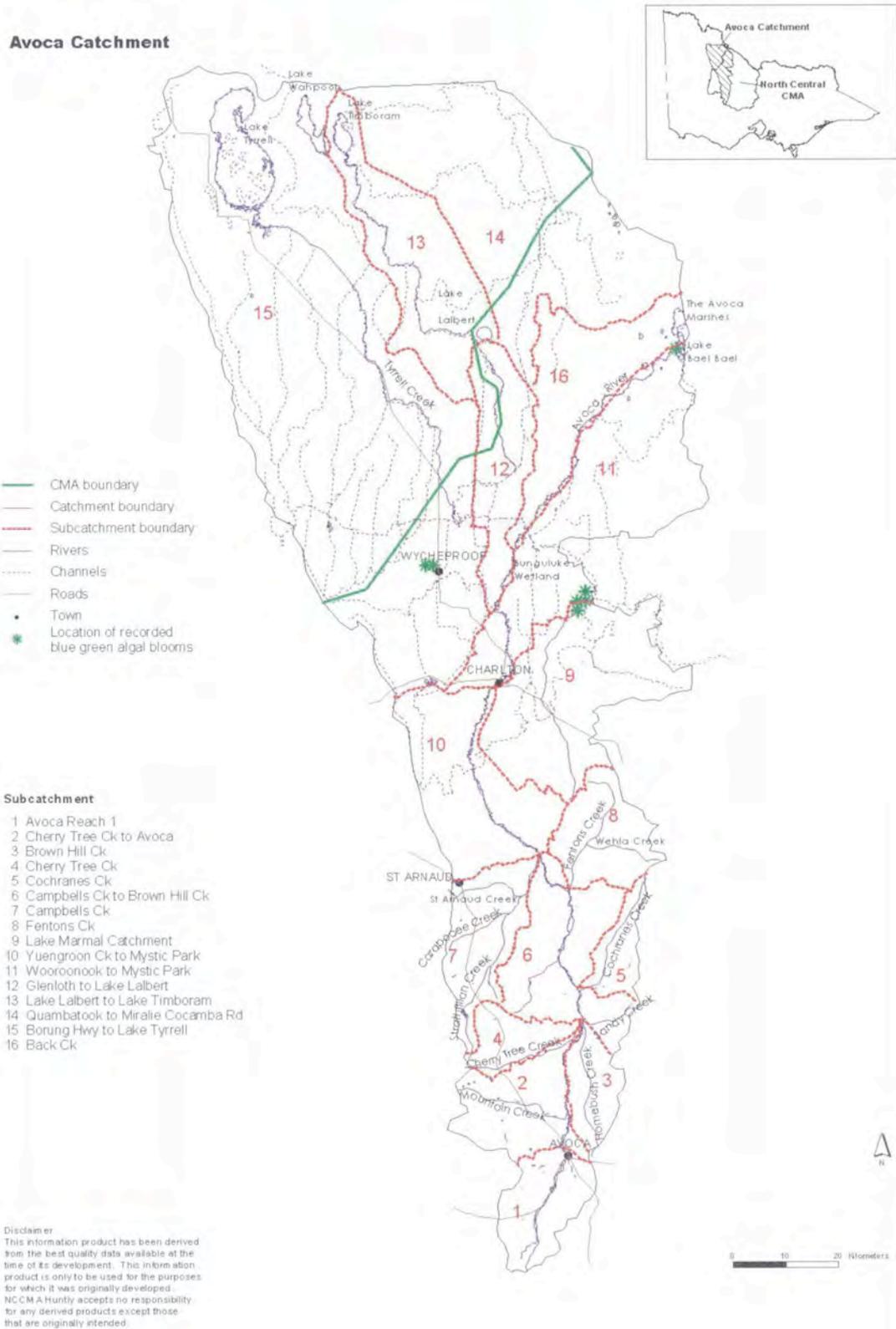
Also needing consideration are the more gradual and subtle changes such as seasonal shifts or changes in average temperatures. These changes could have complex implications through direct impacts or significant flow-on effects that cause disruption and changes to ecosystems, productivity; infrastructure, allied industries, community health and well-being, essential services and so on.



Photo: Liz Russell, Banyandah Nursery Donald, supplied most of the tubestock for the plantings.

Geographic And Historical Context

Avoca Catchment



Geographic And Historical Context

The Avoca River Basin covers 1.2 million hectares from the steep uplands of the Pyrenees to drainage into the Avoca Marshes north of Quambatook. The system is broken up into 29 separate reaches, eight on the Avoca itself and the others on tributaries.

Four of the eight primary reaches (4,5,6 and 7), and seven tributary reaches are found within the Buloke and Northern Grampians Network area. The environmental condition of all the reaches are described as being in moderate condition by the North Central CMA, except for reaches four and five (poor condition) between Coonooer Bridge and Towaninnie.

Reach Seven, between Avoca and Natte Yallock is a priority reach under the North Central CMAs Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS).

The geology of the area is complex with a history going back to Palaeozoic times, involving the deposition of sediments (sometimes of considerable thickness), tectonic and igneous activity and erosion.

The steepest country is mainly the south amongst the northern foothills of the Pyrenees, but also occurs along a ridgeline of the Great Dividing Range located generally to the east of the Avoca. This steep country is drained by fast flowing, ephemeral streams in rocky drainage lines.

Topography is strongly influenced by differential resistance to weathering and erosion of the folded and metamorphosed parent rock. Many summits represent an old plain on Ordovician sandstones and shales dissected by tributaries of the Avoca River.

Many of the granites also remain as steep hills (e.g. Mt Yawong and Mt Buckrabanyule). Relatively steep metamorphic aureoles are commonly associated with these granite intrusions.

Large areas of gentle, undulating hills with lower erosion hazard occur on Ordovician sediments and, occasionally, on granite rocks created by ancient planation by rivers and creeks. Productivity on these hills is highly variable.

Soils are commonly red, sodic, duplex soils that are highly susceptible to erosion. Associated with the granite country are sandy soils with low fertility that are also prone to erosion.

Plains on Tertiary sediments were created when large rivers dissected the highlands and laid down extensive beds of gravel, sand, clay and silt in broad valleys cut into the basement rock.

In the south, a series of Quaternary sediments was deposited and eroded by north-flowing streams, producing terraced plains.

These flat, alluvial plains are productive, with deep soils and a reduced erosion hazard.

The Box-Ironbark vegetation communities dominate the landscape and reflect the geology, altitude and climate of the inland slopes and associated alluvial fans.

More than 83% of the original vegetation has been cleared and nearly all the remaining bush has undergone grazing, timber cutting or mining.

In just over 170 years, practically all the original Box-Ironbark communities have been modified and degraded, resulting in land and resource degradation that includes loss of biodiversity; loss of habitat for flora and fauna and an increase in the number of threatened species; soil erosion; declining soil fertility; increased impact from weeds and pest animals; rising water tables; increased surface salinity, and increased frequency of algal blooms in waterways.

There are six broad vegetation and landscape types:

- Dry Forest, with six floristic communities
- Mallee, with two floristic communities
- Heathy Woodland, with three floristic communities
- Herb-rich Woodland, with three floristic communities
- Granitic Woodland, with two floristic communities
- Wetlands

The forests and woodlands are dominated by eucalypts below which grow shrubs, heaths and scattered grasses. Mallee is found on the most rocky and exposed rises (e.g. Hard Hills). Grassy woodlands and grassy plains, with an associated herbaceous layer are found on the lower, more moist areas.

A few important wetlands remain (e.g., Bunguluke, Wooroonook), usually in close association with the major rivers and creeks, and support River Red Gums along with other plants requiring permanent water or adapted to periodic or seasonal inundation.

Geographic And Historical Context

THREATENED FLORA SPECIES INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- Stuart Mill Spider orchid
- Red Cross Spider orchid
- McIvor Spider orchid
- Yellow-lip Spider orchid
- Lowly Greenhood orchid
- Brilliant Sun -orchid
- Robust Greenhood
- Woodland Leek Orchid
- Swamp Diuris
- Golden Cowslips
- Clover Glycine
- Goldfields Grevillea
- Goldfield Boronia
- Grey Grasstree
- Small Milkwort
- Silky Swainson Pea
- Scented Bush-pea
- Spiny Riceflower
- Turnip Copper-burr
- Chariot Wheels

THREATENED FAUNA SPECIES INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- Fat-tailed Dunnart
- Brush-tailed Phascogale or Tuan
- Squirrel Glider
- Bibron's Toadlet
- Growling Grass Frog
- Olive Legless Lizard
- Tree Goanna
- Woodland Blind Snake
- Swift Parrot
- Malleefowl
- Painted Honeyeater
- Regent Honeyeater
- Bush Stone-curlew
- Barking Owl
- Powerful Owl
- Speckled Warbler
- Diamond Firetail
- Brown Treecreeper
- Hooded Robin
- Jacky Winter
- Crested Bellbird
- Crested Shrike-tit
- Black-chinned Honeyeater
- Square-tailed Kite
- Painted Button-quail



Photo: St Arnaud Primary School at Winjallok

Geographic And Historical Context

Avon Richardson Catchment

The Avon-Richardson catchment is part of the Murray-Darling Basin and covers 330,000 hectares. The river system is a terminal system that rises in the Pyrenees foothills to the south-west of St Arnaud and flows northward to terminate in Lake Buloke near Donald.

The system is broken into ten separate reaches of which five are rated as in moderate environmental condition, four in poor condition, and one in very poor environmental condition.

The upper reaches of the Richardson are generally considered in moderate condition, as is the area around the Rich-Avon Weir. The Avon and its tributaries are generally considered to be in poor condition. Of most concern is that the river between Donald and Lake Buloke is considered to be in very poor condition.

The catchment occurs along the south-eastern margin of the Murray-Darling Basin and can be divided into two physiographic regions - the West Victoria Uplands and the Murray Basin Plains.

The uplands occur to the south east and, like the Avoca catchment, are also characterised by hills of Palaeozoic sandstones, slates and shales, and northerly trending alluvial valleys.

Local to intermediate scale fractured rock groundwater systems predominate in this region.

North West of the uplands fringe the Murray Basin Plains, the topography becomes more subdued. This landscape consists mainly of dune systems (deposited by wind action), alluvial plains and gentle sandy rises. The last two are often overlain by a thin veneer of aeolian clay.

Groundwater systems are regional systems occurring within alluvial and marine sediments.

Lake Buloke, the Avon-Richardson's terminal lake, seems to have formed as result of land subsidence, and the regional groundwater flow beneath it being retarded due to a significant fining up of the underlying sediments.

Grey self-mulching clays are the dominant soil type in much of the catchment. These soils have a uniform fine texture clay profile to depth and are the most productive cropping soils types in the catchment. The grey self-mulching clays are found in association with non-friable clays in low lying areas, and are intermingled with brown self-mulching clays.

The red duplex soils (for the most part hard-setting) are the dominant soil type in the north eastern and south-eastern segments of the catchment. These soils are far less productive than the friable grey and brown clays. The red duplex soils are prone to structural failure when heavy rains fall on these soils, and cultivation exacerbates this effect. Surface sealing and compaction often adversely affect crop establishment. Gypsum is commonly applied.

Prior to European settlement, soils supported Grasslands and Plains Grassy Woodland communities including the nationally threatened Buloke Woodlands. Other Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) include Plains Woodland; Black Box Chenopod Woodland; Plains Woodland/Plains Grassy Wetland; Plains Woodland/Plains Sedgy Woodland/Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodlands, and Black Box/Lignum wetlands.

Since European settlement, and certainly throughout the period from 1970 to 2000, groundwater levels have been rising over much of the low lying parts of the catchment due to a shift in the water balance. While this trend seems to have been reversed during the extended dry period of recent years, the Avon-Richardson remains one of the most severely salt-affected areas in the North Central CMA region.

Over 10,000 hectares of affected land has been identified with salinity impacting on the catchments lakes and wetlands, the lower Richardson River, and the birds and other fauna that depend on this habitat. Salinity also affects infrastructure in the township of Donald and the amenity of residents and visitors.

One of the primary keys to reducing the impact of salinity is managing recharge to groundwater at a catchment scale.

Plains are the dominant characteristic of the Wimmera Bioregion landscape. Alluvial sediments have deposited along the floodplains of the major creeks and rivers - while, to the east of the Richardson, ancient metamorphic, marine sedimentary and granitic hills outcrop from the surrounding sedimentary plains.

Relatively flat terrain, fertile soil and mild winters combine to create an ideal environment for dryland cropping and sheep grazing. More than 90% of land is privately owned and farmed. Produce mainly includes cereal, oilseed, grain and legume cropping, wool and meat.

The extent of farming means that only around 4% of the original vegetation remains. Land use changes, loss of vegetation and clearing, and altered hydrological regimes have led to increasing salinity, soil structure decline and soil erosion which threaten both biodiversity and agricultural assets - including farmland, the York Plains, Avon Plains Lakes, and Lake Buloke.

Geographic And Historical Context

Threatened flora species include:

- Chariot wheels
- Turnip Copperburr
- Buloke Mistletoe
- Downy Swainson-pea

Threatened fauna species include:

- Brolga
- Bush-stone Curlew
- Eastern Great Egret
- Freckled Duck
- Diamond Firetail
- Hooded Robin
- Olive Legless-lizard
- Pale sun-moth

Note: Woodland birds as a suite are in decline. These include species such as the Brown Tree-creeper, Rufous Whistler, Varied Sittella, Restless Flycatcher, White-browed woodswallow, White-browed Babbler, Painted Button-quail, Red-capped Robin, and Southern Whiteface.

**PLAINS ARE THE DOMINANT
CHARACTERISTIC OF THE
WIMMERA BIOREGION
LANDSCAPE.**

Key Assets

An Asset-Based Approach

Natural resource management in North Central and across the BNG Landcare Network area uses an asset-based approach rather than a threat-based approach as part of its decision-making process in prioritising on-ground actions and other initiatives.

That is, rather than react to threats as they present themselves, prioritise the protection of assets based on the ecological, economic, social and cultural values and benefits they provide to the community.

The asset based approach is aimed at directing scarce, and sometimes inadequate resources, to achieving the best environmental and socio-ecological outcomes for the available investment.

Summary of Assets

As part of the development of the Regional Catchment Strategy, the North Central Catchment Management Authority undertook extensive community and stakeholder consultation to identify the regions significant natural resource assets. These inform regional priorities for investment.

In addition to the priority assets, the RCS also supports actions to protect local natural assets that are highly valued by the community. Where these have been identified, they have been recorded as notable assets.

The BNG Landcare Network has also knowledge of local natural assets gained through its interaction and consultation with groups. For the most these are consistent with those recorded by the North Central CMA but it remains that important local assets identified by groups should be cross-referenced and referred to the CMA as appropriate. This will demonstrate the networks representation of group's interests and also be consistent with and support the CMAs community engagement strategy.

Geographic And Historical Context

A summary of assets within the network area include:

- Agricultural Land
 - Indigenous Cultural Heritage sites and artefacts
 - Avoca River Reaches
 - Avon-Richardson River Reaches
 - York Plains
 - York Plains Wetlands
 - Lake Buloke
 - Kara Kara Carapooee, including
 - » Kara Kara National Park
 - » St Arnaud State Forest
 - » St Arnaud Regional Park
 - » Stoney Creek Nature Conservation Reserve
 - » Stuart Mill Nature Conservation Reserve
 - Tottington, including
 - » Big Tottington Nature Conservation Reserve Reserve
 - » Mt Bolangum Nature Conservation Reserve Reserve
 - » Morrl Morrl Nature Conservation Reserve
 - » Tottington Bushland Reserve
 - Bealiba Dalyenong
 - » Dalyenong Nature Conservation Reserve
 - » Tunstall Nature Conservation Reserve
 - Bunguluke Wetlands
 - Remainder Reserve System of Parks and Reserves, including
 - » Redbank Nature Conservation Reserve
 - » Gowar Nature Conservation Reserve
 - » Gowar South Nature Conservation Reserve
 - » Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve
 - Hard Hills
 - Wooroonook Lakes
 - My Wycheproof
 - Mt Jeffcott and Mt Jeffcott Range
 - Lake Buloke
 - Avon Plains Lakes - including Lake Batyo Catyo and the Rich Avon Weir
 - Cope Cope Lakes (including Round Lake and Browns Lake)
 - Charlton Forest
 - Klunders Hill
- Tributaries of both the Avoca and Avon-Richardson Systems, including
 - » Cherry Tree Creek
 - » Strathfillan and Campbell Creeks
 - » Carapooee, Middle and Western Creeks
 - » St Arnaud Creek
 - » Tarpaulin Creek
 - » Cochranes Creek
 - » Sandy Creek
 - » Paradise and Reedy Creeks
 - » Andersons Creek
 - » Wallaloo Creek
 - » Dog Trap Creek
 - Tyrell Creek
 - Lalbert Creek
 - Other wetlands providing environmental water and habitat for fauna and flora

While any resource of value – such as remnant vegetation, waterways or waterbodies, soils and so on – can be described as an asset, it is probably more useful from a management and investment perspective to be able to define them discretely and distinctly.

At a local group level this may mean talking about remnants on property A, property B and property C and demonstrating their individual value and significance, the value-adding of linking them into a landscape context, and the contribution this will make to regional and or higher objectives and priorities relating to management of remnant vegetation. Sometimes this may be driven more from a community engagement priority than a landscape one.

IT IS PROBABLY MORE USEFUL FROM A MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT PERSPECTIVE TO BE ABLE TO DEFINE THEM DISCRETELY AND DISTINCTLY.

Governance And Organisational Structure

SECTION 3: GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Overview

The BNG Landcare Network is an incorporated organisation operating under Rules of Association revised from the model.

These rules of association regulate the overall management of the organisation and provide for important matters such as management committee elections, meetings, and financial records, among others. The minimum matters that need to be dealt with in the rules are prescribed by the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.

The Network is overseen by a Steering Committee made of representatives from member groups as well as from partner organisations.

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to direct and ground-truth the operations and activities of the organisation, ensure compliance with its relevant statutory and regulatory responsibilities, provide direction and supervision to paid Network employees and contractors – e.g. the facilitator/s.

The rules specify that the Steering Committee consist of 4 Office-bearers and an additional 8 -12 ordinary committee members, The Office bearers being the President or Chairperson, vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary.

It is a requirement that the majority of members on the Steering Committee are made up of representatives from member groups.

Representatives from partner organisations are usually appointed ex-officio.

Representatives serve for a twelve month term and are re-nominated at each Annual General Election, usually held in November each year.

The Steering Committee is required to meet at three other times during the year.

The Network is Member of Landcare Victoria Incorporated (LVI) and is insured through policies brokered by LVI.

These are

- **Policy 1:** Public and Product Liability Insurance, which includes
 - a. Public & Products Liability
 - b. Pollution Liability
- **Policy 2:** Personal Accident – Voluntary Workers Insurance
- **Policy 3:** Association Liability Insurance

Knight Norfolk (Chartered Accountants) provide professional advice and help oversee the financial management of the Network and help ensure compliance with requirements for filing Business Activity Statements, Compulsory employee superannuation, Workcover and Consumer Affairs Victoria Annual Reports.

Governance And Organisational Structure

Steering Committee

At the 2019 AGM, the following members were appointed to the Buloke and Northern Grampians Steering Committee

Ken Coates	Chairperson (Natte Yallock Landcare)
Prue McAlister	vice-Chairperson (Avon Plains Banyena Landcare)
Ann Dunstan	Treasurer (Avon Palins Banyena Landcare Group, Landholder)
Kevin Spence	Facilitator and Secretary/Executive Officer (Stuart Mill Landcare)
Lindsay Ezard	Committee Member (Winjallock Landcare, Landholder)
Fiona Burchell	Committee Member (Avon Plains Banyena Landcare, Landholder)
Barry Robertson	Committee Member (Carapooee Landcare, St Arnaud Field Naturalists, Kara Kara CMN, St Arnaud Community Resource Centre, Landholder)
Ellen White	Committee Member (Wycheproof and District Landcare, Buloke Shire Councillor)
Anne Hughes	Committee Member (St Arnaud Field Naturalists, Kara Kara CMN)
Mary Fielding	Committee Member (Birchip Landcare Group)
Anna Arkoudis	ex-officio Committee member (Buloke Shire)
Tess Grieves	ex-officio Committee member (North Central CMA)
Deborah Saxon-Cambell	ex-officio Committee Member (Kara Kara Conservation Management Network)



Photo: The St Arnaud Primary School team after the plantout

Governance And Organisational Structure

Landcare Facilitators

The Victorian Government provides funding for a 0.5 FTE facilitator position through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. While there is the option to have 2 people share this part-time position as happened in the past, at present only one facilitator is employed under contract in this position.

The facilitator is required to provide strategic coordination, leadership and planning support to the BNG Landcare Network and its Landcare community necessary to ensure good governance and continued success within the context of an evolving natural resource management and social environment.

The primary roles of the Landcare facilitator are to:

- Provide appropriate support and co-ordination to assist the BNG Landcare Network in its strategic planning endeavours
- Facilitate opportunities for the effective and efficient delivery of priority works at scale
- Support the BNG Landcare Network to meet its governance responsibilities
- act as a key contact for Landcare groups
- maintain strong links and build trust with Landcare groups
- foster a high level of community participation in natural resource management
- provide support in capacity building, group development and project management
- ensure consistency between local actions and regional, State or Commonwealth strategies and plans.

**MAINTAIN STRONG LINKS AND
BUILD TRUST WITH LANDCARE
GROUPS**



Governance And Organisational Structure

Member Groups

The BNG Landcare Network supports 19 Landcare Groups; 2 'Friends' groups; one field naturalist group, and a conservation management network. Some of the groups are extremely active and robust, others are moderately active, whilst some are struggling. 2 groups are in effective recess.

GROUP NAME	NO OF MEMBERS	MAIN ISSUES AND KEY ASSETS
1 Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group	15	Environmental and recreational water in the Avon Plains Lakes; stock and domestic water supply; river health (Avon-Richardson); remnant protection; strategic revegetation; salinity; cropping practices.
2 Birchip Landcare Group	26	Biodiversity conservation; threatened species (particularly woodland birds); environmental water and wetlands; remnant protection; strategic revegetation; weed control.
3 Callawadda Landcare Group	10	Strategic revegetation; remnant protection; river health (Richardson); weeds.
4 Carapooee Landcare Group	14	Biodiversity conservation; threatened species; strategic revegetation; weed control; rabbits
5 Charlton Landcare Group	36	River health (Avoca); flood management; weeds, rabbits; remnant protection; strategic revegetation; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing)
6 Donald and District Landcare Group	11	River health (Richardson); Lake Buloke health and water quality; salinity, remnant protection; strategic revegetation; rabbits, weeds; flood management; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing); wind erosion
7 Emu Landcare Group	9	River health (Avoca); strategic revegetation; remnant protection; weeds, rabbits
8 Glenloth Landcare Group	10	River health (Avoca); remnant protection; strategic revegetation; weeds; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing)
9 Jeffcott North Landcare Group	23	Remnant protection; strategic revegetation; environmental water and wetland protection; salinity; biodiversity conservation; threatened species, rabbits, weeds; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing); wind erosion
10 Kooreh Landcare Group	15	Erosion control; remnant protection; strategic revegetation; river health (Avoca and tributaries); weeds; rabbits; kangaroo control
11 Natte Yallock Landcare Group	65	River health (Avoca); flood management; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing); erosion control (gully); strategic revegetation; remnant protection; weeds; rabbits

Governance And Organisational Structure

GROUP NAME	NO OF MEMBERS	MAIN ISSUES AND KEY ASSETS
12 St Arnaud Hills Landcare Group	9	Erosion control (gully); weeds; strategic revegetation; remnant protection; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing)
13 Stuart Mill Landcare Group	15	Erosion control (gully); weeds; rabbits; strategic revegetation; remnant protection; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing); kangaroo control
14 Teddywaddy Landcare Group	7	Rabbits; weeds; strategic revegetation; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing)
15 Winjallok Landcare Group	12	Erosion control (gully); river health (Avon and weeds; rabbits; strategic revegetation; remnant protection; salinity; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing); kangaroo control
16 Wycheproof and District Landcare Group	15	Weeds; rabbits; strategic revegetation; remnant protection; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing); wind erosion
17 Wychitella Landcare Group	25	Weeds (especially wheel cactus); remnant protection, strategic revegetation; erosion control (gully)
18 Yawong Conservation Group	10	Rabbits; weeds; erosion control (gully); river health (Avoca); strategic revegetation; remnant protection; sustainable farming initiatives (soil, cropping, grazing)
19 St Arnaud Field Naturalists Club	23	Biodiversity conservation and threatened species; remnant protection; landscape linkages; strategic revegetation, PPA control
20 Kara Kara Conservation Management Network	19	Biodiversity conservation and threatened species; remnant protection; landscape linkages; strategic revegetation, PPA control; kangaroo control
21 Friends of Mt Jeffcott	12	Biodiversity conservation (particularly flora species) and protection; weed and rabbit control;

Governance And Organisational Structure

Collaborative Organisations and their Strategic Objectives

Apart from the groups, the BNG Landcare Network enjoys a number of key collaborations which are essential to the successful and coordinated delivery of Landcare support to members and with whom the often Network partners in various projects, events, activities and initiatives.

Landcare Victoria Incorporated: www.lvi.org.au

Landcare Victoria Incorporated (LVI) was formed following an amalgamation in 2018 between the Victorian Landcare Council and the Farm Tree and Landcare Association.

It is now the independent, representative and recognised body for Landcare in Victoria – i.e., our peak body.

LVI partners with Government to support Landcare groups in Victoria with their work to undertake and promote:

- Careful land management
- Sustainable farming
- Environmental Stewardship
- Community well-being

LVI works for increased recognition, resourcing and support for Landcare by:

- Fostering community learning and action
- Participating in government policy development
- Facilitating collaboration between Landcare and government bodies
- Representing Landcare nationally via the National Landcare Network and its Members council
- Providing services to member groups and their staff such as incorporation protection, insurance cover, grant support, information on current issues, training and advice

LVI is governed by a volunteer Committee of Management made up of community representatives from each of Victoria's ten natural resource management regions.

Advice on policy direction is provided by a Member's Council in which the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network is active.

North Central Catchment Management Authority: www.nccma.vic.gov.au

The North Central CMA is the leading natural resource management (NRM) agency in north central Victoria for coordinating and monitoring NRM programs.

The 2013-19 Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) provides the long-term vision for natural resource management within the North Central CMA region.

The North Central CMA believes that an engaged and active community is critical for the successful implementation of the RCS which states as its vision a *community active in protecting and enhancing the integrity of its catchment* – and so there is obviously a significant role that Landcare can play in assisting delivery of programs and strategies.

Regional Landcare Support Plan

In addition to the RCS, the North Central CMA also articulates its support for Landcare and community-based NRM through its Regional Landcare Support Plan.

The purpose of the Regional Landcare Support Plan is to ensure that the North central CMA is as effective as possible in supporting Landcare Groups and Networks to achieve their goals.

This Strategy echoes the Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan (see below) in using the five functions of Landcare to target its support.

- Operate – effective and efficient groups and networks
- Engage – communities in environmental stewardship
- Collaborate – with others to enhance skills and possibilities
- Do – on-ground works that makes a difference
- Tell – people about the successes and lessons

The Regional Landcare Support Plan sets out a table of actions aligned to the above functions.

Governance And Organisational Structure

Local Government

The two primary local government organisations in the network area are the Buloke Shire Council (www.buloke.vic.gov.au) and the Northern Grampians Shire Council (www.ngshire.vic.gov.au).

From 2002 to 2009, both these Councils were partners in delivering Landcare Support to local groups under the NHT funding provided by the Federal Government through the North Central CMA.

They continued to provide a level of financial support to the Network till 2014.

The Network has worked closely with both local government organisations in drought and flood responses, including the mobilisation and coordination of work crews. Currently, the primary interaction is through the Victorian Government's Roadside Weed and Rabbit Control Program which provides funding to rural and regional Councils.

Local Government Organisations are statutory bodies incorporated under The Local Government Act 1989 (Victoria). The Act sets out the primary purposes and objectives of Local Government defining its functions and powers. These include

- to act as a representative government and consider community needs when making decisions;
- to establish strategic objectives for municipal services and monitor their achievement;
- to ensure the responsible and accountable management of the organisation's resources;
- to advocate for local community interests to other communities and governments;
- to provide fair and equitable representation of constituents;
- to be a responsible partner in government, taking the needs of other communities into account;
- to foster community cohesion and encourage participation in civic life;
- to manage community assets; and
- to enforce by-laws.

As such, there remains ongoing opportunities for the Landcare movement to collaborate and inform local government so it deliver on the Council Plan.

Barengi Gadjin Land Council: www.bglc.com.au

BGLC represents over 200 Traditional Owners from the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk family groups, who were recognised in the 2005 Native Title Consent Determination, the first in south-eastern Australia.

BGLC is a Registered Aboriginal Party, as decided by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, in line with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. They are also a registered Aboriginal Corporation under the CATSI Act (Fed).

They are the Prescribed Body Corporate for the Wotjobaluk claim area, as outlined in the Native Title Act, and have the legal authority and obligation to work on behalf of Traditional Owners.

Barengi Gadjin Land Council is the primary source of advice and knowledge for the Victorian Government on matters relating to Aboriginal places located in or Aboriginal objects originating from the area for which the party is registered.

BGLC is also the first stop for all matters relating to cultural heritage and indigenous land management. It is the only body in the region with the legislative authority to make legal decisions about cultural heritage.

The Vision of the Barengi Gadjin Land Council is *Traditional Owners working together as Custodians of Culture, Country, Heritage, Lore and Language*.

From a strategic perspective, Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network is keen to work with Barengi Gadjin Land Council and support values that respect for Culture, Country, Heritage, Lore and Language, and which commit to professionalism, inclusiveness, engagement and responsiveness.

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation: www.djadjawurrung.com.au

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) is incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) and is regulated by the Office of the Regulator of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC).

Established in 2004, the principal objectives of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation are to:

- Promote the health and wellbeing of the Dja Dja Wurrung People and;
- Protect and promote the laws, culture, property rights and human rights of the Dja Dja Wurrung People.

Protection of culture, heritage and the environment is very important for the Dja Dja Wurrung in order to maintain a cultural identity. Through negotiated agreements, the Dja Dja Wurrung strengthen and maintain cultural and traditional practices while also ensuring that significant sites are protected and maintained.

Governance And Organisational Structure

Dja Dja Wurrung also recognises the environmental value of land and takes a holistic approach when it comes to managing land and the environment. This includes looking at the management of the environment at the whole catchment level and the development of landscape.

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation has developed its Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034 which will provide direction for the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Traditional Owner Land Management Board. It will be used to build partnerships with key stakeholders and to increase the involvement of Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners in the effort to achieve their goals.

The Country Plan has nine aspirations listed under the following themes

- Jaara People
- Cultural Practices and Customs
- Cultural Heritage
- Bush Tucker
- Rivers and Waterways
- Land
- Enterprise
- Self-Determination
- Joint Management

Through these aspirations the Dja Dja Wurrung people recognise the importance of their cultural heritage – their significant places and landscapes, their stories and language, their customs and practices and their responsibilities in looking after country.

Their Vision is for the health and well-being of Dja Dja Wurrung people to be underpinned by their living culture.

Their Vision is for their lands and waters to be in good condition and actively managed to protect their values and to promote the laws, culture and rights of all Dja Dja Wurrung people.

Their Vision, as this country's First People, includes being politically empowered with an established place in society and being capable of managing their own affairs from a strong and diverse economic base.

This is entirely consistent with, and complimentary to, the Landcare ethic and from a strategic perspective the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network looks to respect these aspirations and pursue opportunities to work with the Corporation and Traditional Owners that supports their achievement.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Victoria): www.delwp.vic.gov.au

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is tasked with creating liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities.

It is focussed on caring for and protecting the environment, and helping to respond to climate change through risk mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The Department recognises the link between the built and natural environment in the quality of our lives. It works to accommodate population growth while maintaining world class liveability and protecting our heritage for future generations.

The Department also assists local governments to support people, communities and growth at the local level.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning supports a number of important volunteer programs – including the Victorian Landcare Program. These programs involve more than 55,000 people who regularly make an effort to improve Victoria's land and water systems, biodiversity, marine and coastal environments, and ecosystems.

Agriculture Victoria (AgVic)

The Agriculture portfolio is supported by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR). The purpose of the department is to create the conditions to sustainably develop the Victorian economy and grow employment.

From the perspective of the Network, one of the most significant roles of AgVic is to coordinate the State Government's Land Program.

The Land Health Program works with dryland farmers across Victoria to improve the productivity, quality and health of their land and protect adjacent natural assets such as waterways.

Land Health is delivered by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) with partners including Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare, the Federal Government, industry organisations and agricultural education institutions.

The Land Health Program offers training, advice and information to dryland farmers and rural service providers, in the areas of:

- Farm planning
- Productive soils
- Farm water
- Grazing and pasture management
- Sustainable cropping
- Soil conservation (preventing and managing land degradation caused by salinity, erosion or acidity)

Governance And Organisational Structure

Land Health staff can help farmers to :

- Improve the productivity, condition and management of soils
- Improve grazing, pasture and cropping management practices including better use of nutrients
- Use water more efficiently, improve capture and storage, undertake a water budget and understand water quality issues
- Manage land according to its capability
- Minimise the impact of wind and water erosion, dryland salinity, soil acidification and remediate degraded land
- Make more informed business decisions

Victorian Landcare Program (Community Engagement and Landcare Team)

The Victorian Landcare Program (VLP) is the Government's program of support for Landcare and is designed to act as a catalyst – supporting groups and networks in a strategic way and helping them to be more powerful and effective as they work to stop the decline in , and improve the health of, Victoria's natural resource base.

The goal of the VLP is a Shared Responsibility for a Healthy Environment.

As written above, the VLP Strategic Plan outlines the five functions of Landcare that the VLP will target with its support – Operate; Engage; Collaborate; Do; Tell.

Amongst the range of services and initiatives it delivers to support Landcare are

- » regional and State-wide coordination (including the role of the Regional Landcare Coordinator)
- » administering the Victorian Landcare Grants
- » communications such as Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine, Landcare Notes, and supporting the Victorian Landcare Gateway website
- » coordinating Landcare conferences and awards, facilitating stakeholder meetings and other networking opportunities and activities
- » training and development for groups and networks
- » commissioning research on a wide range of data and information relevant to Landcare
- » monitoring and evaluation, including group and network health.

Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program (VLFP)

The VLFP is the program funded by the Victorian Government (as part of the VLP) to part-fund 68 local Landcare facilitators across the State. It was launched in recognition of the value of the work Victoria's volunteer-based Landcare groups and networks in natural resource management and their contribution to protect, enhance and restore the natural environment.

It is specifically aimed at ensuring groups have access to the expertise, advice and support of professional Landcare staff which has been identified as a critical need by grassroots groups.

In the case of the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network, the work plan developed to implement the VLFP broadly outlines the work areas and activities to be undertaken by the facilitators.

1. Supporting on-ground delivery

- » act as an information and knowledge broker
- » provide technical expertise and support in project development, implementation and management



Photo: Donald and St Arnaud Schools Twilight BBQ and Bonfire

Chapter title

2. Building local community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining
 - » facilitate group and network training
 - » provide support in capacity building, group development
3. Undertaking community engagement and building partnerships
 - » build and maintain partnerships
 - » act as two way conduit between the grassroots community and government
 - » promote and communicate the Landcare ethic
 - » facilitate increased volunteer engagement in Landcare
 - » be responsive to local needs, maintain strong links and build trust with Landcare groups
 - » be a key contact for Landcare groups and community members seeking advice and assistance on a range of natural resource management issues
4. Assisting with planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
 - » assist with monitoring, reporting and evaluation
 - » facilitate group and network strategic planning
 - » provide some executive and administrative support
 - » ensure consistency between local actions and regional, state or Federal strategies and plans
5. Securing project grants and other funding/sponsorships
 - » assist with the preparation of funding/sponsorship applications

The current funding for the VLLFI program is scheduled to end in June 2019 with a application for ongoing funding being submitted as Business Case to Treasury by DELWP.

National Landcare Program

Although, from the perspective of the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network, the Australian Government is primarily stakeholder and investor in approved, funded projects, it also has a commitment to supporting Landcare through its National Landcare Program which recognises the importance of grassroot community groups in managing the nation's natural resources.

The National Landcare Program Phase 2 is now in operation and the Australian Government is investing approximately \$1 billion in this phase, between 2018 and 2023.

The investment will primarily be delivered by the Department of the Environment and Energy and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and will include a range of measures to support natural resource management and sustainable agriculture, and to protect Australia's biodiversity.

Through the National Landcare Program, the Australian Government aims to work in partnership with governments, industry, communities and individuals to protect and conserve Australia's water, soil, plants, animals and ecosystems, as well as support the productive and sustainable use of these valuable resources.

The National Landcare Program aims to help the community address problems such as:

- loss of vegetation
- soil degradation
- the introduction of pest weeds and animals
- changes in water quality and flows and
- changes in fire regimes.

Governance And Organisational Structure

Stakeholders

The Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network works with a diverse number of stakeholders with varying frequency and at various levels - including sourcing grant funding; information exchange and consultation; planning; event coordination, and implementation of specific actions and initiatives.

These include government agencies and departments; statutory bodies; non-government organisations; schools; business and industry; and other community organisations;

THESE INCLUDE:

Parks Victoria	Wycheproof P-12
Landcare Australia	St Arnaud Primary School
Bush Heritage	St Patricks Primary School
Trust for Nature	St Mary's Primary School
St Arnaud Community resource Centre	Donald Primary School
Donald High School	Fredrick Harold Socks
St Arnaud Secondary College	Riverlea Australia
Charlton P-12	

Junior Landcare

The Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network has a long and very successful history of promoting Junior Landcare by working with schools, scout groups and sporting clubs across the Network area.

Of particular note are the annual Greenweek program run by Donald High School, and the similar Enviroweek program run by the St Arnaud Secondary College.

The activities usually centre on revegetation and the planting of tubestock for waterway protection, landscape linkages, erosion control, or windbreaks. However, activities have also included litter collection, weed control activities, nest boxes, plant propagation, plant identification, seed collection, water monitoring, and energy efficiency.

WE HAVE A LONG AND VERY SUCCESSFUL HISTORY OF PROMOTING JUNIOR LANDCARE BY WORKING WITH SCHOOLS, SCOUT GROUPS AND SPORTING CLUBS ACROSS THE NETWORK AREA.

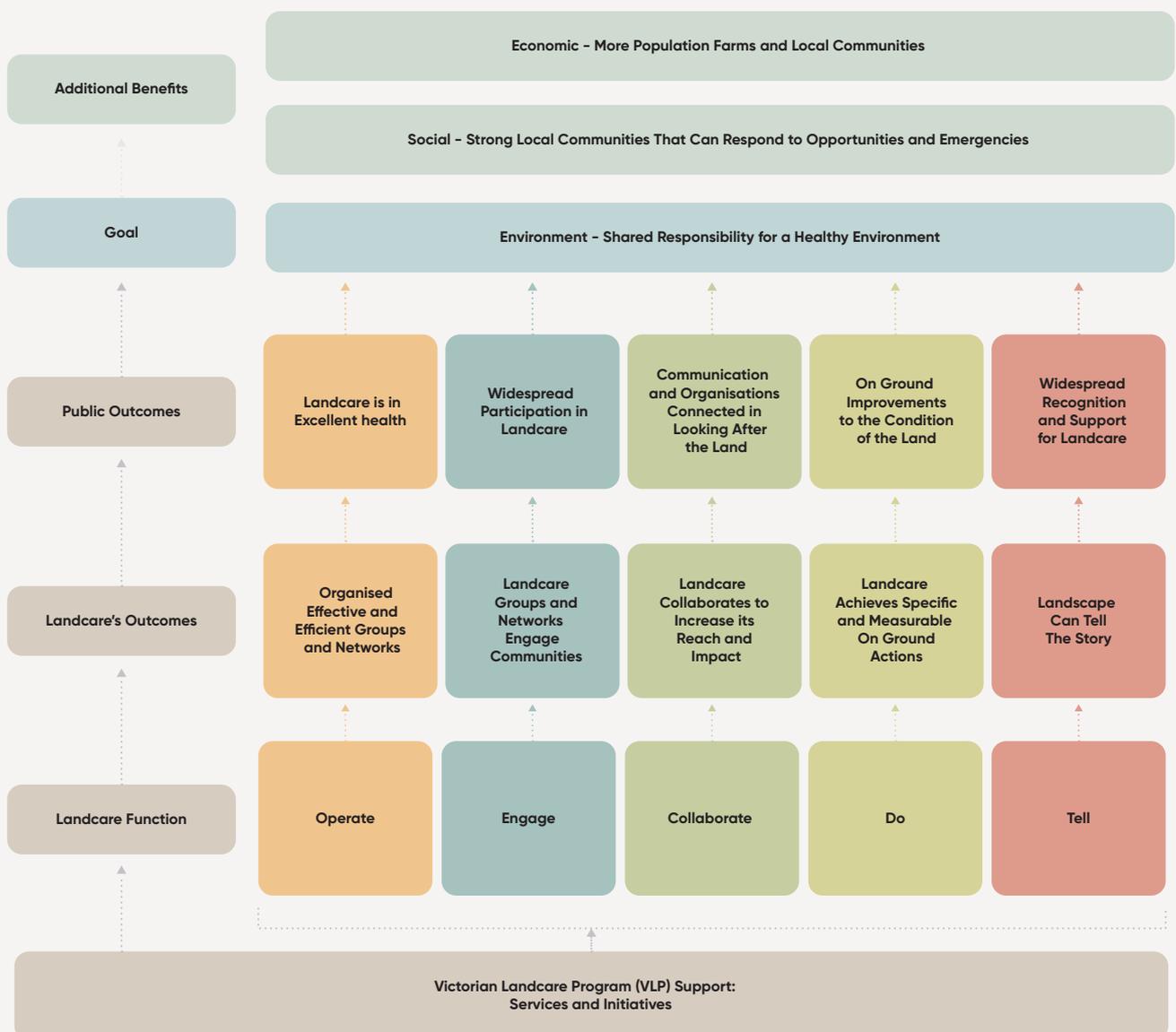
Objectives and Strategic Direction

SECTION 4: OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Introduction

This section is the key section for the BNGL Network’s 2019-2024 Strategic Plans.

The general and background information included in the previous sections provides context for the Network’s priorities in meeting the objectives and strategic direction based on the dynamic of remaining relevant, responsive and supportive to our autonomous member groups (the grassroots) whilst contributing toward and being guided by the Landcare and Public Outcomes articulated in the Victorian Governments Landcare Support Plan Program Logic (see Figure XX below).



Objectives and Strategic Direction

The plan adopts a risk management approach based on the current and revised Risk Management ISO Standard 31000:2018 in that it looks to base our decision-making and strategic direction based on the opportunities and risk factors that either facilitate or imperil our success at being able to contribute effectively to the functions, outcomes and goal of the above framework.

The plan exists as a living document that allows for adaptation and improvement at the action scale, and so is flexible enough to be able to adjust the organisations direction in response to a changing environment – whether physical, social, economic, regulatory or political.

At its core, the plan is intended to ensure the Network remains an effective service organisation to its member groups and continues to provide essential support these groups.

Most importantly, it is acknowledged that the strength and resilience of Landcare across the Network is having an active and involved volunteer base. Therefore, helping to maintain and increase membership or participation in groups will be a core responsibility for facilitators and committee members.

The table below identifies major opportunities and risks faced by both the Network and member groups, and the objectives from within the framework that these impact upon.

It also outlines broad strategies that the Network needs to pursue to take advantage of opportunity or to mitigate risk.

The following table then articulates specific actions the Network can take to implement these strategies, and which may be included in a workplan.

Consistent with this Strategic Plan, the immediate outputs from these will include:

- Better communication
- Greater accessibility and presence
- Improved information loops and schedules
- Greater and targeted assistance with project/activity identification, scoping and planning
- Greater and timely assistance to access and prepare grant applications
- Greater and timely assistance with reporting, evaluation and acquittal
- Increased group capacity and skills

The Steering Committee will have responsibility for the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) of this plan and will direct necessary adaptations to strategy and action as appropriate.

The MERI process will also inform any revisions or additions that need to be made to this Strategic Plan.

Key evaluation questions for Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Plan.

To what extent has the Network

1. advanced the health of Landcare across the network by building the capacity of member groups and supporting them to be more organised, effective and efficient?
2. been able to encourage wider participation in Landcare by supporting member groups to engage more effectively with their communities?
3. been able to build better collaboration and cooperation between member groups and other stakeholders or investors so that communities and organisation are better connected in natural resource management
4. been able to increase the reach and influence of both itself and member groups through networks and partnerships?
5. been able to support and/or attract investment and access to other resources in NRM across the Network area?
6. been able to contribute to on-ground improvements in the condition of the land and genuine landscape change?
7. been able to communicate and promote the Landcare ethic and achieve greater support and recognition for Landcare?
8. achieved its objectives and how can we improve.

Objectives and Strategic Direction

Objectives, Opportunities, Risks and Broad Strategies

OBJECTIVE 1: OPERATE

Landcare Outcome:

Organised Effective and Efficient Groups and Networks

Public Outcome:

Landcare (the movement) is in Excellent Health

OBJECTIVE 2: ENGAGE

Landcare Outcome:

Landcare Groups and Networks Engage Communities

Public Outcome:

Widespread Participation in Landcare

OBJECTIVE 3: COLLABORATE

Landcare Outcome:

Landcare Collaborates to Increase its Reach and Impact

Public Outcome:

Communities and Organisations Connected in Looking After the Land

OBJECTIVE 4: DO

Landcare Outcome:

Landcare Achieves Specific and Measurable On-Ground Actions

Public Outcome:

On-Ground Improvements in the Condition of the Land

OBJECTIVE 5: TELL

Landcare Outcome:

Landcare can tell the Story (key message – through collaboration and effort, people and communities succeed in 'being the change they seek')

Public Outcome:

Widespread Recognition and Support for Landcare

Objectives and Strategic Direction

OPPORTUNITIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL THAT WILL ASSIST SUCCESS	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>The ongoing need for Landcare.</p> <p>As long as there are pests, people and production putting pressures on resources, environmental services and the landscape to produce food, fibre and fuel there will be a need for Landcare</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Active and involved 'grassroots' membership who see Landcare as an enabling process</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Committed and experienced Steering Committee members representative of member groups and the local community who have a strong understanding of the Landcare movement and the farming community which makes up the bulk of group memberships</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Part-time paid facilitator (funded through the Victorian Government Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative) who engages with and supports local member groups to undertake their activities and volunteer functions, maintain membership and connect to wider landscape issues</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Ongoing VLLFI program aimed at creating not 'self-sustaining' but 'sustainable' groups supported by a facilitator.</p> <p>This support is critical to maintaining the relationship with community and, in particular, the volunteer Landcare movement</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Strong Regional Landcare Support and participation in the regional Landcare Team (North Central CMA)</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Membership and active participation in Landcare Victoria Incorporated – the State's peak Landcare body</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Proven record of working with member groups and partners</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Ability to act as a strong advocate for member groups</p>	●	●	●		●
<p>Ability to act as a community catalyst and promote Landcare as an enabling process intended to support the sustainable production of food, fibre and fuel, as well as the protection of the environment</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Ability to work as a broker and to fit in with investor priorities and to connect up to additional, external resources</p>			●	●	●

Objectives and Strategic Direction

OPPORTUNITIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL THAT WILL ASSIST SUCCESS	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Government support and recognition.</p> <p>Government has long recognised that the active participation of an engaged and informed community is essential to effective natural resource management and that there is a need for a collaborative approach across both community and government.</p> <p>It acknowledges that strong on-going relationships with community are critical for long-term enduring environmental outcomes</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Support at policy level and resourcing for engaging volunteers and recruitment of members (e.g., Victorian Government's <i>Volunteering for Nature Environmental Volunteering Plan</i>)</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Support at a policy level for the provision of resources to include and promote sustainable agriculture within the farm sector (e.g., agricultural focus in the Australian Government's <i>National Landcare Program 2</i> and associated regional projects/initiatives)</p>		●	●	●	
<p>Engaging and influencing people beyond our traditional membership</p>		●	●	●	●
<p>Availability of far-reaching digital and social media platforms to share information and to assist communication and engagement of target audiences</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Reach of Landcare.</p> <p>The significance of community-based Landcare in the Natural Resource Management (NRM) mix is that it has become the premier avenue to reach and access private landholders or managers (who control almost 70 % of land) and to mobilise a vast volunteer army amongst the wider community</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>People being the 'Change they Seek'</p> <p>At the grass-roots level, Landcare is about local people finding local solutions to local issues and then taking responsibility to turn ethic into action.</p> <p>Its strength lies in the very direct and personal commitment people have to their local landscape, and its effectiveness in this ownership and the application of local knowledge and skills</p>	●	●	●	●	●

Objectives and Strategic Direction

OPPORTUNITIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL THAT WILL ASSIST SUCCESS	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>New and innovative avenues for recruiting much needed environmental volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> partnering with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities partnering with universities and TAFEs (including collaborating on pathways to future employment in the environmental and agricultural sectors) partnering with event organisers to access enthusiastic, connected volunteers (e.g., from Babylon and Esoteric music festivals held in the region, geocaches, etc.) partnering with the corporate sector and other organisations (including clubs, service organisations and local government) Create "Adopt a ...!" concepts to aid in marketing causes for volunteers - e.g., 'Adopt an Orchid' <p>- marketing the Network areas assets and environmental values – e.g.. Box Ironbark forests as a 'Biodiversity hotspot'; Avon Plains Cultural Heritage values; 'breadbasket' of the Wimmera Plains, and the threatened Buloke Woodlands, etc.</p>					
<p>New corporate partnerships</p>			●	●	
<p>Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and increased access to philanthropic funding</p>			●	●	



Photo: Riverlea Planting Gre Gre 2017

Objectives and Strategic Direction

RISKS AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL THAT WILL HINDER SUCCESS	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
Over-committed, time-poor and under-resourced support staff	●	●	●	●	●
High dependence on a few key people both at group and network level	●	●	●	●	●
Lack of committed membership and/or executive group	●	●	●	●	●
Lack of a strong and active Network Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●
Failure to engage community of interest	●	●	●	●	●
Lack of volunteers to share burden of work and activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty recruiting new members and inadequate succession planning diminishing, aging rural and regional population with a high community volunteer demand meaning less time and effort available to Landcare larger farms, higher inputs; less workforce; family diaspora, less time, leading to less time and resources directed to Landcare 	●	●	●	●	●
Failure to understand the priorities and motivations of member groups and their individual members		●		●	
Failure to understand the different sectors of the community		●	●	●	
Lack of funding and other resources	●	●	●	●	●
Poor collaborations and partnerships	●	●	●	●	●
Poor communication processes and procedures	●	●	●	●	●
Failure to adhere to agreed strategic direction	●	●	●	●	
Lack of appropriate knowledge, information, advice and expertise needed to make decisions	●	●	●	●	●
Poor policies and procedures and/or failure to implement them as regulated or documented	●				

Objectives and Strategic Direction

RISKS AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL THAT WILL HINDER SUCCESS	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Difficulty negotiating the regulatory and bureaucratic environment</p> <p>Pressure from increasing levels of regulation and accountability and from juggling many different commitments can create a climate for burn-out and an unsustainable and undesirable working environment which affects the commitment of otherwise dedicated and willing people, and the health and viability of groups</p>	●				
<p>Climate change and increased risk of unstable seasons to production and socio-ecological systems - e.g., farming less predictable, farm income less stable, flow-on effects to local economy, polarised community views</p>		●		●	
<p>Landcare branding is seen as being too conservation-based (i.e. 'green') and in conflict with farm-based production systems</p>		●		●	●



Photo: Youngest Goldsmith helping out Mum.

Objectives and Strategic Direction

BROAD STRATEGIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL TO ADDRESS OPPORTUNITY OR RISK	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
Identify and utilise local group expertise and contacts to increase individual and member group ownership and engagement in both Landcare and the Network	●	●	●		●
Engage and motivate member groups by maintaining a 'grassroot', community-based focus and loyally representing the interests and concerns of members	●	●	●		●
Take account, and demonstrate inclusion, of local groups' interests in network decision making					
Maintain committed, representative Steering Committee undertaking MERI oversight of Network activities and initiatives					
Share advocacy tasks across our management group	●	●	●	●	●
Ensure the Steering Committee maintains the Network's corporate security and image through the implementation of appropriate governance procedures					
Maintain part-time paid Network facilitator to provide professional support to member groups, implement work plans and provide executive support to the Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●
Improve awareness of the Network's functional activities and promote its role and profile to member groups to encourage improved engagement and more active participation	●	●	●		
Support groups with preparing and documenting their own strategic planning that will assist them identify, pursue and deliver priority projects, and activities relevant and important to group members	●	●	●	●	
Support projects that protect priority and notable assets in the landscape, and which minimise environmental risk and impacts to the resource.					
Assist groups and the Network to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pursue funding and other resources as required to implement actions access grant funding and other resources from the Government, corporate and philanthropic sector align their initiatives/activities within the context of investor, regional, State and Federal priorities -deliver effective NRM outcomes. Access latest information on best management practice and other technologies acquit projects and funding responsibly to help secure future support from investors 	●	●	●	●	●
Look at corporate/organisations sector as a source of both funds and volunteer labour			●	●	
Support groups with membership recruitment and succession planning so that work burdens and other responsibilities are adequately shared	●	●		●	

Objectives and Strategic Direction

BROAD STRATEGIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL TO ADDRESS OPPORTUNITY OR RISK	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Assist groups and the Network to put in place appropriate governance procedures that may be basic but are adequate and compliant with their statutory and regulatory responsibilities</p> <p>However, encourage groups not to meet simply for the sake of meeting - meetings should have a purpose and outcome that makes attendance worthwhile</p>	●				
<p>Assist groups with executive and administrative support to negotiate the regulatory and compliance maze</p>	●				
<p>Promote the Network's role as an information broker and in being a key contact for Landcare groups and community members seeking advice and assistance on a range of NRM issues</p>	●	●	●		
<p>Extend the influence of Landcare and the Network to other landholders, individuals, organisations and decision makers in the community</p> <p>Communicate effectively with stakeholders, partners and both community and natural resource management decision makers</p> <p>Target influential people at regional and state level</p> <p>Share peer experience and knowledge - build on what has been done</p>		●	●		●
<p>Facilitate communication with and between member groups and other target audiences by encouraging access to the existing communication network</p>	●	●	●		●
<p>Improve and expand existing communication network by exploring new technologies and linking up with the networks of new partners</p>	●	●	●		●
<p>Actively pursue media opportunities and other 'free publicity'</p>		●			●
<p>Actively pursue representation and raise the profile of the Network and members with government and other policy/decision makers</p>		●	●		●
<p>Act as a two way conduit between the 'grassroots' community and government or other investors.</p> <p>Act as a broker to fit in with investor's priorities and connect up to the resources and expertise the Network and its members need</p> <p>Advocate for, speak out strongly and negotiate hard on behalf of Network members to policy makers (e.g., to Federal/State governments and relevant peak bodies such as VFF, NFF, LVI, etc</p> <p>Loyally represent the interest and concerns of member groups</p>	●	●	●		●

Objectives and Strategic Direction

BROAD STRATEGIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL TO ADDRESS OPPORTUNITY OR RISK	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Identify, develop and maintain strategic partnerships and collaborations.</p> <p>Build networks and partnerships that exploit mutually beneficial outcomes and synergies</p> <p>Negotiate shared goals and roles to enlist partners in projects</p> <p>At a Network level, participate actively in relevant decision making processes.</p>	●	●	●		
Collaborate with Regional and State Landcare Support	●	●	●	●	●
Collaborate with Landcare Victoria Incorporated for increased recognition, resourcing and support for Landcare	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Encourage participation from the wider community in on-ground works and other Landcare activities by 'marketing' events and opportunities for involvement and participation</p> <p>Exploiting new and innovative avenues for recruiting much needed environmental volunteer</p>		●	●	●	●
Seek to understand the goals and attitudes of others in the NRM system		●	●		
Maintain strong indigenous engagement and collaboration in Network activities and initiatives		●	●		
Make it easy for non-members to access our expertise and advice		●	●		
<p>Promote and communicate the Landcare ethic: the power and effectiveness of local people working on local issues to achieve positive change in their communities and environment</p> <p>Ensure that the Landcare message is promoted and publicised and shown to be of value to the community</p>		●	●		●
<p>Identify and address the motivations, barriers and opportunities in relation to mobilising volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand and explore the volunteering landscape for opportunities to partner with organisations, community groups and corporates for mutually beneficial outcomes create finite, flexible, event-based volunteer opportunities that are straightforward to market to target audiences 	●	●	●	●	●

Objectives and Strategic Direction

BROAD STRATEGIES AT A NETWORK OR GROUP LEVEL TO ADDRESS OPPORTUNITY OR RISK	OBJECTIVES IMPACTED				
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Link in with initiatives by the Victorian Government through its <i>Volunteering for Nature</i> program to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make administration of volunteers easier • build capacity and capability amongst volunteers • improve sector collaboration • attract more diverse volunteers • involve more young people • celebrate and promote volunteering 	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Develop a branding plan that will better market the Network and Landcare to members. i.e., includes a strong agricultural/farming focus that reflects Landcare’s origins and which provides appropriate balance against the highly successful environmental protection, or ‘green’ image that has evolved around the movement.</p> <p>Despite the above, promote a culture of stewardship and guardianship in caring for the land which includes the careful use of resources and the protection of the environment as key considerations in the long-term profitability and sustainability of farming.</p>		●			●
<p>Work with groups, the region, LVI, DELWP, DEDJTR, KKCMN and other organisations to develop a Network relevant program of technical and practical seminars, events, workshops and/or training activities aimed improving farming practices and environmental awareness</p> <p>e.g., Look for opportunities to facilitate and target improved agribusiness skills and risk management at a farm and family level useful to local members</p> <p>Be conscious that times for events or meetings should be relevant to the farming calendar. Raise this at a regional and wider level</p>		●	●	●	●
<p>Identify gaps in Network coverage (socio-geographic context) and implement engagement strategies</p>		●	●		
<p>Keep track of opportunities and threats in policy and industry trends and develop the Network’s strategic understanding (around government programs and policy)</p>	●	●	●		●
<p>Look for alternative investors/funding sources to cover facilitator time and other Network activities, e.g. fee-for-service, project management, corporate, philanthropic</p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p>Participate, and encourage member groups to participate, in LVI initiatives and activities – e.g. forums</p>	●	●	●		●

Objectives and Strategic Direction

Key Work Plan Actions

WORK PLAN ACTION	PRIORITY HIGH = 1 LOW = 5
As far as practicable, ensure network representation (facilitator or Committee member) at all Landcare meetings, activities and events	1
At each Steering Committee meeting, monitor, evaluate, report and improve (MERI) Network progress toward objectives	1
<p>Encourage and assist each group to prepare and document project plans, however basic, so that are 'project ready'.</p> <p>Ensure plan is accessible and useful to groups</p> <p>Use GIS or other agreed format to document plan.</p> <p>Make sure they have a plan that has a realistic opportunity for success. Taking action is a key motivator while dead-ends are demoralising. In a resource-constrained environment, work with groups to find practical, cost-effective options to address priority issues within the time and resources available to them.</p> <p>Work with relevant groups to prepare and begin implementing coordinated, integrated and cost-effective pest plant and animal control programs that will maintain economic and long-term control. Create and direct public resources to buffer zones that protect and expand target areas. Pest plant and animal control remains a major focus for many groups but the reality is that while there may be some resourcing available to act as a catalyst for control work to commence, the long-term responsibility and cost will be on the landholders .</p>	1
<p>Maintain watch for, and provide information and advice to groups, on potential funding opportunities for identified projects</p> <p>Offer assistance to groups in the preparation and submission of funding applications to a standard that meets program/investor guidelines.</p> <p>Market alignment of member and Network funding applications to local community assets and the beneficial outcomes to the local, wider and corporate sectors</p> <p>Extend assistance to the reporting and acquittal of successful projects</p>	1
<p>Ensure each group sets at least one strategic objective to aim for each year</p> <p>Ensure each group undertakes at least one activity, event or initiative each year – even if it is only a social BBQ after the annual AGM - that will provide an opportunity for new and existing volunteers to associate with the Landcare group.</p> <p>Ensure every group holds at least one meeting per year (AGM at minimum).</p>	1
Hold one major, open Network wide activity each year with a program of genuine relevance to groups so that recognition of and participation in the Network is developed	1
Each year, plan at least two event-based (themed) opportunities for environmental volunteering in the Network area for CALD communities and/or urban-based volunteers. Identify and, where possible, access necessary resources to implement plan	1
Maintain current communications platforms and arrangements with St Arnaud Community Resource Centre. Maintain, review and improve the effectiveness and reach of our communication plan and its platforms	1
<p>Provide, or facilitate access to information and advice requested by groups and individuals, or that has been identified as lacking during contact with them.</p> <p>This may be across a range of NRM, farming, community health or governance related issues.</p>	2

Objectives and Strategic Direction

WORK PLAN ACTION	PRIORITY HIGH = 1 LOW = 5
<p>In calls for volunteers for on-ground actions or other initiatives, market why it should motivate people to get involved in environmental volunteering – e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help the natural environment and all forms of plant and animal life • give something back to society and or community • help future generations • gain a sense of satisfaction • social, mental and health benefits <p>Increased understanding and acceptance of the concept that the personal well-being of the community and the economic well-being of the region are dependent on the health of the natural environment is an important motivator that may increase relevance to the volunteering sector and help enlist more, much needed volunteers within and without the region.</p>	2
<p>Use 'special' connection to local environment, river, wildflower or native animal etc., to highlight what makes us special here and encourage greater volunteerism and motivate landholder action – e.g., Biodiversity hotspot (Goldfields/Box Ironbark); Breadbasket production (Wimmera); endangered Buloke Woodlands, Cultural Heritage (Avon Plains)</p>	2
<p>Use <i>Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037</i> as leverage for funding.</p> <p>This is the Victorian Government's plan to stop the decline in the health of our native plants and animals, and improve our natural environment. Of particular relevance is the target of 5 million Victorians acting to protect the natural environment by 2037.</p>	2
<p>Work with the St Arnaud Resource Centre to develop a virtual volunteering service that also includes promotion of the benefits of volunteering, and includes a record of volunteering activities and outcomes – including social, mental and physical benefits</p>	3
<p>Contact organisers with a view to create volunteer recruitment opportunities from the clientele of both the Babylon and Esoteric Music Festivals</p>	3
<p>During the next twelve months, the Network will make contact with the Victorian multicultural commission to discuss CALD and similar environmental volunteering opportunities volunteering more recognisable and accessible</p>	3
<p>During the next twelve months, the Network will make contact with regional universities and TAFEs in Ballarat, Bendigo and Horsham to explore environmental volunteering opportunities</p>	3
<p>Review indigenous engagement strategy with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Barengi Gadjin Land Council by Dec 2020</p> <p>Invite Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Barengi Gadjin Land Council representatives onto Steering Committee</p>	3
<p>Hold minimum three general meetings of the Steering Committee and one AGM annually</p> <p>Keep member groups informed of all Network proceedings through email, Facebook, Web, WOM, meetings etc.</p> <p>Ensure stakeholders are formally kept up-to-date with relevant projects, initiatives, issues and results. Share feedback and act as a conduit between different stakeholders as required</p>	3
<p>Pursue Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status to increase reach into philanthropic trusts</p>	3
<p>Rebrand the Network and change the name of the Network to the Avon Richardson Mid-Avoca Landcare and Agriculture Support Network (ARMA)</p>	3

Objectives and Strategic Direction

WORK PLAN ACTION	PRIORITY HIGH = 1 LOW = 5
<p>At each member group, member meeting or event promote the Network's role as an advocate for group interests. Demonstrate and publicise how group interests have been incorporated into NW decision making</p> <p>Maintain contact record with Landcare groups – including with executive and individual members.</p> <p>Document requested actions or issues</p>	3
<p>Document the benefits and outcomes the Network has been able to facilitate – e.g., in capacity building, on-ground outcomes, attracting investment, recruiting volunteers, developing new partnerships, promoting the Landcare ethic etc.</p>	3
<p>Create videos/powerpoint presentations (titled <i>Be the Change you Seek</i>) on Landcare success stories - relevant to the Network's landscapes and members - to showcase how community/ neighbour collaboration, vision and effort create positive change</p>	3
<p>Produce minimum 4 media articles or submissions per year that showcase the activities or advocacy of the Network, and/or inform the community of significant Landcare issues and achievements</p>	3
<p>Continue to maintain and review open, accountable and transparent governance processes that foster confidence amongst our stakeholders</p>	3
<p>Develop annual business plan which identify staffing, resource needs and income avenues (such as government programs and initiatives; philanthropic funds; fee-for-service; local government support, etc)</p>	3
<p>Help schedule and attend group AGM and Heath Survey by June 30 2019. Draw line under past and have each group start over where this has not been happening annually already.</p>	
<p>Ensure each group completes the group health questionnaire - i.e., encourage members to own their group assessment so that it prompts them to consider the barriers, issues and opportunities relevant to the group.</p> <p>These questionnaires will also help gather baseline and demographic information about the group to maintain an up to data base and assist the Network, region and State to better meet group needs</p>	3
<p>Seek and document feedback on how stakeholders see the network and its activities. Include and document feedback from member groups, partners, facilitators and committee members in MERI processes</p>	3
<p>Work with LVI to lobby government for ongoing or new VLLFI funding</p>	3
<p>Work with LVI to develop a credible and robust method to measure and report on return on investment in Landcare for both investors and the community to show value for money, genuine capacity change and the reach and influence of Landcare other than group members</p>	3
<p>Work actively with LVI and the region to positioning Landcare in relation to the range of strategic environmental and agricultural activities of government – e.g., endangered species; drought; climate change and biodiversity. Participate in LVI initiatives to develop an inclusion process for Landcare across government programs</p>	4
<p>Participate in appropriate local and regional forums and networks as scheduled, including the North Central CMA Landcare Facilitator meetings</p>	4
<p>Work with LVI for continuation of the Roadside Weed and Rabbit Control Project (RWRCP)</p>	
<p>Work with both the Northern Grampians Shire and Buloke Shire on the roll-out of the RWRCP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using local Landcare knowledge to target weeds and rabbits • to coordinate control with Landcare action and foster stronger collaboration between the Shires, landholders and the community • to explore opportunities for the Network to collaborate with the Shires on a fee-for service basis 	4

Objectives and Strategic Direction

WORK PLAN ACTION	PRIORITY HIGH = 1 LOW = 5
Work with LVI for the continuation of key weed and pest taskforces (e.g., Gorse, Blackberry and rabbits). Advocate for new taskforces such as for Bridal Creeper.	4
The Network and groups to acknowledge their local heroes through participation in LVI and other Landcare award programs.	4
Advocate for a Landcare Award to acknowledge young farmers for sustainable farming practices	4
Identify and encourage enthusiastic LC members to 'step up' and take leadership roles within their group, the Network and with LVI.	4
Identify gaps in the professional development or capacity and ability of facilitators, Steering Committee members and group executives to carry out their roles or responsibilities at an appropriate standard. Look to access the resources necessary to overcome these gaps	4
Raise succession planning with each group and the Network Steering Committee at AGM. Assist members with undertaking the process. Seek professional advice and expertise to help guide planning.	4
Develop list of guest speakers/presentations, and provide groups with ideas and contacts to make meetings interesting and inviting	5
Provide farm level agribusiness skills development opportunities	5
Pursue resourcing that provides for workplace transition opportunities the Network can offer to the unemployed	5
Assist groups to engage absentee or recalcitrant landholders	5
Maintain the Network's asset register and monitor maintenance, use and replacement of equipment	5
Retain Knights Norfolk as the Network's accountants	5
Utilise Xero Accounting Software to maintain transaction records and reports	5
Investigate and compare bank fees and account benefits between existing National Australia Bank, St Arnaud Branch accounts and the Bendigo Community Bank, Avoca Branch.	5



Photo: The Fredrick Harold team at Goldsmiths Plantout



Landcare
Buloke and Northern
Grampians