

Welcome all,

LVI finished the financial year with 462 financial Member Groups. Since 30 September another 125 Member Groups have renewed. Those figures include 14 new groups joining during the last year, and 14 more since 30 September.

LVI would like to congratulate member Gillian Tolley (Friends of the Prom) and John Dahlenburg (previously Nhill South Landcare) who were recognised in the 2018 Australia Day Honour.

It has been a busy year for Landcare Victoria Inc, as the inaugural Committee of Management settled in and prepared the foundations for the organisation going forward. We held two strategic workshops, which were very helpful in providing initial directions, and we trust the new Committee of Management will benefit from the recommendations. Throughout this process we have continued to provide a high level of member support and to advocate on behalf of Landcare to our partners.

Members Survey

LVI surveyed members across Victoria to get their views in the lead-up to the inaugural elections. The survey conducted in February 2018 was well received by members who strongly endorsed the move to revitalise Landcare and instil a new determination and strategic direction.

Members urged LVI to:

- maintain a strong voice in advocating to government and community for action to support sustainability and productivity
- provide practical support for members' on-ground works, capacity building among land owners and sharing of knowledge to support sustainable production.
- implement new initiatives to connect groups and build networks between Landcare groups and like-minded community organisations, government and agencies.

A detailed report on the members' survey will be considered by the new Committee of Management and the Members Council.

Partnerships & Advocacy

LVI provided landcare representation for the: Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) Landcare discussions; Biodiversity 2037 workshop; Commissioner for

Environmental Sustainability Reference Committee; Farmers for Climate Action Fellowship; National Biosecurity Workshop; National Landcare Network Board & Members Council; Overseas Landcare Fund committee; Riparian Advisory Forum; VFF Land Management Committee; VicRoads Roadside Environment Committee (VREC); Victorian Carp Stakeholder Reference Group; Victorian Catchment Summit on “Our Catchments Our Communities” Strategy implementation; Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management Magazine Editorial Committee; Victorian Landcare Gateway Committee; and the Victorian Rabbit Action Network.

LVI also had discussions with: Farmers for Climate Action; Victorian Environment Friends Network; Greening Australia; Trust for Nature; Vic Catchments; and the Victorian Farmers Federation. We hope that some of these will result in formal partnerships and we have also made initial approaches to reinvigorate the Landcare relationship with Agriculture Victoria.

We are very pleased to have signed an **MOU with Vic Catchments**, the peak body for the Victorian Catchment Management Authorities. This is the formalisation of the informal partnership which has existed between Landcare and the CMAs for decades, successfully combining our resources to address the vital remedial work our country needs and deserves. The MOU was launched earlier this month and we welcomed the attendance of Anthony Carbines, Parliamentary Secretary for Energy Environment and Climate Change, which is representative of our state government’s continued interest in and support for Landcare in this state.

We also signed an **MOU with Australian Landcare International (ALI)** during the year regarding the Overseas Landcare Fund to support Landcare activities overseas, initially through grants to small-scale community projects. LVI Deputy Chair Dr Kaye Rodden presented at the International Landcare Conference in Japan with ALI support: a very successful event attended by representatives from 11 the 20 Landcare countries.

LVI co-sponsored the Heather Mitchell Fellowship and supported the Intrepid Landcare Leadership Retreat in Gippsland.

LVI has attended a variety of meetings including with the Commission for Children and Young People, Glenelg Hopkins - Environmental Achievers Awards, Insurance for Environmental Volunteers in the Yarra Ranges, North Central Landcare Link-up and the Port Phillip & Westernport Landcare forums, plus a number of Take2 events through Sustainability Victoria of which LVI is a pledge partner.

Landcare Resources and Policy issues

The Australian Government commenced Phase II of the National Landcare Program and conducted Regional Partnership bids. Eligible groups reported significant difficulties in completing the both Smart Farm and Environment grants, and that these programs were oversubscribed is indicative of a level of enthusiasm among the Landcare community that available funding was unable to match. LVI is disappointed that the Australian Government did not allow LVI to sponsor or auspice the applications of our Member Groups and have been assured by Assistant Minister Price’s office that the situation was not intentional and we will be working with the Department of Energy and Environment to address the issue.

As a member of the National Landcare Network (NLN), we have been part of national advocacy regarding the National Landcare program, and have been active in merger discussions between NLN and Landcare Australia.

The Australian Government through Landcare Australia continues to support biennial conferences and the 2018 National Landcare Conference and Awards is in Brisbane on October 10 to 12.

At a State level, Victoria continues to enjoy strong levels on support and LVI values the ongoing partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, with whom we meet regularly. The main focus has been on actioning 2016's Victorian Landcare Program Review and Biodiversity 2037.

While LVI has concerns as to the final shape of the Biodiversity Response Planning, we are pleased to have been involved in the co-design process and that at least three area working groups have Landcare community representation. Working Groups are expected to engage with the relevant stakeholders and communities to "identify and prioritise" projects for investment by the end of May and we encourage landcare members to contact the working groups to ensure this process achieves good outcomes to guide investment.

Across the state LVI has been very pleased to see the new Local Landcare Facilitators come on board as well as the new Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator. One of the actions under the Victorian Landcare Program Review Action Plan was around supporting Landcare employers and employees and after almost twelve months of discussions with DELWP, LVI has agreed in principle to partner with DELWP for the provision of **Landcare Employment and Workplace-Related Advice, Dispute Resolution and Referral Services**: the plan is for this service to be available in July. LVI receives many member queries associated with these issues and this service will also address some of the issues raised at LVI's 2017 Professionals Forum.

In terms of grant processes, LVI has supported over 50 grant applications across several grant programs including the Victorian Government's Climate Change Challenge Innovation Grants, Community Skills grants and DELWP Community and Volunteer Action grants, also the 20 Million Trees and the Smart Farms Small Grants under the National Landcare Program , Melbourne Water and various local council grants.

Community Learning for Environmental Action (CLEA) Project

LVI continued with year 3 of the CLEA project, which focuses on how best to support peer learning and mentoring between grassroots environment groups. Part of the CLEA project has been peer inquiry at the three forums LVI conducted during 2017. There are now a large number of resources available for groups via the resources page of the LVI website, and we are currently looking at strategies for Year 4 of the project. The project is funded by the Natural Resources Conservation League and the Department of Environment's Enabling Landcare grant.

Membership

Member Forums

Two member forums were held 2017 in Lake Cullulleraine and Stuart Mill generously supported respectively by Mallee and North Central CMA, plus the Landcare Professionals Forum at Riddells Creek. The Mallee forum was attended by 60 local and other landcarers and many key partners. A key focus of the event was a demonstration of the success of sustainable farming practices promoted by the landcare community on limiting erosion of arable land in this dry environment.

The Stuart Mill forum attracted around 45 participants in total, around 50% from the North Central region and the rest from across the state. Whilst there were many highlights, the two guest speakers, Penny Roberts and David Jochinke were stand out performers, giving contrasting insights into how to effectively engage community, those in a peri-urban environment and broad acre farmers respectively.

Members also discussed a range of hot topics, including: landcare – valuing what we have; flexibility of funding to fit regional situations; bushtender and offsets; Protection of biodiversity after planting / integration with agriculture; diversity in landcare; climate change; landcare access to public land; water and big dams and irrigators; keeping grassroots volunteerism strong, simple and valued.

LVI also held a Professional Development workshop over 2 days for over 30 Victorian landcare facilitators. A prior survey of the facilitators determined the content of the workshop and attendees valued the opportunity to make peer-to-peer connections, and access to new ideas about how to work in committees and on specific topics of interest.

Group / Network Statistics ¹

Median income among Member Groups fell to \$5,172 with almost half of all groups (49%) operating under \$5,000 p.a. However, the average income is \$39,951, partially explained by the average income of the 60 networks being \$185,520. These income figures reflect a slight decrease at the higher to middle tiers while the number of groups operating under \$2000 p.a. has been steady the last three years at one third. The proportion of total income from grants has remained around 78%.

Average Member Group size held steady at 30. Member Groups engaging contractors held steady to 41% and the proportion of Member Groups employing staff, mostly part time, dropped to 14%.

Member Insurance

We continue to offer our groups a competitive product in public liability, voluntary workers, and management liability insurance.

¹ These figures are from the 17/18 membership year with 22% groups reporting on the previous 16/17 period. Figures for 16/17 membership year: median income \$5,875, ave. income \$43,608, 58 networks ave. income \$201,186, grant income share 77%, ave. group size 30, groups engaging contractors: 40%, groups with employed staff: 17%

Since the last AGM there have been five incidents reported under the insurance, two were potential bullying / sexual harassment claims, two were falls involving volunteers and one is an accident involving an employee which resulted in a WorkCover claim. No claims have been made as yet against the LVI insurance regarding these incidents.

General Activity

Communicating with members continues to our core activity, as we continue to field over 260 member enquiries and correspondence a week from Member Groups by phone, email, letter and fax. We also provided advice to members covering matters of interest to groups including grants, resources, events and news. We have developed a new website www.lvi.org.au with a news feed and provided continued updates on the Gateway and via our facebook page which now has 294 followers.

We also continue to be a partner in the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management Magazine, being part of the editorial team and managing the magazine mailing list including the subscriber confirmation project undertaken in 2017, to which over 10,000 subscribers responded resulting in 6000 postal confirmations and 6000 added to the email notification list.

The introduction of the Child Safe Standards was a big issue for members in 2017 and in response LVI worked with the Commission for Children and Young People to produce the **Child Safety Guidance Note**. This was made available on the web mid-year and publicised in Issue 71 of the Landcare magazine. It is a live document and responses from members have been positive.

LVI also continued the Landcare Voices Oral History Project, commenced as part of the 30th Anniversary celebrations. Interviews have been conducted and are available with: Doug Richens; Ed Adamson; Horrie Poussard; Pam Robinson; Peter Davies; Rob Youl; Robert Edgar; Rosemary Weatherly; Sue Campbell plus the summary slideshow.

In closing, I would like to express my thanks to the LVI Committee of Management, the hard-working sub-committee members, and our staff in the office.

I would particularly like to recognise the outstanding service of the outgoing committee members of Landcare Victoria Inc., namely Peter Berrisford (10 years), Artur Muchow (9 years), Sandy MacKenzie (5 years), Phil Horner (5 years) and Alice Knight (who joined us last year), and also those seeking re-election Dr Kaye Rodden and Mike Haughton.

I thank them for their valued contribution to Landcare, and look forward to seeing some of them as part of the LVI Members Council.

Terry Hubbard

Chair – Landcare Victoria Inc. (LVI)

23 April 2018