



Roger Hardley
Secretary
Victorian Landcare Council
485 Wild Dog Road
Apollo Bay, 3233

Phone: 52 376 272
Email:
wilddogs2@bigpond.com
Date: May 2011

The Review of Caring for Our Country – Australia's natural resource management investment initiative.

Victorian Landcare Council

Submission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Victorian Landcare Council (VLC) is the peak body representing the diverse community of landcare volunteers and coordinators across Victoria. It is an independent voice for all landcarers in the state and one of its key objectives is to advocate for landcare and encourage cooperation and partnerships across all government and non government organisations. The VLC has two elected delegates representing Victoria on the National Landcare Network.

This review of the Federal Government's Caring for Our Country initiative is welcomed and the following submission by the VLC attempts to address the critical question raised in the Discussion Paper (1) circulated,

“How can we support a sustained improvement in the management of Australia's natural resources?”

Pivotal to answering this question we believe is acceptance of the fact that the landcare community is the key to achieving this outcome. Not only because it is the major investor. South Australian research over the ten years from 1997- 2007, for example, has identified that on average across four regional areas, for every dollar of government and non government funds invested in natural resource management (NRM) projects, **four** dollars were supplied by the community. \$15.6 million of government incentive funds was turned into \$59.2 million of cash and in-kind dollar equivalent contribution by the landcare community (2).

But also because the community has the local knowledge and commitment to support sustained action for the long term.

The Australian Landcare Council is currently coordinating a comprehensive consultation process to develop the Australian Framework for Landcare Action Plan that will guide landcare in the future. The Victorian landcare community, led by the VLC, has developed a detailed response to this document, detailing four key roles that we believe landcare can play in landscape change.

These roles are:

**... a facilitator of community learning,
... provider of environmental services,
... planner at landscape level,**

and

... a platform for engagement between communities and government.

In some respects the landcare community is similar to a paddock of arable soil, sown with perennial pasture. The potential to support growth is enormous, all that is required is water and sun and occasional nutrients. We believe that the Caring for Our Country initiative has the capacity to supply these essential ingredients for sustained growth.

The VLC believe that an healthy landcare community is a key ASSET in the landscape, and it should be recognised and invested in accordingly.

This submission is based upon this premise.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustained improvements in NRM will founder without establishing firm and trusting partnerships with key stakeholders.

It is imperative that the Caring for Our Country initiative addresses the need to find a balance between production and conservation in partnership with the community and, this needs to be its key objective.

True long term partnerships which are based on trust can not be prescribed.

If the Caring for Our Country initiative is to be successful in improving the rate of change in natural resource management, it needs to foster a process which supports the independence of a group and its capacity to initiate, and commit to long term NRM programmes .

We see the development of priorities for NRM as an inverted pyramid, with the on ground outcome at the apex, the result of an integrated application of federal, state, regional and local aspirations.

The VLC believe that the regional bodies provide a key link between the community and government and non government stakeholders.