

The Landcare/CMA partnership

The Victorian Landcare Council supports engagement between the Landcare community and CMAs in each region. The Statement of Common Purpose between Landcare and the NRM Regions affirms the commitment of Landcare and regional NRM bodies to:

*Fostering communities that are aware, engaged and active in ensuring Australian landscapes are healthier, better protected, better managed, more resilient and provide essential ecosystem services in a changing world.*¹

Victorian CMAs policy also affirms the value of the partnership between CMAs and Landcare:

*As CMAs we do not own or directly manage natural resources and must achieve agreed outcomes and meet our responsibilities by partnering with those that do. We therefore often act as integrators and brokers – we facilitate, coordinate, partner with, engage and support others as part of our everyday work. We must proactively and effectively engage and work with others to deliver strategies and initiatives which achieve improved catchment health and sustained practice change.*²

A region's Landcare community represents the interests of local communities. The CMA brings a regional perspective. The two work together in setting priorities, accessing funding, and designing programs that change practices and improve landscapes. Just how the ideal of partnership is worked out is a matter for each region. NRM issues and governance arrangements are region-specific—each region goes about its business in its own way, with a long history to the relationship with Landcare.

Dialogue between Landcare and CMAs supports mutual understanding and collaboration.

Regular discussion between CMAs and Landcare Networks. Most CMAs have regular meetings between Landcare support staff and CMA staff. We believe that regular communication is also needed between community management of Landcare Networks and CMA management. Regular forums (see diagram below) allow for issues to be raised, perspectives communicated and appreciated, and agreements established.

We note the success in some regions of quarterly meetings with Chairs of Landcare Networks. Regular meetings develop understanding of agendas at regional and local level, and give attention to the matters we have set out above as these become salient in the flow of NRM business, and before they become problematic. Discussion with Landcare leaders and Landcare staff are equally important. Agendas should be set jointly by Landcare and CMA.

Regional Landcare forums. Landcare members will hear about the outcomes of regular discussion between CMAs and Landcare Networks, but we believe that an annual gathering of Landcare members and staff with CMA staff and management has value on three counts. First, when so much of NRM business is conducted virtually, it allows people to meet each other face-to-face and get reacquainted with person behind the email address. Second, it allows reflection on and celebration on achievements in the partnership between Landcare and CMAs. Third, it allows for discussion within the wider regional NRM community of problematic issues or opportunities that require larger shifts in attitudes and working relationships.

¹ Statement of Common Purpose, National Landcare Network and the National NRM Regions' Working Group, 2012.

² Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework for Victoria's Catchment Management Authorities, Draft October 2012, Victorian Catchment Management Forum, p 2.

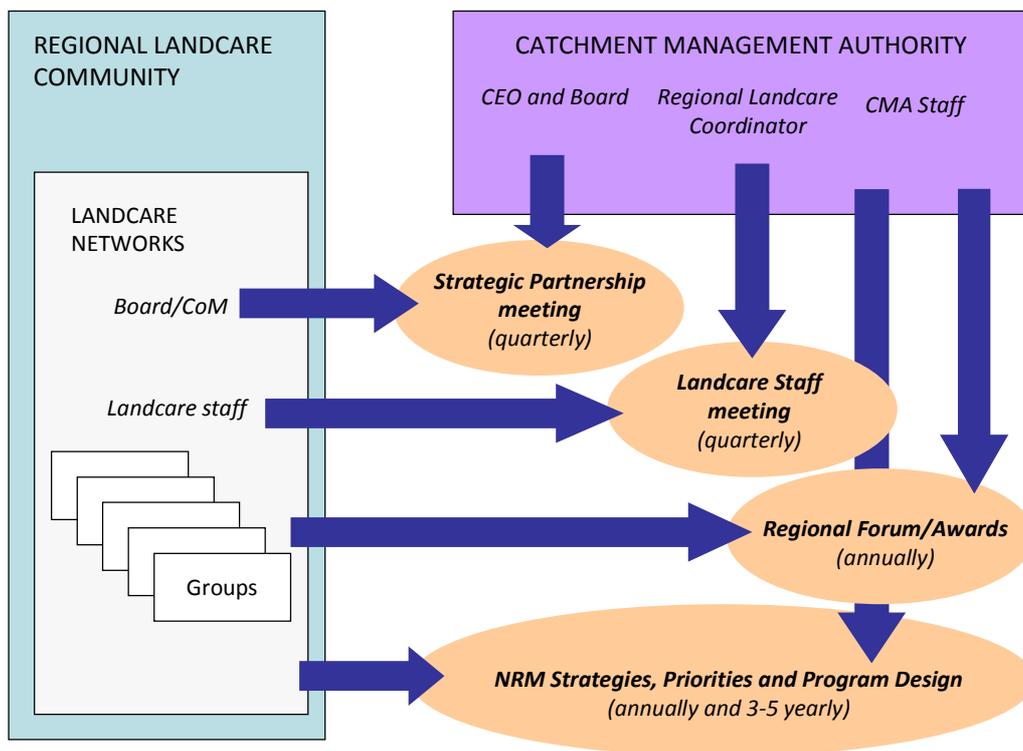


Figure 1: Settings for dialogue between Landcare and CMA

Matter for discussion between a CMA and the Landcare community. Discussion with VLC delegates suggests several matters for attention between a CMA and its Landcare community.

Funding for Landcare's presence in communities and landscapes. Local Landcare groups have low financial overheads, and many CMAs provide an annual contribution to operating costs. Landcare Networks, however, have significant on-going costs to maintain their presence in communities. That presence provides a platform for delivery of projects as these develop within local communities and as government priorities allow. CMA/Landcare discussion should work towards a viable arrangement for baseline funding, including joint proposals to government on this.

Models for delivery of CMA programs need discussion, with a view to creating opportunities for Landcare participation in delivery. We note that some Landcare Networks have developed service agreements with their CMAs, providing some continuity of funding for these Networks.

Sharing of information on trends affecting NRM. CMAs can share information on recent and likely future developments in NRM funding, so that Landcare Networks and groups can understand and prepare for this. Landcare Networks can share information on current issues amongst landholders and townships.

Consultation on regional planning. Collaboration in design of consultation processes associated with planning will ensure communities understand planning tasks, and have opportunity for discussion within their local communities, and with CMA planners. Landcare Networks can identify specific local issues and the best way to bring these into discussion in communities.

The place of local planning. The preference of funders over the last decade for regional, State and national priorities at the expense of local priorities has marginalised local NRM planning. How best to link local planning with regional planning is an open question. CMAs are seeking

to integrate planning for assets into plans for landscapes.³ With their history of planning at local level, Landcare groups and Networks can assist this integration of action across assets classes, and within particular communities.

Design of programs. Landcare Networks know what has worked and not worked with NRM programs in their communities and landscapes in the past, and they know the current attitudes and readiness in local communities. This knowledge should be part of the design at regional level of programs to influence landholders. Discussion should include:

- the mix of information, education and incentives that will be most effective;
- learning from previous programs; and,
- the role of Landcare in delivery and evaluation of program outcomes.

Management of projects. Contracting for project delivery is conducted between individual Networks/groups and a CMA, but standard administrative arrangements for projects negotiated with CMAs are a matter on which Landcare Networks have opinions and can suggest improvements.

Data sharing. Landcare Networks and groups provide information in their funding bids, and CMAs use some of this to build a picture of NRM activity in a region. Landcare access to this data should be negotiated between CMAs and Landcare organisations, to support Landcare planning.

Assessment of engagement. When there is agreement on the level of engagement for an NRM task, CMAs and Landcare Networks should agree on methods to assess that engagement. This will enable discussion on difficulties directly between the CMA programs and Landcare Networks concerned, and secure recent improvements in the partnership. We suggest that assessment be made at least bi-annually of all aspects of the CMA/Landcare partnership, with discussion of matters with unusually high and low assessments.

The VLC's role

The VLC has a role to:

- develop with an understanding of collaboration with Landcare in each region, through discussion with VLC regional delegates;
- inform the Victorian Landcare community of effective models of collaboration between CMAs and regional Landcare communities;

Jointly with Victorian CMA CEOs and Chairs, the VLC has a role to:

- identify aspects of collaboration that are ripe for improvement, and provide an opinion on strengths and limitations of current collaboration;
- document models of collaboration between CMAs and Landcare, on specific matters, and communicate these to the Landcare community across Victoria, and to CMA staff.

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Comment to ross.colliver@bigpond.com

³ Ryan S, O'Neill D, Chrystal J and McKee J (2013) *Regional NRM Planning in Australia. What is it? Where is it heading?* National NRM Regions Working Group, Canberra.