

BRIEFING NOTE 1

1st October 2009

This is the first in a series of what will be irregular briefing notes on the activities of the Victorian Landcare Council (VLC). The objective of these notes will be to keep the Victorian Landcare community informed of the actions of the VLC and provide an outlet for discussion around the issues which the VLC has engaged in. Your comments are therefore both welcome and valued.

REPORTS

Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission – VLC prepared a Landcare submission to the enquiry, emphasizing the value of community engagement through facilitators/coordinators and recommending the Landcare model. The submission is available on the Royal Commission website under Victorian Landcare Council.

Caring for our Country (CfoC) Business Plan – a very strong and positive submission was made to Minister Burke on the unintended consequences of the CfoC process which has seen so many highly valued f/c staff now lost to Landcare. Informal feedback is that this has been well received and there will be changes in the future program. For a copy contact pipeter@aapt.net.au and we'll get one to you.

DEVELOPMENTS

We have Task Forces working on;

1. the economic contribution of the volunteers in Landcare and the extent of the leverage this gives to the public investment
2. bringing together a Landcare/VLC "showbag" of information, input and developments which we can circulate to policy and decision making people in government and industry
3. developing a history of Landcare success for inclusion in presentations and promotions of Landcare
4. preparation of a prospectus for government funders to present the case that the public funding is an investment in the infrastructure of our nation, its soils, its productivity and its biodiversity

The VLC Rules and Process subcommittee has been asked to work on process and procedure matters in preparation for the development of a Manual of Procedures. A MoP will;

1. provide guidelines for the use of the VLC name, published materials, banners and any approval/ sponsorship of any event
2. develop process for both Council and Committee of Management meetings to ensure we are productive and responsive to all input
3. develop a transparent and easy to use pathway for the Landcare community to bring issues to the VLC and for those issues to be dealt with properly
4. develop an archiving policy and procedures to ensure early records and history are maintained but unnecessary old records are disposed of

We are very concerned about the outcome of the CfoC Business Plan and are seeking ways to help ensure Victoria achieves a better outcome from this process in the coming years. We are active in engaging with and supporting initiatives in this effort and would like as much feed back and contact on this issue as the Landcare community has available. We see a role as a clearing house for local and regional information on both successful and failed CfoC bids and the processes which were used to prepare them.

We are currently seeking funding for;

1. a laptop computer and fuel expenses to enable office holders to travel to Landcare community meetings and events
2. the expenses involved in facilitating a series of 'round table' discussion meetings which will bring together a range of Landcare stakeholders and Landcare community activists to develop better outcomes and responses to the issues of the day

AGM OUTCOMES

The VLC had its first AGM on July 11 and there were some changes. Office holders in 2009-10 are;

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| Chair | Peter Huthwaite (PPWPCMA) | pipeter@aapt.net.au |
| Deputy Chair | Peter Schwarz (GBCMA) | grimsthorpe@bigpond.com |
| Secretary | Roger Hardley (CCMA) | wilddogs2@bigpond.com |
| Treasurer | Julia Gibson (PPWPCMA) | jegibson@tpg.com.au |

There are also six members of the Committee of Management;
Ross Garton, Irene Butterworth, Ross McDonald, Barry Elliott, Judy Griffiths, Geoff McFarlane

We welcomed two new delegates to the Council but we still seek two delegates each from the Mallee CMA and West Gippsland CMA regions and one delegate from North East CMA region. We are very keen to bring these regions up to full representation and seek help in finding appropriate delegates who can help make a difference for Landcare in their region.

THE VLC OUTLOOK

It has been a tumultuous year for Landcare and for the VLC. We've been formed for less than a year, the year in which profound and difficult change has come to Landcare and to our nation's economy. The old cliché that when the going gets tough the tough get going has never been more appropriate and we are going to need to be tough. Funding for Landcare and natural resource management in general will be competing with health, education, infrastructure developments and all the community's wants and needs. We will face fierce competition in a period of ever tighter budgets and flat public revenues. We know our issue has never been more important to Australia; climate change will place immense stress on the viability and sustainability of our agricultural resources and our biodiversity.

There is another cliché about times of funding constraints; it's the best time to make decisions, we think about them more and are more attuned to the potential downside. So now is a great time for us to be thinking about the future strategic direction for Landcare and sharpening our arguments for priorities. We know our model works well, we have some very serious runs on the board and we have a good history of flexibility and adaptability, let's face it, we've lasted over 20 years in Victoria. This is a great foundation on which to help build community resilience to the impacts of climate change, and this will be the biggest game in town (and country) for many years to come.

We look forward to all your comments and feed back.

For feed-back and comment check out our Landcare Gateway site or email to pipeter@aapt.net.au

Peter Huthwaite
Chair

Roger Hardley
Secretary Phone: 52 376 272

For and on behalf of the Victorian Landcare Council

