

# Victorian Landcare Council

## Briefing Note 5

### *Current Business*



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*In this Briefing Note, we update your current business: the VLN merger with the VLC, concern about Landcare 's place in the Australian Government's Carbon Farming Initiative, the rollout of the new Victorian Landcare facilitators, and consultation on new Regional Catchment Strategies.*

**Victorian Landcare Network and Victorian Landcare Council merge.** The Victorian Landcare Network, which represents the interests of Landcare staff working with Landcare groups and Networks, decided at its AGM to incorporate with the VLC. Progress on its objectives will be stronger through a merger with the Victorian Landcare Council, and the Council welcomes Landcare staff to a joint effort in promoting the interests of community Landcare.

The interim delegates on the VLC Council are Neil McInnes (coordinator at Upper Barwon Landcare Network), Trevor Barker (previously, president of the Victorian Landcare Network), Matt Stephenson (long experience in pest plants and animals in Gippsland), Moragh McKay (Bass Coast Landcare Network) and Leigh Blackmore (Project Platypus, Wimmera). Landcare staff will have two positions on the committee of management, filled by Matt Stephenson and Trevor Barker. The VLC's Rules of Association will be changed to include paid professionals as members.

The VLC will propose to DSE that the Council now run the annual Landcare forum, previously undertaken by the VLN as part of statewide Landcare training and subsidized by DSE. In 2012, the forum is scheduled to be held in Corangamite, and in 2013 in East Gippsland. A working party of Trevor Barker, Kaye Rodden, Geoff McFarlane and Matt Stephenson will oversee planning for the forum, to be held in September.

**Landcare sidelined in Carbon Farming Initiative.** The National Landcare Network represents peak community Landcare organisations or bodies from each State and Territory. At its quarterly meeting in November, a key issue was the Carbon Farming Initiative. The Prime Minister stated in her election policy that, " Landcare, the trusted volunteer organisation which has been working with our farmers for the past 21 years, will be funded to help farmers by providing information on how to further benefit under the initiative. Landcare will also advise farmers if there are opportunities to ``pool'' with nearby properties and catchment areas. It means that if farmers share parts of less productive land, they could create carbon estates and share the profits."

To date there have been no discussions with Landcare in relation to this, and it appears as if the Regional Landcare Facilitators (employed by the Australian Government) are now expected to take on this Landcare role. The NLN will be pursuing further with the relevant Departments and Ministers. The Victorian Landcare Council is also concerned at the absence of Landcare involvement in the roll out of the CFI, and the lack of information about how landholders can be involved. The Council has decided to coordinate a statewide workshop on the CFI.

**New Landcare facilitators.** The 60 new positions are now approved and allocated around the regions. Landcare networks and groups are busy sorting out employment arrangements and advertising. The addition of new staff will create some turmoil and excitement, and this will be a time when old Landcare members can step in to help new staff get up to speed rapidly, and smooth the way for integration with existing staff. As part of this effort, the VLC will hold a workshop for Landcare staff to welcome and incorporate both new and existing landcare coordinators to the VLC family. The workshop will also provide a briefing on the VLC's role and its position on the role of Landcare in NRM, drawing on the VLC submission to the Action Plan for Landcare.

**Consultation on the new Regional Catchment Strategies.** The CMAs are renewing their Regional Catchment Strategies (RCS), with final documents due in the Minister's office in September. This is a tight timeline for development of a technically complex document, now is the time for community Landcare to make sure that there is adequate consultation with communities. In two regions that we know of, CMAS will be taking a draft out for community consultation, in one case, seeking comment via a website. There needs to be opportunity for the CMA to sit down with informed local landholders and discuss how regional priorities should play out within each local landscape. Face-to-face discussions build trust and understanding, and at this point in the planning cycle, CMAs need to invest in time talking and listening to the community. Of course, Landcare groups and Networks are a well-informed and trusted point of access to community networks. The Victorian Landcare Council urges CMAs to talk with their Landcare Networks in the design of the consultation process for the RCS.

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