

# Victorian Landcare Council

## Briefing Note 6

### *Policy*



VLC CHAIRMAN, Terry Hubbard, [terjan.hubbard@gmail.com](mailto:terjan.hubbard@gmail.com)  
 SECRETARY, Roger Hardley, [wilddogs2@bigpond.com](mailto:wilddogs2@bigpond.com)

### **The VLC Strategic Plan**

*The VLC is currently developing a Strategic Plan to guide its activities in the medium term. The “Objectives” and “Priorities” described below are key components of this plan, which is currently in Draft form. If you would like to contribute to the discussion or comment on the contents below, please contact the VLC secretariat.*

**Strategic priorities for the Victorian Landcare Council.** In workshop sessions at its recent general meetings, the full Council of delegates from community and staff have been pinpointing the issues that most need attention to strengthen community Landcare in Victoria over the next couple of years. We have been guided in the first instance by our objectives:

1. Recognition and resourcing of Landcare as a facilitator of community learning and action.
2. Close collaboration between Landcare, regional bodies and government programs in the design and implementation of community consultation on NRM issues and plans.
3. Active participation by Landcare in the design and evaluation of integrated NRM projects at landscape scale.
4. Participation of Landcare members in the development of NRM policy.
5. Support and ongoing training for Landcare staff and networks.

Looking at current opportunities and pressures in natural resource management in Victoria, the Council has identified five Strategic Priorities.

1. **Lift the priority of NRM issues in national and State policy and resourcing.**  
 Environmental issues are a high priority to the citizens of Australia: the priority NRM is given in National and State funding is nowhere near as high, nor high enough to make a difference to the sustainability of landscapes and farming systems. While some ecosystems have been protected, most continue to decline. All face radical challenges from increasing human use and abrupt changes in environmental conditions. The resources dedicated by government to reach sustainable landscapes needs to increase.

2. **Make the case for longer funding cycles.** If there's one thing that sucks the life blood out of a voluntary Landcare group or Network, it is the constant pressure to bid for dollars, in a funding system of annual cycles, with criteria that change constantly, and require detailed information that seems unrelated to the outcomes sought. Competitive tendering is not at issue, and submission guidelines and processes are getting better, but the annual cycle is still profoundly inefficient. Landscapes change over decades, and require long-term action, so it is long-term action that needs to be funded.
3. **Make the case for NRM programs that engage, educate and support all community members in taking action for healthy, productive landscapes.** In the 1980s, NRM policy embraced Landcare as a way to mobilise broad community participation to deal with land degradation. In the 1990s, community action became part of integrated catchment management. In the last decade, targeted investment for biophysical priorities has become the dominant policy in NRM, and support for broad community participation has been cut. This is misguided. Sustained change in landscapes requires targeted public investment *and* ongoing encouragement for private landholders to improve their land management and contribute to environmental projects with public benefit.
4. **Press for formal approval and implementation of the National Action Plan for Landcare.** The VLC's view is that top-down management organised around technical responses to biophysical problems - the dominant paradigm in Australian NRM - needs to be complemented by strong support for bottom-up, community-based responses to environmental problems. The Action Plan developed by the Australian Landcare Council needs to shift from being a draft, to formal implementation in the NRM plans and resourcing of the Commonwealth, and all States and Territories. Australia's NRM system needs to re-engage with the highly effective community participation offered by Landcare.
5. **Negotiate training and learning for Landcare support staff, and information on employment of staff.** Paid staff are a bedrock for community Landcare. They stay informed about the administrative requirements in the NRM system, handle a lot of paperwork, and get behind innovative ideas coming from the community. They need solid support through training that builds the skills of new and experienced staff. Organisations employing Landcare staff need to understand what they need, and manage them appropriately.

February 2012