

Victorian Landcare Council

Policy Briefing Note 25

We're mid-way through a busy year and it's time for an up-date on one of the VLC's capacity building projects, **CLEA** - *Community Learning for Environmental Action* - our peer learning and mentoring project.



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Peer learning and mentoring

- You're on your Committee of Management, struggling with the normal problems - how to connect more deeply to your community, how to keep your committee motivated, how to find money, how to get government agencies working with you, not against you. Imagine what it would be like if you could talk with someone on a Landcare committee of management that has already walked the path you're on.
- You're a Landcare Coordinator, facing one of those everyday tough situations that come up working in community. Image if you had someone you could phone up, who understood what you were talking about, who had a few ideas themselves, but who could give you room to think things through for yourself.
- Imagine what would happen in Landcare right across the State if you could hear about groups and networks innovating on things you're working on. Imagining picking up the phone and getting the inside story from the person who was behind that innovation.

CLEA is a 3 year Victorian Landcare Council project, funded by the Natural Resources Conservation League and the VLC, that aims to work out how to support peer learning and mentoring between grassroots environment groups. Our focus is knowledge on the people side of Landcare, knowledge about organising community action, collaborating with partners, and influencing decision makers.

Our approach is to trial tools, find out what works, and keep asking questions. We're looking to use what is already there in the Landcare community - our capacities, relationships and the places where we meet and talk together.



Kerstie Lee with Goulburn Broken region facilitators



Green Army discussion at the May Dunkeld Forum

What have we discovered in our first year?

Committees of Management are a good place for peer learning. No-one's got much time for extra meetings, but CoM meetings keep ticking along. They're a good place to strengthen peer learning. CLEA's aim is to put learning on the COM standing agenda, alongside on-ground projects and the Treasurer's report.

Stories. Dr Ross Colliver, the Project Organiser, has been talking with Chairs and staff of Landcare Networks about the recent achievements of Networks. At [Stories](#) you'll find first-hand accounts from the frontline of Landcare, plus audio pieces from the interviews. The Story/Lessons Learned format is a neat way to communicate what Networks are learning, and some strong [themes](#) are emerging.

Questions Without Easy Answers. A lot of Landcare's knowledge about organising local action is in-your-bones, tacit knowledge. How do we get that knowledge articulated? [Questions Without Easy Answers](#) is a way to work out the questions that Landcare needs to start asking, questions about how to engage more deeply with your community, generate support from your partners, and get your views heard by decision makers. We're now introducing QWEA to Landcare Committees of Management, because that's a great place to getting talking with people who want to find better ways to make a difference.



Peter Greig, Upper Barwon Landcare Network



Darrell Powell & Lisette Mill, Basalt to Bay Network

Ask Around. Who can you really talk to about the nitty-gritty of supporting action in communities? We each have personal networks of individuals, but imagine if we pooled out networks. Ask Around gets people to map their network, and work out who they can talk with to support their inquiry.

Invitations. You're invited to be part of CLEA. We're inviting grassroots Landcare leaders to talk about what's really going on as they organise projects and collaborate with government agencies. We're inviting Committees of Management, the workhorses of Landcare, to find their Questions and start using their networks to get answers. And there's a new invitation out to talk [over the fence](#) with other environmental activists.

In progress. Hear recent news, random thoughts and well-reasoned strategies, as they evolve, at our blog ["In progress"](#).

Our annual report to NRCL is now submitted, along with what we want to do in [Year Two](#). Keep track of what we're doing at <https://sites.google.com/site/landcareplanning/home>. Or call Ross Colliver, 0411 226 519, and have a conversation.