

# Victorian Landcare Council

## Activity Briefing Note 20

The new Labor Government in Victoria will continue investment in Landcare facilitators. This Note updates you on how we made our case, and what's next in VLC support for grassroots Landcare.



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### First, the good news!

"The Minister for Environment, Climate Change & Water, Lisa Neville, has committed \$3.2 million to ensure the funding of Victoria's 68 Landcare facilitator positions for another four years:

*"Local volunteers know what needs to be done to get the best outcome for their region. We are supporting facilitators to empower locals to act for their environment. We will work to improve and extend the coverage of this program, making sure that facilitators can continue to grow their role in our communities."*

Thanks to those groups and networks which have provided us with examples of the impact of facilitators—a good example really drives home the message.

### Behind the scenes

The VLC, in collaboration with FTLA, has spent two years making the case for landcare facilitators with the major political parties in Victoria. We said:

*Facilitators help communities get more done  
Facilitators strengthen connections within communities  
Landcare is a platform for long-term change*

We've reminded our politicians that with 630+ groups, 67 networks and approximately 40,000 members, Landcare is a powerful force. Landcare groups cover around 80 per cent of the private land area and around 60 per cent of the total State. The benefit is there in dollar terms—\$1 from the government calls out \$5 of private investment – and it's there in the social well-being of individuals and communities.

The upshot of our letters and personal meetings with politicians was that we went to the election with a promise from both the Coalition and the Labor Party to maintain funding for Landcare facilitators.

After the election, we wrote to the new Environment Minister to congratulate her and offer our support for implementing her Party's promise of on-going support for the Landcare Facilitator Initiative. In a follow up face-to-face meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Anthony Carbines, we raised three issues for the Minister:

1. that the roll out of the next phase of State support for landcare facilitators needed to be done quickly, so momentum in groups and networks is maintained and staff weren't forced to find other positions;
2. the need for Landcare policy that bridges government portfolios and integrates community and government action on productivity and sustainable landscapes;
3. the need for development of a Business Case for Landcare, as a collaboration between the community sector and government, to establish the costs and benefits of Landcare's contribution to natural resource management in Victoria.

Soon after that meeting, we met with Ingrid Duncan, Director, Environment & Community Program, in the new Department Environment, Water, Land & Planning. Given that guidelines for a new round of positions were not yet released, we suggested to her that the current Facilitator program be extended, to retain existing staff and the momentum of projects. During the next financial year, consultation and evaluation could arrive at ways to improve the coverage of groups by available facilitator positions.

We're pleased to hear that the Minister has now not only put this in place but extended the government's commitment for all 68 facilitator positions for 4 years from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. During the first year the minister also committed to review the program to fill any gaps and build a case for increased investment in landcare in the future.

## What's next?

**This Business Case for Landcare** is a major focus for us at the VLC. We need to build up understanding, in the government side of natural resource management (NRM), of how Landcare works. Instead of complaining that decision makers don't understand Landcare and what it needs, we need to set out what Landcare needs in comprehensive terms. The Business Case will make the case for investing in an holistic Landcare Program in Victoria over the next 5 years. It will outline what we do, how we do it and the impact Landcare activities have in social and ecological landscapes. *Contact Moragh Mackay, moragh@vic.chariot.net.au*

**Strengthening our Voice (SoV)** is a four year project to build a stronger Voice for Landcare in Victoria. The project is funded via the National Landcare Programme to increase the capacity of Landcare networks across Australia. We're on the way to putting in place the VLC's communication and management systems, and we're working with regional Landcare communities to back the things they decide will strengthen Landcare within each region. *Contact Ian Maclagan, iwmaclagan@gmail.com*

**Community Learning for Environmental Action - CLEA** - is a 3 year Victorian Landcare Council project, funded in part by the Natural Resources Conservation League, to support peer learning and mentoring between grassroots environment groups. CLEA is developing a suite of peer learning and mentoring processes that are low cost and easy to use, and testing these within the Landcare community. See [the CLEA site](https://sites.google.com/site/landcareplanning/home)  
<https://sites.google.com/site/landcareplanning/home>

**VLC Forum in Dunkeld, 8-10 May**, see <http://www.vlc.org.au/> A great way to meet people passionate about making Landcare a strong force in communities and the NRM system.