

# Victorian Landcare Council

## Briefing Note 23



More on the VLC Regional Forum in Dunkeld, May 8-10, where delegates from just about all regions in Victoria convened in an event organised by the Glenelg Hopkins Landcare community, at the Grampians Retreat on the edge of the National Park. We had 60 people come and go over the weekend, including Rod Taylor, State Manager of the Landcare Program, and Jim Adams, Executive Officer of the National Landcare Network. Two thirds of participants were community members, and the rest were Landcare staff who nonetheless took time from their weekends to contribute.

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### Strategic planning session, Friday afternoon

The weekend got under way with a Strategic Planning Session led by facilitator Ross Colliver. Working groups for each of the VLC's four Portfolios—Advocacy, Partnerships, Capacity and Governance—came up with the most important strategies for the next two years. These now go to VLC CoM, which will finalise the VLC Strategy. Thanks to Dr Peter Greig, Upper Barwon Landcare Network, for his notes from this session, and to those who came in especially to give us a diverse mix of views. Here are the big ideas that came through.

<b>Advocacy</b> <i>Encourage governments, other organisations and the public to recognise and resource Landcare. Contribute to natural resource management policy.</i>
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<b>Speak directly to politicians.</b> Make personal contact. Tell them what Landcare is doing in their electorate, and the policy issues they might speak out about.
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<b>Develop a policy platform for Landcare.</b> The VLC has been reacting to others' policy positions—it needs to sort out its own position, working from the grassroots up.
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<b>Research and document Landcare's impacts.</b> Put this into a Business Case that says what Landcare delivers and what it needs.
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<b>Partnerships</b> <i>Facilitate collaboration between Landcare, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), local government, and State and Federal governments</i>
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<b>Make politicians aware of Landcare,</b> through personal contact & examples. The VLC's "Champions" project has recruited 5 Federal MPs; that process needs to be replicated with State MPs.
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<b>Talk regularly with Chairs and CEOs of CMAs.</b> Work out how the partnership can use the strengths of both organisations and drive the overall NRM effort.
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<b>Connect to local government.</b> Connect through the Victorian Local Governance Association, which is interested in social and economic outcomes in communities.
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<b>Capacity</b>	<i>Build the capacity of grassroots Landcare</i>
<p><b>Build the Landcare family.</b> Create ways for networks and groups to connect with each other and draw on each other's expertise.</p> <p><b>Meet face-to-face,</b> where Landcarers and staff can share their stories and their knowledge, and inspire each other.</p> <p><b>Find the training needs,</b> for staff and volunteers.</p>	
<b>Governance.</b>	<i>Build a strong state-wide and regionally representative organisation</i>
<p><b>Make politicians aware of Landcare.</b> Make personal contact, give examples of what is happening locally, keep them up to date with Landcare issues.</p> <p><b>Communicate what the VLC is doing.</b> Members and potential members aren't hearing enough. To reach younger people, multi-channel communications are required. And a unifying message is needed – going beyond the Landcare logo.</p> <p><b>Expand membership, and develop policy from the grassroots up.</b> To really represent the grass roots, membership needs to expand. The VLC needs to consult its membership on policy positions.</p>	

### Friday night networking and Saturday's Field Trip

Bush poet and Port Phillip and Westernport delegate Mike Cleeland entertained us over dinner. Mike and his partner Pip, who illustrates his books, very generously donated all profits from the weekend sale of their books to support an initiative of Australian Landcare International (ALI). With other donations, \$500 was raised to support a project initiated in Uganda by Jimmy Musiime, President of the Kabale Agroforestry Network. Jimmy attended the Forum and gave a fascinating insight into how landcare is getting underway in Uganda.



Saturday morning's field trip to Bill and Cee Blackwell's property "Corea" was enjoyed by almost 40 delegates who were welcomed by Craig Oliver, chair of the Panyabyr Landcare Group. The Blackwell property is a showcase for biodiversity and agroforestry planting, habitat preservation and sustainable land management. Surrounded by the magnificent vegetation on "Corea", Dave Nichols of the Glenelg Hopkins CMA explained the "Woodland Birds on Farms" monitoring project being run by the GHCMA in Panyabyr and Upper Hopkins areas.

### Workshops, Saturday afternoon

In our regular showcase of Landcare Partnerships, we heard first from Bill Sharp and Bill Weatherly about the Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group, and the role of the Norman Wettenhall Foundation

in supporting that group. Bill, who is on the Foundation's Board, pointed out that you can't just take philanthropic money, you have to focus on what the funder wants. Then Dave Nichols from Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Leigh Blackmore, Project Platypus, discussed the way the Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink has evolved as a collaboration between two CMA regions and several landcare groups. Planning first established broad purpose and priorities, each partner then seeks out funding for the areas where they can make a contribution. They run their own projects, using their own contracting and incentive arrangements, but they act in alignment with the larger plan. Independent action produces collective impact!

In the next session, "Getting government to act on weeds", Geoff Rollinson, Heytesbury District Landcare described how cooperation developed between agencies to deal with weeds in a vegetation corridor on the coast. Matt Stephenson, Bass Coast Landcare, set out his **4 Prongs to success**— 1) harnessing "Over the Fence" peer pressure, 2) community projects, 3) the use of Shire Local Laws and Rangers for weeds in and near towns, and 4) compliance notices from DELWP under the Catchment and Land Protection (CaLP) Act 1994. We then applied the principles we had just heard to the issue of roadside weeds in the Glenelg Hopkins area, where weeds threaten remnant volcanic plains grassland.

We closed the afternoon with a panel discussion on *The Green Army*. Two Green Army projects up and running in the region (with Basalt to Bay Landcare Network and Upper Mount Emu Landcare Network) gave us their highs and lows, and we heard from Landcare projects being planned in other regions. Conservation Volunteers Australia appear to be doing a great job managing their projects.



Many Landcarers have had misgivings based on past experience with similar programs. The discussion confirmed that the Green Army can be hard work, but it can get results. The secret seems to lie in being persistent about what you want, at the planning and implementation stage, and being prepared to put in a lot of time and resources to get the work flow set up for the teams.

The Australian Government is resolute in its commitment to the Green Army, and it has a big budget. We've heard that the program is prepared to be flexible on many of the program specifications, so if you want work done, take your idea to one of the program deliverers and see what you can negotiate.

## Saturday evening

After dinner guest speaker Liz Fenton took us deep into the glories of Volcanic Plains grasslands. Liz, who lives at Hamilton, is passionate about native grasslands and the fauna they support. She gave us heartbreaking examples of how ignorance and incompetence on the part of landholders and local government is damaging grasslands, but also uplifting examples of good things happening for grasslands, when all partners such as local government and CFA are aligned. Woorndoo Landcare Group is recreating a section of native grassland on a previously cropped roadside, and the Grassy Groundcover Restoration Project is using direct seeding techniques in Wickliffe and Glenthompson areas with Chatsworth nurseryman David Franklin supplying locally collected seed and expertise.

The evening ended with a generous solo performance of country music originals and standards from local Gunditjmara man Johnny Lovett. Earlier in the day, Johnny had welcomed delegates to Country, talking about the need to connect young people to Country. He is pleased that the Landcare community is working to “care for country” and in response to our discussion on weeds, observed that “when we cared for the country, we didn’t have a weed problem”.



## Council meeting, Sunday morning

The business end of the weekend was the Full Council meeting, when delegates from each region sit down with the Committee of Management and make decisions. The meeting was well-organised by Executive Secretary Kaye Rodden, and ably chaired by President Terry Hubbard. We sat down at 8.30 and were done by 11.00



**Thanks** to the local Glenelg Hopkins delegates, Una Allender, with support from Wayne Bryce, for putting the local program together, and to Ross Colliver for facilitating the strategy session and workshops. Thanks to Commonwealth Department of Environment for funding for the Forum, and support from Glenelg Hopkins CMA, both financially and in-kind. Grampians Estate winery donated the wine given to visiting presenters,

We look forward to seeing you at the AGM, 29th August, in Melbourne, and then in East Gippsland for the next Regional Forum later this year. Plan for the trip!