



# AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY LANDCARE FUTURES *framework*

[ 2022-2027 ]



# AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY LANDCARE FUTURES FRAMEWORK

*Investing in the grassroots  
Australian Landcare  
Community to provide critical  
capacity for Australia's natural  
resource management  
programs, delivering social and  
environmental outcomes for  
communities and landscapes.*

**\$48million investment over five years**  
in addition to, and complementing, the  
existing Regional Land Partnership  
program.

There has never been a more important time or greater opportunity to support local communities to contribute to community-based natural resource management and community resilience.



*The National Landcare Network acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.*

# PURPOSE

## Greater Local Engagement is needed to;



**Revitalise and mobilise community networks, knowledge and actions for community-based natural resource management.**

**Ensure land managers are well placed to participate in carbon markets and emerging agricultural and biodiversity stewardship programs**

**Assist delivery of the national drought strategy, the threatened species strategy, and the national soils strategy and to shift the needle on the un sustainable development goals, and un decade on ecosystem restoration, as well as working towards Australia's 2030 emissions reduction target.**

The Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework has been produced by the National Landcare Network (NLN) on behalf of its members. The Framework is being co-designed by the National Landcare Network together with the peak State and Territory Landcare Organisations (STOs) who form a key part of the Australian Landcare Ecosystem (Figure 1, see also Appendix for a description of Australian Landcare organisations). If adopted, further co-design will occur together with Government Agencies (DAWE) and other Landcare stakeholders.

For over 30 years Landcare has delivered the Australian Community and successive Australian Governments exceptional value and return on investment. Not only in terms of natural resource management, but also community resilience and health and well-being. Throughout 2021, the National Landcare Network with State and Territory Organisations have been listening to the Australian Landcare community. We have heard a loud and united call for targeted investment in Landcare to enhance capacity into the future. Investment to ensure Landcare is partnering with Government to deliver grassroots natural resource management programs for the benefit of communities, the environment and for productive landscapes.

Targeted investment in the Australian Landcare Community will mobilise one of the largest community-based environmental volunteer movements in Australia at a time when it is needed most. Investment to strengthen the social and natural capital outcomes of community Landcare, enabling grassroots climate action, participation in environmental markets, contributing to land stewardship from the ground up.





Key to the **Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework** is a proposed \$48million investment over five years in addition to, and complementing, the existing Regional Land Partnership program. The Framework is underpinned by three priority program areas:

### Landcare Futures Community Investment Program

Investing directly in strengthening the capacity of local communities to deliver surge capacity against national, regional and local natural resource management (NRM) priorities. Delivering climate action when and where it is most needed – in our communities, now.



### Landcare Futures Environmental Markets Leadership Program

Building the leadership capacity with a focus on indigenous and community-based NRM leadership for landholder participation in environmental (carbon plus) market mechanisms and opportunities.



### Landcare Futures Innovation Program

Providing a platform for Landcare Futures knowledge sharing and information exchange across Australia driven for and by trusted grassroots landcare networks. A Landcare Futures Facilitator will deliver the national program & build linkages across the three priority program areas.



Implementing the **Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework** will result in targeted, efficient, and effective local actions, at regional scales that build community resilience through driving local solutions to meet today's social, and environmental challenges. This investment will build capacity of the grassroots network providing critical surge capacity for Australia's natural resource management programs.



### GRASSROOTS LANDCARERS

(est 160,000+)



### LANDCARE GROUPS + NETWORKS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

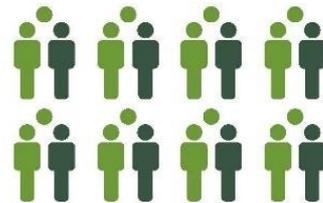
(est 5,000+)



### NATIONAL LANDCARE NETWORK

STATE & TERRITORY MEMBERS (8 members)

MEMBERS COUNCIL (24 representatives)



### NATIONAL LANDCARE NETWORK

8 Board Members

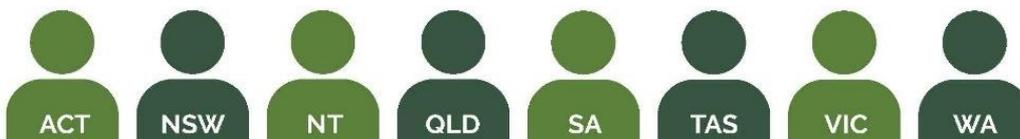


FIGURE 1: AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL LANDCARE NETWORK – HOW WE WORK

# BACKGROUND

## The Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework

is being developed by the National Landcare Network on behalf of its State and Territory Landcare peak body members and their collective memberships. It reflects the views of Australia's 6,000 groups - 160,000 community landcarers who are calling for greater investment in Landcare to enhance their capacity and to be a partner in delivering key Government programs.

The Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework focuses on community grass-root action for connecting and delivering environmental, social, economic, and built domains of the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy, the National Drought and Soils strategies, the Ramsar Agreement and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework is founded on the success of the National Landcare Network in empowering State and Territory Landcare and local groups to take a unified and coordinated approach across the nation for the delivery of key projects. Over 5 years the proposed Framework would see the National Landcare Network leading the delivery of a \$48 million dollar program, in addition to and complementing the existing Regional Land Partnership program.

Landcarers are significant deliverers of social capital - communities and their connectedness, for natural resource management in Australia. The strength of the National Landcare Network is its ability to connect community landcarers with each other and with other bodies. Community Landcare connects across natural, social, economic, and built domains for the environment, for sustainable agriculture, and for the wider community. This investment will build

capacity of the grassroots network providing critical surge capacity for Australia's natural resource management programs.

Building on the success of the National Landcare Network in creating a national unified community Landcare network, and the promising outcomes of the Landcare-led Bushfire Recovery Project, the Australian Landcare Futures Framework will widen the role-out of co-design and collaboration between the State and Territory Landcare organisations. Implementing the Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework will result in targeted, efficient, and effective local actions, at regional scales that build community resilience through driving local solutions to meet today's social, and environmental challenges.



## Contribution of the Australian Landcare Community to Government Priorities

Landcare in Australia is a well-established and trusted approach and ethic to land stewardship that has long recognised the value of building the social capital that underpins community resilience (Henry et al 2008, Ottesen 2019, KPMG 2021). Landcare's core business is building adaptive capacity that results in better agricultural productivity and profitability, ecosystem services, and in turn, the health of communities (National Landcare Advisory Committee 2016). Having a connection with the land is known to significantly increase the resilience of the community and community members (Hegney et al, 2007).

Landcare projects attract investment and in-kind support into rural and regional communities, provide opportunities for volunteering, and deliver substantial outcomes from relatively small investments. The value of Landcare towards improved health and well-being outcomes was recognised in a recent report by KPMG (2021) highlighting that Landcarers avoid millions in healthcare costs due to improved mental and physical wellbeing through their active involvement in Landcare.

**The Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework** capitalises on the 30-plus years of community Landcare success in responding to Australia's environmental challenges. Community Landcare groups manage and conserve soil, land, vegetation, water and biodiversity across a wide range of our nation's landscapes. Community Landcare develops social capital, building vital resilience in the

face of changing climate, weather, markets, and disasters such as bushfires, floods and drought. In addition to fostering natural resource management and best practice land stewardship from the ground up. Community Landcare supports social cohesion and builds resilience in local communities, positively impacting on the health and wellbeing of communities. People of different ages, cultures and socio-economic groups unite to be landcarers. Australia faces urgent climate challenges that call for action resulting in landscape-scale transformation. The promising outcomes from the Landcare-led Bushfire Recovery Project has demonstrated that with the right kind of support, the Australian Landcare Community has the capacity and ability to deliver.



## Community Landcare Delivers High Return on Investment

It has long been recognised that Landcare delivers economic as well as environmental and social returns. Most recently, the economic modelling in the KPMG (2021) report highlighted that the conservative economic benefit from participation in Landcare is \$1,347 per person per year when looking solely at health and well-being benefits (e.g., social capital) generating an estimated total economic benefit of over \$191 million dollars per year.

In NSW it has been estimated that the net benefits of a supported Landcare in the state is \$500 million per year and that investing in Landcare provides an economic return of between \$6-\$7 for every \$1 invested (Aurecon undated). In 2021, 60 Landcare Coordinators worked with over 1300 partners across NSW and nationally organising 5300 activities.

An economic analysis of the value of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program demonstrated that the \$4 million program generates \$31 million in value – a benefit cost ratio of more than 7:1. It also demonstrated that the wider social cohesion created by Landcare Facilitators and their activities is valued at \$87 million (RPS 2020). In the Victorian Landcare Community it has been

estimated that for every \$20,000 in on ground project or education funds there are returns of up to 100 social connections and 500+ hours of community and social capital.

*Projecting to an investment of \$48 million over five years, the Landcare Futures Framework would provide:*

**Over 240 000 + social and community relationships**

**1 200 000 hours of social and community capital (based on 100 engagements at an average of 4 hours per project)**

**Over 48 000 participants (based on 30% average network membership participation)**

**An estimated \$12 million injected into local economies (based on 25% program value contributing to contractors, catering, local business services etc. excluding secondary spending by participants).**

## The Urgent Need for Investment in Community Landcare

With diminishing investment in the Australian Landcare Community, the legacy of the last 30 years of community development and capacity building in communities caring for the land stands to be diminished right at the time it is needed most. The status quo fails to adequately leverage one of the largest social and environmental community-based movements

in Australia to foster sustainable practices and increase landholder participation in emerging environmental markets, to conserve biodiversity and help the land, and agriculture sector reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Ensuring investment in Community Landcare will leverage the high ROI of the movement, deliver outcomes across social, environmental and agricultural sectors and importantly provide much needed surge capacity for when responding to the critical issues of our times: the biodiversity crisis, habitat loss, natural disasters and climate change.

# FRAMEWORK

The **Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework** is underpinned by three priority program areas:

## **1** Landcare Futures Community Investment Program

Investing directly in strengthening the capacity of local communities to deliver surge capacity against national, regional and local natural resource management (NRM) priorities

## **2** Landcare Futures Environmental Markets Leadership Program

Building the leadership capacity with a focus on indigenous and community-based NRM leadership for landholder participation in environmental (carbon plus) market mechanisms and opportunities.

## **3** Landcare Futures Innovation Program

Provides a platform for Landcare Futures knowledge sharing and information exchange across Australia driven for and by trusted grassroots landcare networks. A *Landcare Futures Facilitator* will deliver the national program and build linkages across the three priority program areas.

*The implementation of the Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework will have national impact:*

**Delivering sustainable agricultural, biodiversity stewardship and climate action, outcomes including in the carbon plus biodiversity market arena.**

**Mobilising the volunteer Landcare movement for improved land stewardship, and community resilience across urban, peri-urban, regional, and rural Australia.**

**Transforming landscapes across Australia improving fire and flood resilience.**

**Amplifying the role of community Landcare networks in regional planning in collaboration with regional bodies.**

**Building resilience and assisting the response, and recovery of community and natural assets to climate change, bushfire, flood, and drought.**

**Building social capital, in combination with increasing capacity for land stewardship which are core foundations for community and landscape resilience in these times of climate crisis and post-pandemic recovery.**

Resilience and climate adaptation interventions have the most impact when they are designed and implemented closest to community, while considering national priorities and strategies. Unfortunately, Australian Landcare Communities have increasingly lost access to the funding base necessary to drive capacity for increased on ground

action. Implementing the Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework will result in targeted, efficient, and effective local actions, at regional scales that build community resilience through driving local solutions to meet today's social, and environmental challenges providing important surge capacity for existing government programs.

## 1. Landcare Futures Community Investment Program

The Landcare Futures Community Investment Grants Program will ensure that national natural resource management and land stewardship priorities are addressed into the future by targeted investment, strengthening the capacity for on ground works at the local and landscape scale in landcare communities across Australia.

Local landcare representatives have the knowledge, and technical skill base to inform regional and national priorities through EOI processes and technical panels, as well as having the capacity to deliver meaningful

on ground projects. Many Landcare Groups already have projects ready to go and could get started very quickly. For example, Landcare Tasmania has a Project Bank submitted by groups seeking funding. The projects are developed and ready to go. Recently, in the Landcare led Bushfire Recovery Grants Project, 211 applications were sourced from the community at very short notice, which saw an oversubscription by 50% of the available funding.

Current monitoring of the Landcare led Bushfire Recovery Grants Program partnership delivery model shows that 70% of applicant groups were peak State Landcare Organisation members. This program provides a model for investing in Landcare where it counts most in communities on the ground.

## 2. Landcare Futures Environmental Markets Leadership Program

To ensure land stewards are at the forefront of sustainable practices and emerging environmental markets and help the land and agriculture sector reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Landcare Futures Leadership Program is an essential component of the Landcare Futures Framework.

Landcare Futures Environmental Markets Leadership Program is designed to support the Agriculture and Biodiversity Stewardship Market Scheme proposed legislation

supporting the national biodiversity market, building capacity for Landcare Professionals across the country to play a crucial advisory role. It will be coordinated across each State and Territory and brought together through the Landcare Futures Innovation Program.

The program will be implemented across eight peak Landcare State and Territory Landcare Organisations reaching an estimated 100 emerging Landcare Future leaders each year, with specific targets for Indigenous and community-based NRM leaders. The Environmental Markets Capacity Building Program will provide training and accreditation in emerging carbon and biodiversity assessment tools.

### 3. Landcare Futures Innovation Program

The Landcare Futures Innovation Program will ensure there is a process and platform for Landcare Futures knowledge sharing and information exchange across Australia, driven from the grassroots up. Harnessing the diverse Australian Landcare Community, the Landcare Futures Innovation Program will provide governments, industry, and other stakeholders a policy-lab that has direct reach into communities across Australia - a grassroots source of truth. The Landcare Futures Innovation Program will play a key role in the transformation of land stewardship, supporting the diffusion of innovation and

adoption of better practices. The National Landcare Network will act as a custodian of the platform into the future ensuring the knowledge base is not lost.

The Landcare Futures Innovation Program will be led by the Landcare Futures Facilitator with a focus on strengthening capacity for Australia's Landcare networks participation and early adoption of emerging carbon and biodiversity marketplaces, including the federal government's Agriculture and Biodiversity Stewardship Program. The Landcare Futures Facilitator will also ensure a holistic approach is applied to the Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework linking all three program elements.

**Table 1:** Indicative budget - National Delivery Partnership 2022-2027.

PROGRAM ELEMENT	ANNUAL BUDGET	SUB-TOTALS	TOTAL
Community Landcare Grants	\$ 8,000,000		
Technical Advice, Extension Support	\$ 400,000		
Program Management	\$ 250,000		
Marketing Comms Coordination	\$ 80,000		
Network Coordination	\$ 200,000	\$ 8,930,000	\$ 35,720,000
Program Facilitation	\$ 640,000		
Leadership Development Program	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 2,640,000	\$ 10,560,000
Innovation Knowledge Hub	\$ 300,000		
Landcare Futures Facilitator	\$ 150,000	\$ 450,000	\$ 1,800,000
			<b>\$ 48,080,000</b>

## MONITORING & EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation would be a part of all programs with quarterly reports evaluated against the program logic (Figure 2). National stakeholder engagement, including co-designed evaluation questions, will be used to provide data driven, meaningful performance indicators with defined and coordinated targets and priorities. We propose the National Landcare Futures program would have the same reporting requirements as the Regional Bodies, where Landcare would become a "national delivery body" with the four elements of the National Delivery Partner proposal written into our agreement.

**Figure 2:** Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework Program Logic - leveraging capacity of the Australian Landcare Community to deliver environmental, social and economic outcomes. This program will build capacity of the grassroots network providing critical surge capacity for Australia's natural resource management programs.

 <b>PROGRAM OBJECTIVE</b> - Leverage the social capital of the 160,000 plus community Landcare volunteers across Australia, catalysing action from the ground up to strengthen capacity and increase local engagement in government programs to protect biodiversity, natural capital and ecosystem services, building community resilience in recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic, natural disasters and increasing community capacity to adapt to climate change through local networks delivering landscape outcomes and the adoption of innovation and emerging environmental markets.						
Problem statement	Inputs	Outputs: Activities	Outputs: Strengthened capacity	Short-term outcome (0-10 weeks)	Medium-term outcomes (10 wks-12 months)	Long-term outcomes (12months-4years)
Weak links between local communities and national priorities and programs are diminishing existing social capital and creating barriers for knowledge exchange, the development of adaptive capacity and actions for climate adaptation/resilience at the community level. Barriers to the widespread community-based adoption and understanding of emerging environmental markets.	<b>Landcare Futures Community Investment Program</b> - targeted investment in community landcare. <b>Landcare Futures Environmental Markets Leadership Program</b> <b>Landcare Futures Innovation Program</b> <b>National Landcare Futures Facilitator</b> National, State and Territory Coordination and Technical support Regional Network Coordinators, Local Landcare Facilitators	National Landcare Futures Knowledge Exchange Forums Landcare Futures Leadership Development First Nations Knowledge Program Local Landcare Futures Plans Local future landcare landscape projects Field Days	Landcare networks Landcare Groups Local communities First Nations communities Land stewards, Care and Friends of groups, Schools	Improved mechanisms for local expertise to contribute to regional planning processes and regional and national policy priorities. Strengthened surge capacity for long term, on ground projects driven by community landcare delivering regional landscape and social health and well-being outcomes.	Strengthening community participation and engagement with the National Drought Strategy, the National Soils Strategy, Threatened Species Strategy. Increased capacity for participation in emerging environmental markets and the Agricultural and Biodiversity Stewardship Pilots.	Linking of social and environmental adaptive capacity within communities across regions. Landscape scale restoration and rehabilitation Climate action and capacity to adapt to climate change through landcare. Sustainable Agriculture Diversification of funding for land stewardship and widespread community-based adoption of environmental markets. <b>UNSDGS</b>
<b>Assumptions</b> – Program funding will be over 5 years, in addition to the existing Regional Land Partnership Program and work closely with all Levels of government, NRM regional bodies, Drought Hubs, the National Recovery and Resilience Agency, and the Foundation of Rural and Regional Renewal.				<b>External Factors:</b> Funding availability, COVID-19, natural disasters - floods fires and other climate change related impacts, extinction crisis.		

# APPENDIX

## REFERENCES

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# APPENDIX

## THE AUSTRALIAN LANDCARE ECOSYSTEM

The Landcare network across Australia has a demonstrated ability and long history of collaboration with other organisations to achieve outcomes for all Australian's but particularly those in rural and regional communities. To deliver the Australian Community Landcare Futures Framework, the National Landcare Network and member Landcare State and Territory Organisations (STOs) will work together with government, industry, private investors, and critically for implementation Regional Bodies, Landcare Australia and to co-ordinate and support delivery of the program.

The [National Landcare Network \(NLN\)](#) is the peak representative body for Community Landcare Groups across Australia and works to provide a voice for community Landcare at the national level. The NLN is made up of representatives from each State and Territory Landcare peak body, who come together to represent, support and foster the community Landcare movement.

[Landcare NSW](#) is the peak representative body for the community Landcare movement in NSW. With over 60,000 active Landcarers in NSW, the unique Landcare network of local and regional Landcare Coordinators, volunteers, individuals and businesses provides a strong link to all rural, urban and regional communities in NSW. Landcare NSW works on a range of projects with both government and non-government partners to ensure that our environment, farms and communities are supported through a range of initiatives including NSW Landcare Program, Partnering in Private Land Conservation, Aboriginal Community Engagement Program, Creating Canopies in Greater Sydney, Bushfire Recovery Fund, Driving Habitat in Action, Landcare NSW Natural Disaster Seed Fund, Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery Grants.

[Landcare Victoria Inc.](#) represents community landcare in Victoria and is an influential voice for the Victorian landcare movement, supporting landcare communities to achieve integrated sustainable agriculture and environmental outcomes. Landcare Victoria supports governance, strategy, advocacy, project development, training and professional development for our landcare networks and groups across the state. We also arrange affordable insurance cover and provide grant and asset management auspice support to our members. With over 600 member groups, representing more than 17,000 households and an estimated 60,000 individuals, Landcare Victoria is one of the largest environmental volunteer organisations in Victoria, fostering on-ground community led action.

[Landcare Tasmania](#) is the peak body that works to represent, support, strengthen and grow Tasmania's Landcare movement. We have over 200 members groups plus individuals who work on projects in their area to improve the health of our natural and working environments. In 2019, we engaged more than 3,000 people in Landcare operations. Over 2,000 separate landcare activities were carried out and collectively we performed 135,000 hours of work around the State on both public and private land.

[Queensland Water and Land Carers \(QWaLC\)](#) support's community-based approaches to managing and protecting our natural resources – creating more productive and sustainable farms, conserving our environment and building more cohesive and resilient communities in Queensland. We promote and advocate for ecologically sustainable development across Queensland in partnership with governments, philanthropists and the wider community. As Queensland's peak body for natural resource management volunteers, QWaLC undertakes this work on behalf of its membership of over 32,000 people from more than 440 member groups.

[The Landcare Association of SA \(LASA\)](#) is the peak advocacy and representative body for Landcare in South Australia. LASA is an independent, non-government and not for profit community organisation that supports, celebrates and advocates for community Landcare in South Australia.

[The WA Landcare Network](#) formed out of a Community Forum held in Perth in May 2013, hosted by the National Landcare Network. In May 2014, WALN was formally incorporated as a not-for-profit organisation with a foundation membership of 10 community groups. In January 2021 WALN had 125 Ordinary Member Groups and 30 Associate Members.

[Landcare NT](#) is the peak body representing Landcare groups in the Northern Territory. We support our members, the community Landcare groups of the NT. Recently Landcare NT partnered with the National Recovery and Resilience Agency to conduct successful Sustainable Land Management Field Days in Anmatjere, Central Australia.

[Landcare ACT](#) is the peak representative body for community Landcare in the ACT region. Working with our members, we represent, support, and celebrate over 70 Landcare groups and thousands of on-ground environmental volunteers in the ACT Region.

[Landcare Australia Limited](#) supports the landcare community with funding, capacity-building, on-ground projects, information, networking and promotion of landcare achievements and is a service provider for government programs and delivers major land restoration projects.

