



West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

# Regional Landcare Support Plan

2020- 2025





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### **Assessability**

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### **For Further Information**

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### **Traditional Owner Acknowledgement**

WGCMA acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Land Owners and other indigenous people within the West Gippsland catchment area: the Gunaikurnai, the Bunurong and Boon Wurrung, and the Wurundjeri people. We also recognise the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in land and natural resource management.





# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
	<i>Landcare vs landcare</i>	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>4</b>
	2.1 Landcare in West Gippsland	4
	2.2 Opportunities and challenges	5
<b>3</b>	<b>Vision</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Strategic alignment</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Outcomes and Objectives</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>We support landcare</b>	<b>9</b>
	6.1 Why we support landcare	9
	6.2 Who we support	9
	6.3 How we will support Landcare	10
	6.4 Support Actions	10
<b>7</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Appendix 1: Program Logic</b>	<b>15</b>

# 1. Introduction

Landcare is an Australian-wide movement of community groups and individuals working in their local area to improve the environment and sustainability of farms.

In West Gippsland landcare has a long and proud history, made up of a committed and motivated grassroots community that have delivered best practice natural resource management for more than 30 years.

In 2020, five Landcare networks support 52 Landcare groups. There are also approximately 55 community-NRM groups who do not sit within the Landcare network structure, such as friends of groups or foreshore committees of management. All these groups and networks drive projects that address local and landscape-scale issues through on ground works such as revegetation, pest plant and animal management, soil health and riparian management. They also build skills and social connections in the community through training and events.

We recognise the successful history of landcare in the region, its current important role in enhancing the West Gippsland environment, and its ability to adapt to meet emerging challenges. We believe partnering with landcare is one of the best ways to achieve great on ground outcomes for our catchment.

We also recognise that landcare belongs to the community, and respect its independence, autonomy and partnership. We want to support, not direct landcare.

*“The WGCMA Regional Landcare Support Plan 2020- 2025 is not a strategic plan for landcare in the region, but is a guide for how WGCMA will support landcare for the next five years.*

*It builds on the previous 2013-18 Regional Landcare Plan with input from a review undertaken in 2019 with Landcare staff, Landcare network executives and WGCMA staff.”*





## Landcare vs landcare

Landcare arose from a specific program and model designed as a local group-based approach to caring for the land, founded in 1986. It was founded by Joan Kirner and Heather Mitchell, then respectively Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and Victorian Farmers Federation President. The movement grew from many examples of local groups working to care for the land as farm tree groups or soil conservation groups.

Landcare became a way of describing a specific type of community group (ie a Landcare group) and a broad way of describing grassroots, community groups who work to protect the environment and the ethos of individuals to protect the land (ie the landcare movement). Groups such as Friends of, Coastcare and Foreshore Committee of Management fit this broad understanding of landcare and may be considered part of the landcare “family” even if they do not bear the Landcare name.

In this plan, sometimes the lower case “landcare” is used to describe both Landcare and other community-NRM groups efforts, whilst other times “Landcare” is used to describe specific Landcare structures and groups.



## 2. Background

### 2.1 Landcare in West Gippsland

The West Gippsland region is home to a vibrant landcare community.

Five Landcare networks assist 52 diverse groups who cover a vast range of interest areas – including but not limited to biodiversity, soil health, tree plantings, threatened species management, erosion control, coastal protection, pest plant and animal management and social events. There are also over 2,000 Landcare members.

The five Landcare networks in West Gippsland are Bass Coast Landcare Network, South Gippsland Landcare Network, Yarram Yarram Landcare Network, Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network and Maffra and Districts Landcare Network. These five Landcare networks are voluntary community-based incorporated bodies overseen by their own boards and run by highly skilled community-based Landcare coordinators and project officers who work to support Landcare groups, projects and activities.

We support the Landcare networks in a variety of ways, including:

- partnering to deliver on ground projects across the region;
- hosting the quarterly Regional Landcare Forum which brings together volunteers and staff from each Landcare network board;
- supporting three out of the five landcare with employment management by directly employing them on behalf of the of the relevant Landcare Network;
- upskilling Landcare staff, event and grants promotion, governance support.

In 2019 landcare in the region delivered:

Revegetation	Remnant protection	Volunteer hours	Weed and pest control	Partnerships	Staff	Community Collaboration
323,301 indigenous tube stock were planted 218Ha of revegetation	83.59km of fencing was installed 180ha of remnant protection	21,579 hours	581.40Ha of private property was treated for pest plant and animal	Landcare Networks worked with approximately 290 various organisations	There were 16.1 (FTE) Landcare Network staff	1531 Non landcare members volunteered their time

Each year Landcare groups and networks are surveyed on their group health;

#### Landcare Group Health Scores

Category/Year	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
5 = Trail Blazing	5	6	7	5	3	1	2
4 = Rolling along smoothly	15	11	23	21	14	11	15
3 = Moving forward	21	22	9	20	22	23	14
2 = Struggling along	9	5	9	10	8	15	6
1 = Just hanging on	4	8	3	2	6	4	9
Total responses	54	52	51	58	53	54	46
<b>Average Group Health Score</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>2.89</b>

There are also approximately 55 community-NRM groups (or 'small I' landcare groups) who do not sit within the Landcare network structure, such as friends of groups or foreshore committees of management. We have varying relationships with these community-NRM groups, ranging from working closely to deliver projects to no interaction at all. These groups have been included in this plan as we hope to strengthen our partnerships and provide information and support if required. Additionally, the Victorian Landcare Grants (and new facilitator funding) is open to all community-NRM groups meaning Regional Landcare Coordinator support will need to include these groups.

## 2.2 Opportunities and challenges

### **Improving connections with Landcare network board members**

In the 2019 Landcare Support survey, a key request by Landcare network board members was that we share priorities and strategic intent with network boards to assist in priority setting. There was also a request to clarify the partnership arrangement between us and each network board. Landcare network boards have a regular turnover of members which brings fresh ideas but also means updates need to be provided regularly to ensure all board members are up to date.

### **Decline in Landcare membership**

In the 2019 Landcare Support survey, a key concern was the decline in group membership. This decline may be caused by changing demographics with an increase in absentee farmers, ageing landowners and hobby farmers.

### **Improving technologies**

Landcare network board members identified that increases in technology may assist them with attending meetings and connecting to our staff remotely. It may also assist with efficiencies around membership and reporting.

### **Funding uncertainty**

Uncertainty in funding for facilitators/staff and grants means that Landcare groups are often unable to plan strategically or for long-term projects.

### **Increases in individual interest in Landcare**

Trends in the *2018 Environmental Volunteering for Nature – Environmental Volunteering Plan* suggests the Victorian population to be increasingly time poor, with less time to commit to long-term volunteering and more demand for event-based volunteering opportunities. Locally we've also seen a decline in Landcare membership and a move from group membership to either network membership or individual Landcare-ism (i.e. people acting off their own back after learning skills after attending events or reading online). People are still volunteering or undertaking work on their own property, there is just less interest in traditional group membership.

### **Climate change**

Climate change poses both a threat and opportunity for landcare. A changing climate will mean landcare groups will need to adapt their methods with new planting times, seed types and vegetation species.

Climate change also presents an opportunity for landcare. Activities can help mitigate the impacts of climate change by helping absorb carbon, plus create biolinks across the landscape to help local birds and animals become more resilient to cope with climate stress. Landcare can also play an important role in assisting communities to adapt through support and education of new adaption techniques.





### 3. Vision

Landcare networks and groups, friends of groups, agricultural groups and other community-NRM groups are supported to advocate and take measures to protect and enhance the natural resources of West Gippsland.





## 4. Strategic alignment

This plan is strategically aligned to the following documents:

Federal	State	Regional
<p>The Australian Framework for Landcare 2010–2020</p> <p>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</p>	<p>Protecting Victoria’s Environment – Biodiversity 2037</p> <p>Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan 2012</p> <p>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</p> <p>Water Act 1989</p> <p>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</p> <p>Our Catchments Our Communities</p> <p>Water for Victoria</p>	<p>West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy</p> <p>West Gippsland Waterway Management Strategy</p> <p>Partnerships and Engagement Plan</p>



## 5. Outcomes and Objectives

Over the next five years, the SMART outcomes of the plan are:

1	We have maintained or increased the strength of Landcare and Community NRM partnerships through delivery of appropriate support.
2	We have increased the number of community-NRM groups it informs and consults
3	Landcare and Community NRM groups have increased the number of volunteers in the region.

Over the next five years, the objectives of the plan are:

Support the operation of networks and groups.
Understand the breadth and changing nature of community groups and engage them at the appropriate level.
Understand and respond to the evolving needs of networks and groups by improving access to grants, guidelines, technical assistance and training, while streamlining administration requirements.
Encourage more people in West Gippsland to act to improve the region's catchment.
Communicate and promote the efforts of environmental volunteers to value their work, increase awareness of volunteering opportunities and increase awareness of activities in the region.





## 6. We support landcare

### 6.1 Why we support landcare

We have long recognised the positive impact landcare projects have on the local community. West Gippsland Landcare networks have been a key delivery partner for us for close to 20 years. We have also worked closely with landcare groups over this time in a range of ways.

We support landcare because:

#### **Landcare has good connections to local communities**

Landcare groups and networks have excellent connections to their local communities. Working with landcare groups and networks is an efficient way of engaging people.

#### **Working with landcare creates community ownership**

By working with landcare groups and networks, communities gain ownership over projects which often means they are more likely to take care of the project over many years.

#### **Landcare creates many benefits, not just for the environment**

Our studies have found that supporting landcare groups creating a range of benefits for the local community including improved health benefits, better social connectivity and increased emotional well-being.

### 6.2 Who we support

This plan includes how we will support the wider Gippsland landcare community, defined broadly into three groups:

**Networking partners** The five Landcare networks. *Most of our support* is to networking partners, due to our close working relationship, their complete coverage of our region, and their important contacts with groups and landholders.

**Working partners** Landcare groups and community-NRM groups. *Some of our support* is to working partners, especially to new and emerging groups or groups who seek assistance from us and are unable to receive it elsewhere.

**Collaborative partners** Community-NRM groups. *A small amount our support* is to these groups who are defined by the fact they have not asked us for assistance.



## 6.3 How we will support Landcare

We will support Landcare through:

- The Regional Landcare Coordinator program (funded through the Victorian government- State Landcare Program).
  - The RLC supports the operation of Landcare networks and groups and community-NRM groups.
  - The role aims to sustain current Landcare networks and community-NRM groups, plus expand opportunities and encourage more people to volunteer, in order to improve the West Gippsland environment.
- The Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator Role (funded through the Australian Government National Landcare Program).
  - The RALF supports groups and networks to deliver activities that raise awareness of sustainable agriculture practices.
  - The role aims to increase the awareness and adoption of recommended land management practices that improve the sustainability, productivity, and profitability of agriculture in West Gippsland.
- Indirect support from Corporate/HR Team, Partnerships and Engagement Team, Water and Delivery Team and Land Team. Importantly this also includes employment support to three out of the five Landcare networks.

## 6.4 Support Actions

### Grants and Project Support

Coordinate and administer Victorian Landcare Grants	1 grants program	Annually
Produce media releases focused on Victorian Landcare Grants programs	2 media releases	Annually
Produce case studies highlighting Victorian Landcare Grants projects	2 case studies	Annually
Provide funding assistance for groups and networks to deliver sustainable agriculture activities via RALF Sustainable Agriculture EOI		Ongoing
Provide in-kind support to sustainable agriculture projects		Ongoing
Sharing external grants opportunities through <i>Landcare in West Gippsland e-news</i>		Ongoing

### Events Support

Provide in-kind support to sustainable agriculture events		Ongoing
Sharing external event opportunities to West Gippsland Landcare email list		Ongoing



## Building partnerships

Organise and facilitate Gippsland Sustainable Agriculture Network forums	2 events	Annually
Communicate information to and from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning		Ongoing
Facilitate partnerships between agriculture industry groups, agencies and community groups		Ongoing
Coordinate and administer Regional Landcare Forum	4 meetings	Annually
Foster partnerships and collaboration between Landcare and other groups, agencies, traditional owners and schools		Ongoing
Provide opportunity for Landcare network staff to get together to develop skills and connections	1 event	Annually
Support the engagement of Traditional Owner groups in Landcare	1 event	Annually
Support the engagement of youth in Landcare e.g. Intrepid Landcare	1 event	Annually

## Training Support

Running informal face to face training for networks and groups as requested (topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WEAVE / GIS training,</li> <li>Project and EOI management</li> <li>Social media and communications</li> <li>Sustainable agriculture</li> <li>New and emerging technologies</li> </ul>		Ongoing
Providing formal training for Landcare volunteers, with topic derived from needs expressed in a yearly training survey	1 event	Yearly

## Governance Support

Annual check in with each landcare network board including a partnership agreement signing	1 check-in	Annually
Update on WGCMA support to Landcare network board members	4 updates	Annually
Provide opportunity for Landcare network board executives to get together to develop skills and connections	1 event	Biannually
Support Victorian Landcare Facilitators as per new guidelines		Ongoing
Host a Landcare network chairs meeting between WGCMA Chair and network board chairs	4 meetings	Annually
Provide general governance support and advice to Landcare groups and network executives and staff		Ongoing



## Communications Support

Create case studies that value Landcarers and their efforts. Share on our communications channels (Facebook, Twitter, Website, podcast)	12 posts	Annually
Promote the Victorian and National Landcare Awards	1 campaign	Annually
Produce a report card on Landcare achievements and group health and to celebrate Landcare volunteers in the region	1 report card	Annually
Raise awareness and promote Landcare events, training and case studies through creation of Landcare in West Gippsland e-news	12 editions	Annually
Undertake yearly photoshoot to value Landcare volunteers' efforts	1 photoshoot	Annually
Host description of our support for groups on our webpage		Ongoing
Promoting opportunities to volunteer at landcare events on our webpage Facebook and Twitter	3 opportunities	Annually
Administer the Regenerative Farmers SE Vic and GSAN Facebook groups		Ongoing
Develop and manage a website to support a local Regenerative Agriculture Community of Practice		Ongoing
Updating Landcare group details on Victorian Landcare Gateway, promote its use to groups and get them to maintain their page		Ongoing

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Identify new and emerging groups, add them to group database	1 database	Ongoing
Managing database of group contacts to connect enquiries to relevant group	1 database	Ongoing
Review and update the Regional Landcare Support Plan to ensure the plan is relevant and activities are achievable	1 review	Annually
Collect information on group function and health through the Group Health Survey	1 survey	Annually
Collect information on training needs with groups and networks through the group training survey	1 survey	Annually



### Broader support from us

CEO/Board and executive support from our executive/ corporate/ HR		Ongoing
Developing or using existing policies and procedures and governance support from our partnerships and engagement team		Ongoing
Partnership and Engagement Team - Community based, collaborative planning and delivery		Ongoing
Partnership and Engagement Team - Link Indigenous Partnership Plan and Landcare Support plan		Ongoing
Financial and technical support to groups and individuals for community led projects that have high merit and represent good value from our water and delivery teams		Ongoing
Support and involvement through the angler or riparian partnership programs from our water and delivery teams.		Ongoing
Support for citizen science programs including, Waterwatch and Estuary Watch programs from our delivery and water teams		Ongoing
Support communities of interest with environmental water planning and delivery from our water and delivery teams		Ongoing
Facilitated farmer led discussion groups which support improved irrigation, effluent, nutrient, land and water management from our land team		Ongoing

### Support for networks where staff are hosted by us

WGCMA employment hosting of Landcare staff on behalf of networks is a package. Full details are included in the Partnership Document, which is available upon request. The employment support includes the following items;

Book-keeping support to enable Landcare networks to manage their financial affairs including coordinating annual audits		Ongoing
Computer and Information Technology systems and support		Ongoing
Human resources support, including all legislative requirements		Ongoing
Appropriate office accommodation and infrastructure		Ongoing
Landcare staff have access to vehicles in line the WGCMA Motor Vehicle Policy and Procedure		Ongoing
Support for Landcare network boards and ESC is provided by senior WGCMA staff including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network governance</li> <li>• Staff management</li> <li>• Dispute and conflict resolution</li> </ul>		Ongoing
Internal training and professional development		Ongoing
WGCMA coordination and representation on the Network Employment Steering Committee (ESC)		Ongoing
Coordination of advertising, recruitment and appointment processes in consultation with the relevant Landcare network ESC		Ongoing
Mentoring and peer support of new Landcare staff		Ongoing



## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Annually, we collect data from Landcare groups and networks on membership, funding, group health, areas they require support and education; and challenges and threats facing the Landcare groups. This data is presented in our Landcare Report Card.

As described in the objectives, this data will be reviewed to assess emerging trends and assist with the yearly review of this plan to ensure we are working to meet our SMART outcomes by 2025:

- 1 We have maintained or increased the strength of Landcare and Community NRM partnerships through delivery of appropriate support.
- 2 We have increased the number of community-NRM groups it informs and consults
- 3 Landcare and Community NRM groups have increased the number of volunteers in the region.

Data will be collected to assess any training requirements by Landcare groups and networks.

We also require groups and networks reporting on their Victorian Landcare Grants and sustainable agriculture events to document the successes and challenges of their completed projects to further inform common themes for targeted support.



# 8. Appendix 1: Program Logic

WGCMA Regional Landcare Support Plan 2020 – 2025 Program Logic			
<b>Vision</b>	Landcare networks and groups, friends of groups, agricultural groups and other community-based NRM groups are supported to advocate and take measures to protect and enhance the natural resources of West Gippsland.		
<b>Key themes</b>	Expand • Sustain • Understand • Value		
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the operation of groups and networks.</li> <li>• Understand the breadth and changing nature of community groups and engage them at the appropriate level.</li> <li>• Understand and respond to the evolving needs of groups by improving access to grants, guidelines, technical assistance and training, while streamlining administration requirements.</li> <li>• Encourage more people in West Gippsland to act to improve the region's catchment.</li> <li>• Communicate the efforts of environmental volunteers to value their work, increase awareness of volunteering opportunities and increase awareness of activities in the region.</li> </ul>		
<b>SMART Outcomes</b>	<p>By 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WGCMA has maintained or increased the strength of Landcare and Community NRM partnerships through delivery of appropriate support.</li> <li>• WGCMA have increased the number of community NRM groups it informs and consults</li> <li>• Landcare and Community NRM groups have increased the number of volunteers in the region.</li> </ul>		
<b>Assumptions that activities will lead to plan outcomes</b>	Providing information to community groups will increase awareness of CMA support, Natural Resource Management activities and opportunities that lead to increased volunteerism.		
<b>WGCMA Landcare Program Objectives</b>	<p><b>Regional Landcare Coordinator (RLC)</b></p> <p>Support the operation of Landcare networks and community – NRM groups in West Gippsland.</p>	<p><b>Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator (RALF)</b></p> <p>Support networks and groups to deliver activities that raise awareness of sustainable agriculture practices</p>	<p><b>Other WGCMA Support</b></p> <p>Build, maintain and strengthen partnerships with Community Groups and Landcare Networks.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p><b>RLC/RALF Common Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running informal face to face training for networks and groups (ie GIS, sustainable agriculture, project management, new technologies)</li> <li>• Providing formal training to all groups with topics derived from yearly training survey</li> <li>• Sharing external training opportunities, events and grants to all networks and groups (including sustainable agriculture for RALF role)</li> <li>• Identify new and emerging groups, add them to database, upskill if required</li> <li>• Promoting opportunities to volunteer or join a group</li> </ul>		<p><b>Corporate/HR Team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial management, accounting, audits</li> <li>• I.T, HR, employment, office, vehicle and overheads</li> <li>• CEO/Board and executive support.</li> </ul>



<b>Activities</b>	<b>RLC activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual check in with Landcare networks MOU signings and yearly network board check-in</li> <li>• Foster partnerships and collaboration between groups, agencies, traditional owners and schools</li> <li>• Support network staff as per new guidelines</li> <li>• Running Regional Landcare Forum and Victorian Landcare Grants</li> <li>• Managing database of group contacts to connect enquiries to relevant group</li> <li>• Updating Landcare group details on Gateway</li> <li>• Create case studies of landcare volunteers and yearly photoshoot</li> <li>• Create Landcare in West Gippsland newsletter</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for network staff to get together</li> <li>• Provide yearly opportunity for network board executives to get together</li> <li>• Create yearly report card</li> <li>• Support volunteers at awards and recognition events</li> </ul>	<b>RALF Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funding assistance for groups and networks to deliver sustainable agriculture activities</li> <li>• Provide in-kind support to sustainable agriculture projects and events</li> <li>• Assist with the development of new sustainable agriculture projects</li> <li>• Organise and facilitate Gippsland Sustainable Agriculture Network forums</li> <li>• Develop and manage a website to support a local Regenerative Agriculture Community of Practice</li> <li>• Administer the Regenerative Farmers SE Vic and GSAN Facebook groups</li> <li>• Facilitate partnerships between agriculture industry groups, agencies and community groups</li> <li>• Communicate information to and from the Dept of Ag, Water and the Environment</li> </ul>	<b>Partnership and Engagement Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies, Procedures and Governance</li> <li>• Community based, collaborative planning and delivery (OCOC)</li> <li>• Link Indigenous Partnership Plan and Landcare Support plan</li> </ul> <b>Water and Delivery Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support community priorities: Provision of financial and technical support to groups and individuals for community led projects that have high merit and represent good value.</li> <li>• Support through the Angler/ Riparian Partnership Program</li> <li>• Support for citizen science programs including, Waterwatch and Estuary Watch programs</li> <li>• Support communities of interest with environmental water planning and delivery.</li> </ul> <b>Land Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated Farmer led discussion groups which support improved Irrigation, Effluent, Nutrient, Land and water management</li> </ul>
<b>Foundational Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share WGCMA, State and Federal priorities and strategic intent with network boards to assist in priority setting</li> <li>• Investigate how can Networks partner/collaborate with Intrepid Landcare and other existing and up and coming NRM groups</li> <li>• Investigate Community NRM groups that we are not working with and add to database.</li> <li>• Clarify the partnership arrangement between WGCMA and each network board</li> </ul>		
<b>Underpinning Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State (Victorian Volunteering Plan, Biodiversity 2037, Victorian Landcare Support Plan)</li> <li>• WGCMA Partnership and Engagement plan</li> <li>• WGCMA Indigenous Partnerships Plan</li> <li>• Federal (Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act)</li> <li>• Regional (RCS, Waterways strategy)</li> </ul>		





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