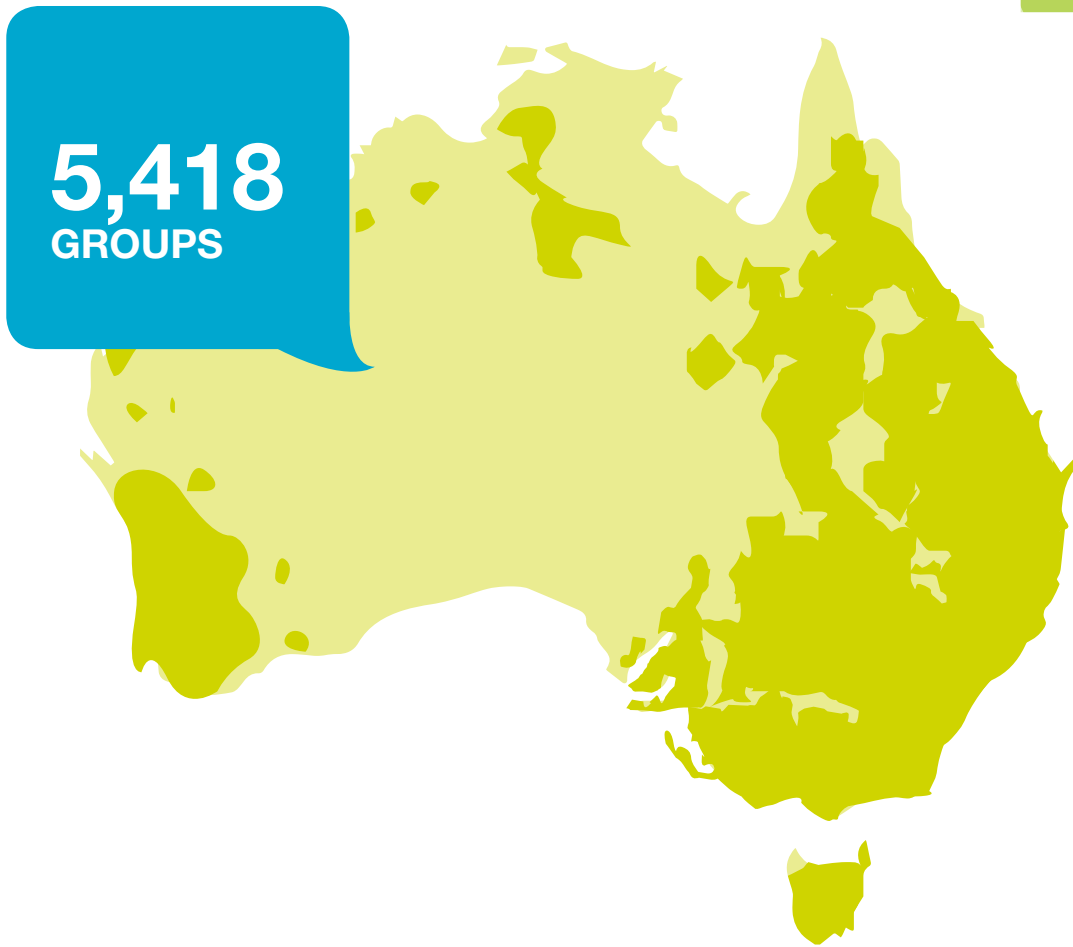




**National
Landcare
Network**

Building a Resilient Australia



Data from the National Landcare Directory; 12/04/2016



Building a Resilient Australia



National
Landcare
Network

At the next election, the Australian Government has the opportunity to revitalise investment in a unique program that provides significant social and environmental benefits for communities across our country, leverages substantial returns, reduces the need for future expenditure, and boosts the economy.

WHO WE ARE

The National Landcare Network (NLN) represents the tens of thousands of people involved in the community Landcare movement across Australia. We work with Landcare peak bodies in each state and territory to support their work and act as a representative voice at the national level. The Landcare movement today is about much more than volunteers planting trees. It encompasses everyone from suburban families spending a Sunday weeding their local patch of bushland, to farmers working to improve the

productivity and sustainability of their properties, to Aboriginal peoples caring for country and passing on traditional knowledge about the use of plants and animals. It brings together people from all walks of life with an interest in making sure our landscapes, soils, native habitats and water are well-managed and cared for, now and for future generations. The maps below clearly illustrate the reach and relevance of Landcare across much of the country.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

Successive Australian governments have invested in Landcare since its inception in the mid-1980s. This investment has built a vast body of capacity across the country and leveraged many millions of dollars' worth of volunteer time, in-kind resources and private finance. It has delivered incalculable savings through reduced land degradation and subsequent rehabilitation work. However, in this current time of financial pressure there is a real risk that this wealth of experience, skills and knowledge could be lost.

The NLN is calling for the next government to reinstate Landcare at the heart of environmental and agricultural policy for cost-effective and long-lasting results to build a resilient Australia.

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'A RESILIENT AUSTRALIA'?

A resilient Australia is one in which community wellbeing, environmental protection and sustainable agriculture are recognised as being essential to the long term economic and social success of our country. The NLN's vision for a resilient Australia includes the following elements:

- A natural environment which is not degraded and supports the fully functional ecosystems needed to:
 - Safeguard Australia's unique and irreplaceable wildlife and landscapes.
 - Protect human habitation and infrastructure from the worst effects of extreme weather.
 - Provide us with safe, clean water for environmental, domestic, industrial and agricultural uses.
 - Help agricultural areas remain productive.
 - Attract local and international tourists and associated business opportunities.
- Healthy, happy and well-connected communities that support the people within them.
- A sustainable and productive agricultural system which supplies both domestic and international markets with high quality food and other consumables.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are fully involved in the planning and execution of land management in Australia.
- City and country people understand and appreciate one another.
- Communities and landscapes are better prepared for the impacts of a changing climate.

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A SIMPLE AND SECURE LANDCARE SYSTEM FOR A RESILIENT AUSTRALIA

In order to build a resilient Australia, we need a stable Landcare model which operates at the national level to support cohesive regional delivery and is underpinned by secure long-term funding.

Currently, there are many organisations operating in the environmental and agricultural spaces, which are often forced to compete for scarce resources even though they are working towards common goals. The majority of funding is administered on a short-term cycle of 1-5 years, while it may take decades for the gains from on-ground work to be realised. These factors can lead to money being wasted on inefficient processes and short-term patches, while the big problems facing our lands and waters continue to grow.

At the same time, drought, flood and fire are becoming more common as climate variability increases. Rural communities need practical support to reduce environmental degradation and maintain productivity through variable and extreme weather. This needs to be driven by long term planning and strengthened capacity within communities to help their own members through tough times.

Community-based Landcare has proven itself as an effective way to deliver environmental outcomes which also offers significant social and economic benefits. It is poised to capitalise on its role as a hub of community involvement in building social capital and capability, especially in rural and regional areas, but also increasingly in urban and peri-urban areas. Strategic investment in Landcare will leverage the capacity that already exists within the movement to improve the sustainability of our natural and agricultural lands, and the wellbeing of our communities. With enough resources, the NLN and state and territory Landcare peak bodies can use their networks to:

- Develop and support programs to increase understanding and facilitate exchange of knowledge and expertise between Aboriginal, rural and urban communities.
- Foster landscape scale projects and collaboration between stakeholders on long-term landscape scale strategic planning and action.
- Unite communities to pioneer modern agricultural practices which embed environmental stewardship, and facilitating cross-tenure land management to address landscape scale challenges such as biosecurity.

The Landcare movement has already established a robust national structure through the state and territory peak bodies and the NLN. With additional resources, Landcare is in a unique position to leverage its membership and coordinate a national approach to natural resource management across Australia, driven by local knowledge.

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WHAT DO WE NEED TO ACHIEVE THIS?

Government investment in Landcare needs to be designed to encourage private investment and build innovative ways to leverage the value of our natural landscapes. On behalf of its members, the NLN is seeking the following commitments from government:

1. Increased investment in on-ground Landcare through bi-lateral agreements with states and territories.
2. Long term funding for the NLN and state and territory Landcare peak bodies.
3. A review of government-funded Natural Resource Management organisations and programs to improve consistency, efficiency and transparency.
4. A commitment that there will be no reduction in the \$120 million currently allocated to community projects through NRM bodies.
5. Assistance programs that build capacity and foster innovation, without excessive red tape and paperwork for participants.
6. Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to manage their own programs, as well as being fully consulted and involved in the planning and execution of other land management in Australia.
7. An investigation into a national environmental accounting system.
8. Development and support of education and engagement programs to build better understanding of environment and Landcare issues and the relationship between country and city.

With its well-established, volunteer-based workforce, Landcare offers value for money to deliver massive benefits for our economy, society and environment. Ignoring this investment now will mean that far greater costs are incurred in the future.



Building a Resilient Australia - Programs and Costings

The NLN is seeking the following commitments from Government:

1. Increased investment in on-ground Landcare through bi-lateral agreements with states and territories.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
1.1 Consistent support for regional paid coordinators to support local Landcare.	\$12.5m per year ongoing	Seek for this funding to be matched by states and territories and takes into account the existing investments by the NSW and Victorian governments who currently provide \$15m and \$12m respectively over a four-year period. These positions will be embedded within Landcare networks, not seated within government entities.
1.2 Investigation and development of a national insurance program for Landcare.	\$1m one-off project	Review existing arrangements and identify whether there is scope for a better model to service the needs of volunteer Landcarers.
1.3 Simple, accessible community grants to ensure that investment reaches Landcare groups and landholders on the ground.	\$120m per year ongoing	This is equivalent to the amount that NRM bodies currently report is distributed to Landcare and community projects in the 56 NRM regions. A role for the community, including advice from Landcare peak bodies, should be embedded into the allocation process for these funds. An increase in the 10% of program costs currently allowed for administration and management should also be considered.



Building a Resilient Australia - Programs and Costings

2. Long term funding for the NLN and state and territory Landcare peak bodies.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
2.1 Consolidated funding stream for Landcare networks delivered annually and administered through the NLN	\$1.65m per year ongoing	Seeking a minimum 10-year funding commitment to ensure the essential work of the network of 8 peak state and territory bodies and the NLN at national level.

3. A review of government-funded Natural Resource Management organisations and programs to improve consistency, efficiency and transparency.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
3.1 A review of all government-funded NRM organisations and programs to improve consistency, efficiency and transparency.	\$1m one-off project	This would take the form of the review called for in the joint stakeholder position paper.



Building a Resilient Australia

- Programs and Costings

4. Assistance programs that build capacity and foster innovation without excessive red tape and paperwork for participants.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
4.1 Support development of innovative Landcare initiatives and projects, including investigation into market-driven approaches, such as tax incentives, which would increase private investment in sustainable land management.	\$2m one-off project, plus ongoing support costs	This measure will use \$2m of the money cut from the Green Army program to build innovation and growth in the environment sector. Ongoing support costs will be dependent on the measures which are developed during the project.
4.2 Investigation and development of certification scheme for sustainably produced goods.	\$1m one-off project	This would be a joint program between NRM Regions and NFF, supported by the NLN and state and territory Landcare peak bodies. It would seek to address the market values which do not recognise the additional costs of sustainable production through, a market driven scheme that does not impose costs on producers.



Building a Resilient Australia

- Programs and Costings

5. Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to manage their own programs, as well as being fully consulted and involved in the planning and execution of other land management in Australia.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
5.1 Employ a least one Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator for each state and territory to facilitate coordination and support between Aboriginal land managers and Landcare.	\$2m per year ongoing	Indigenous Ranger programs and Landcare are two of the most successful long term community building initiatives in Australia. Stronger links will give multiple benefits. Facilitator would work through the peak bodies to determine how Aboriginal land management can inform Landcare, and how Landcare can support Aboriginal land managers. Pathways will need to be tailored to different areas to reflect local capacity and practice. Budget includes provision for regional travel.
5.2 Simple, accessible program to provide resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working on country.	\$20m per year ongoing	This will provide additional support to Indigenous Ranger programs and support the development of indigenous Landcare as outlined in 5.1.



Building a Resilient Australia - Programs and Costings

6. An investigation into a national environmental accounting system.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
6.1 Investigate/develop a system to incorporate the financial value of the environment into policy decisions.	\$1m one-off project	
6.2 Investigate/develop an equivalent system to determine the health and social benefits of a healthy environment.	\$1m one-off project	

7. Development and support of education and engagement programs to build better understanding of environment and Landcare issues and the relationship between country and city.

PROJECT	Cost	Notes
7.1 Support programs which actively encourage exchange between city and country.	\$2m per year ongoing	E.g. Green Nomads, WWOOF, BlazeAid etc
7.2 Integration of Landcare into the National Curriculum to embed understanding and participation from childhood onwards.	\$1m one-off project	This project will include identifying the most appropriate place for Landcare to be integrated into the existing National Curriculum, and carrying out that integration. This will include development of materials and resources as required.

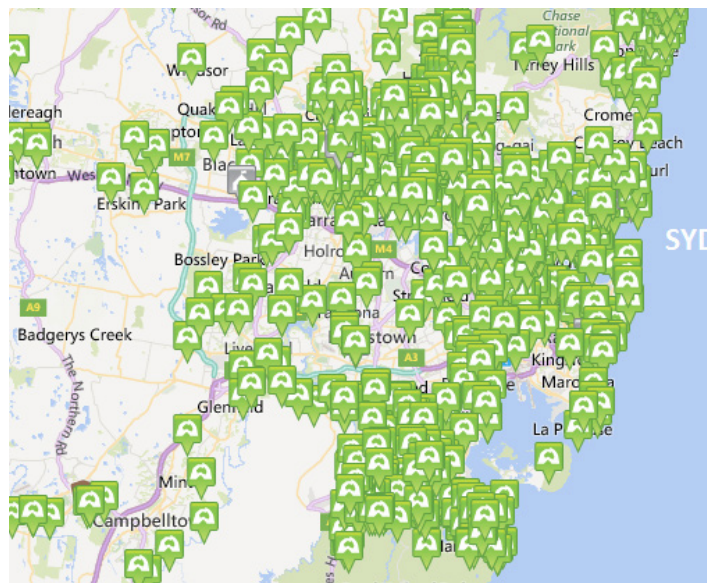
TOTAL INVESTMENT	\$8m one-off projects \$158.15m annually (of which \$120m is already recurrent, see 1.3)	
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2,548
GROUPS



Data from the National Landcare Directory; 12/04/2016



Active Landcare Community
Metropolitan Melbourne, VIC



1,055
GROUPS



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