



Wimmera Landcare and Community Participation Plan 2021



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Key objectives and outcomes

Landcare and community participation is key to achieving effective and efficient natural resource management across the Wimmera CMA region. The objective of this plan is to engage Landcare and the community in regional scale natural resource management and the design and delivery of projects that acknowledge local conditions and align regional community priorities with Australian and Victorian Government priorities.

The plan identifies appropriate approaches for encouraging Landcare and community participation in the Australian Government's Regional Land Partnerships. It outlines how Wimmera CMA will engage and support Landcare and the community in prioritising and delivering natural resource management activities as they relate the Australian Government's 5-year Outcomes and investment priorities across the Wimmera Management Unit (table 1).

The plan aligns with the strategic directions of the Victorian Government's Victorian Landcare Program and Environmental Volunteering Plan, which outlines four focus areas to address the challenges and issues currently experienced by the sector and offers ways to overcome the barriers to attracting new volunteers (table 2).

Environment Outcomes	
Outcome 1	By 2023, there is restoration of, and reduction in threats to, the ecological character of Ramsar Sites, through the implementation of priority actions.
Outcome 2	By 2023, the trajectory of species targeted under the Threatened Species Strategy, and other EPBC Act priority species, is stabilised or improved.
Outcome 3	By 2023, invasive species management has reduced threats to the natural heritage Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties through the implementation of priority actions.
Outcome 4	By 2023, the implementation of priority actions is leading to an improvement in the condition of EPBC Act listed Threatened Ecological Communities.
Agriculture Outcomes	
Outcome 5	By 2023, there will be increased awareness and adoption of land management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, biodiversity and vegetation.
Outcome 6	By 2023, there is an increase in the capacity of agriculture systems to adapt to significant changes in climate and market demands for information on provenance and sustainable production.

Table 1. Regional Land Partnerships Outcomes

Key area 1	Sustain: Support and respond to the evolving needs of the environmental volunteer landscape by improving access to grants, guidelines, technical assistance and training, while streamlining administration requirements.
Key area 2	Expand: Facilitate opportunities for all Victorians to volunteer by developing innovative ways to act for the environment.
Key area 3	Value: Communicate and celebrate the efforts of environmental volunteering so that volunteers know they are making a difference.
Key area 4	Understand: Understand motivations, barriers and opportunities concerning volunteering to inform program design and continuous improvement.

Table 2. Environmental Volunteering Plan Focus Areas



Audience and stakeholders

Support provided by the Victorian Government to groups in the Wimmera CMA region includes support delivered through the Victorian Landcare Program managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Support provided by the Australian Government to groups in the Wimmera CMA region includes support delivered through the Regional Land Partnerships component of the National Landcare Program.

- Landcare Support project

The Victorian Landcare Program provides support for ten Regional Landcare Coordinators based in Catchment Management Authorities across Victoria plus an Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator. These positions provide a key link between local communities and DELWP.

- Victorian Landcare Grants project

The Victorian Landcare Program provides opportunities for groups to access funding to support works and capacity-building through regionally-devolved grants. Funding allocations and principles for this project are confirmed annually and implemented by Wimmera CMA.

- Victorian Landcare Facilitator Initiative

DELWP administers this initiative to fund local facilitators based with groups across Victoria. In the Wimmera region 5 groups receive funding to support part time positions. There are also positions based in neighbouring regions which work closely with the Wimmera team as required.

- Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine

DELWP funds this publication to raise awareness of Landcare and natural resource management among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community. Contributions from Wimmera groups are welcome.

- Victorian Landcare Gateway

DELWP funds this site to function as the statewide community portal for information on Landcare regions, groups, networks, newsletters and events. The Gateway provides the opportunity for all Landcarers to share information, contacts and resources. Wimmera groups can publish and edit pages and specific information on the Gateway free of charge.

- Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator

The Australian Government's Regional Land Partnerships provide support for Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators based in local communities across

Australia. These positions provide a key link between local communities and the Australian Government to promote sustainable agriculture outcomes. One Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator operates in the Wimmera CMA region.

Regional Land Partnerships and Victorian Landcare Program investment in Wimmera group/network capacity combines with investment from other sources including Smart Farms Small Grants (Australian Government), local government and corporate sponsorship.

At present there are more than 50 community-based groups comprising approximately 1200 members in the Wimmera, supported by a range of network structures. 79% of the region's privately-owned land is under Landcare group coverage. As well as groups that implement sustainable farming and environmental projects on-ground, many individual landholders choose to champion local Landcare principles and practices on their land outside of formalised group structures. Wimmera CMA group support is designed to be inclusive and targeted, tailored for specific circumstances or interests and extending opportunities for participation in cross-property planning and activity as widely as possible while also strengthening opportunities to empower groups/networks.



It is essential that the Wimmera Landcare community and local groups continue to build strong ongoing partnerships and working relationships with the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and other important Aboriginal stakeholders.

The community acknowledges that land is fundamental to Aboriginal cultural heritage and wellbeing. Promoting collaboration and understanding between Aboriginal groups and Landcare groups, supporting the activities of the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator and improving cultural heritage and native title knowledge of NRM practitioners are key goals. Wimmera CMA will continue to support local efforts by Aboriginal stakeholders to collect and apply Traditional Owners' ecological knowledge.



Existing community participation methods

At present, Government at both the state and federal level invests in facilitator positions in the Wimmera to strengthen community capacity to act on problems in the local landscape. These facilitator positions are mostly part-time, based in local communities and employed directly by groups. There continues to be strong support in Wimmera communities for this model of locally-based facilitator positions, with Wimmera CMA providing coordinated support from its centrally located office in Horsham.

While federally-funded and state-funded Landcare facilitators in the Wimmera have much in common in terms of their roles and responsibilities, there are also important distinctions between the roles.

Australian Government-funded Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators have access to a strong national network linking positions active in sustainable agriculture in every state and territory. Groups are well-positioned to access information on priorities and opportunities for federal government investment in the local community through the RALF positions. The Wimmera RALF role is guided by a community-based regional steering committee and focuses predominantly on working with community members and groups which have a sustainable agriculture focus.

Victorian Government-funded Victorian Landcare Facilitator positions form part of a statewide support network for diverse Landcare and community-based NRM groups with a focus on on-ground land and natural environment improvement work. Groups are well-positioned to access information on priorities and opportunities for state government investment in the local community through these positions. These positions have a broad scope which may include urban Landcare and junior Landcare functions, where these are identified as local community priorities.

Facilitators play a very important role in the Wimmera, allowing enthusiastic farmers and other volunteers to scale the level of their involvement in group activity up or down as the farming calendar demands.

Wimmera CMA coordinates its enhanced engagement approach with the facilitators, applying principles from the Victorian CMAs Community Engagement and Partnership Framework and Toolkit:

Principle 1. Embed community engagement and build partnerships in all that we do.

Principle 2. Provide meaningful opportunities for our communities and partners to contribute to strategies and initiatives.

Principle 3. Our community and partnership approaches will be planned, tailored, targeted and evaluated.

Principle 4. Collaborate with our communities and partners, transparently and respectfully and establish clear roles and expectations.

With the emergence of market-based incentives as cost-effective mechanisms for achieving and measuring on-ground outcomes and supporting landholders, it is important to continue to demonstrate and communicate the value of groups and networks to landholders and investors. In 2017 Wimmera CMA engaged Charles Sturt University to deliver a large scale Social Drivers of NRM in the Wimmera survey to evaluate attitudes, values and beliefs and the extent of practice change among rural landholders and community capacity building trends. This evaluation was requested to help strengthen the instrument mix employed by the Authority and to clearly define the investment logic for each approach in our community.

Landcare and community group support is consistent with the broader organisational focus on the four key areas of simpler reporting, streamlined processes, smarter delivery, and stronger engagement.



How the plan will be implemented

Wimmera CMA will continue working with our partners in Landcare and the community to address the challenges, issues and barriers to participation outlined in this plan. We will continue to support the Australian Government and Victorian Government efforts to ensure that investment objectives are specific, measurable,

attainable, realistic and time-bound. We recognise Australian Government and Victorian Government priorities may change over time.

Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-2027

Vision:

A healthy Wimmera catchment where a resilient landscape supports a sustainable and profitable community.

This vision is driven by a triple bottom line approach, where the aim is to improve the environment while providing the greatest social and economic benefits for the community.

Wimmera CMA is guided by the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and the *Water Act 1989*. CMAs in Victoria are required to develop and implement a Regional Catchment Strategy- the overarching strategic framework for the future management of natural assets across a region. Wimmera CMA received overwhelming support and feedback from the community during the development of the Wimmera RCS, and will be responsible for guiding investment and coordinating agreed actions to improve natural resource management. The Wimmera RCS emphasises how achievement of objectives and management measures is dependent on collective effort and outlines the core roles and responsibilities for individual organisations in our region. Local groups of landholders, community members and volunteers are highlighted as critical for the successful delivery of a range of NRM programs for the Wimmera.

All Wimmera Landcare and Community Participation Plan actions deliver on the Wimmera RCS by increasing Landcare engagement and supporting groups to recognise and promote the objectives of the RCS.

Targets and measures of success

While recognising the difficulty of accurately measuring returns on investment in capacity-building, the reality of competing needs and limited resources in NRM means we must continue to strengthen the business case for National Landcare Program and Victorian Landcare Program investment in the Wimmera.

The Wimmera CMA will actively support all external evaluations of National Landcare Program and Victorian Landcare Program investment commissioned. A statewide evaluation of the Victorian Landcare Program was completed in 2019, and National Landcare Program investment is regularly reviewed by the Australian Government to improve outcomes for local communities.

The Wimmera CMA Chair and CEO participate in both formal and informal catch ups with Landcare presidents and fortnightly discussions are held with BGLC to help track success on the CMA's commitment to community and Aboriginal participation and to identify approaches. Longitudinal landholder surveys with Charles Sturt University will also continue to be used to help measure success.

Activity table

Wimmera CMA will direct National Landcare Program and Victorian Landcare Program investment at the regional level to deliver the following activities for groups:

Group function	CMA activity	Measure
Sustain	Provide support, advice and knowledge sharing on natural resource management matters to assist the community to participate in the delivery of projects, including landscape-scale revegetation and enhancement activities	No. groups supported
	Coordinate a shared activity calendar	One calendar implemented
	Provide opportunities for groups to access information on risk management, insurance, conflict resolution	No. groups with access
	Provide opportunities for groups to access training and information to strengthen governance and operational processes	No. groups with access
	Support opportunities for group facilitators and other paid Landcare personnel to access information on Workplace Health & Safety, Worker Rights & Responsibilities	No. facilitators with access
	Coordinate and host regular Wimmera Landcare team meetings	No. meetings
	Promote the group model in all community consultation processes incl. RCS and supporting sub-strategy consultation	No. groups consulted
	Provide opportunities for groups to access project planning maps including the online Pozi resource, and to map all works sites	No. maps accessed
	Support access to a catalogue of resources available for download or loan to groups	No. resources
	Support group evaluation efforts to strengthen project planning and implementation	No. activities

	<p>Provide opportunities for group facilitators to participate in project management and cultural heritage training</p> <p>Support opportunities for local group involvement in state and national strategy consultation and review processes, including National Landcare Program and Victorian Landcare Program reviews</p> <p>Support groups to be incorporated and insured and engage with Landcare Victoria Inc, including the LVI statewide forum</p> <p>Deliver maintenance and start up grants to assist groups to meet basic operating requirements</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to access letters of support from CMA executive to assist funding bids</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to receive feedback on funding applications where probity allows</p> <p>Support groups to strengthen understanding of funding guidelines and priorities</p> <p>Deliver the Victorian Landcare Grants project in the Wimmera</p> <p>Provide input into other grants assessment panels as required</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to continue to implement Wimmera Invasive Plant and Animal Management Strategy</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to help implement and maximise value from roadside management actions</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to use investment planning processes incl. INFFER to define and assess proposed works</p> <p>Support groups to develop business cases and brand projects to attract corporate and philanthropic investment, incl. flagship threatened species</p> <p>Support groups to navigate the organisation by providing a single point for initial CMA contact</p>	<p>No. participants</p> <p>No. groups involved</p> <p>No. groups incorporated and insured</p> <p>No. grants</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. project grants</p> <p>No. panels supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. planning activities</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>One Regional Landcare Coordinator</p>
Expand	<p>Provide opportunities for groups to strengthen Junior Landcare activity</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to promote activities and deliver information at the Wimmera Machinery Field Days</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to undertake educational programs to improve community involvement and awareness of threatened plants and animals and the relevant threatening processes</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to conduct field days, or equivalent activities, that allow land managers and community</p>	<p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p>

	<p>members to see local trial results and best practice demonstrations</p> <p>Provide ongoing opportunities for groups to engage with Wimmera CMA Board and project steering committees</p> <p>Coordinate regular meetings between Network chairs and Wimmera CMA leadership</p> <p>Support opportunities for groups to increase engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities</p> <p>Support opportunities for groups to increase engagement with women</p> <p>Support group efforts to plan for succession incl. leadership and office bearer positions</p>	<p>No. groups engaged</p> <p>No. meetings held</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p>
Understand	<p>Provide opportunities for groups to share information on projects and funding programs</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to secure MoUs with Wimmera CMA</p> <p>Support opportunities for volunteer groups to access labour support and resources through partner organisations such as Conservation Volunteers, or the Landmate program</p> <p>Provide opportunities for groups to participate in the review, updating and implementation of regional strategies and action plans incl. waterway strategies</p> <p>Promote opportunities for groups to collaborate in activities where DELWP is a delivery partner</p> <p>Promote recognition of Wimmera group capacity and needs in the development of interdepartmental Regional Operating Agreements or equivalent agreements</p> <p>Promote opportunities for groups to collaborate in activities where the Centre for Participation is a delivery partner</p> <p>Promote opportunities for Wimmera representation at Victorian Landcare Forums</p> <p>Promote opportunities for group involvement in cultural heritage training activities</p> <p>Promote opportunities for groups to collaborate with the Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator</p> <p>Support opportunities for groups to increase understanding of Barengi Gadjin Land Council aspirations articulated in the Country Plan 'Growing What is Good'</p> <p>Promote cross-regional collaboration and communication between facilitators and groups</p>	<p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. agreements</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. activities</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. activities</p> <p>No. participants</p> <p>No. activities</p> <p>No. activities</p> <p>No. groups supported</p> <p>No. activities</p>

	Support groups to host an annual, regionally-based forum for Landcare and other land managers to share knowledge and skills	No. groups supported
Value	Provide opportunities for groups to access GIS and website support to document and share achievements	No. groups supported
	Support opportunities for groups to access media and promotional support	No. groups supported
	Maintain a strong Wimmera profile in key media incl. the Victorian Landcare magazine, the Wimmera Farmer and Landcare in Focus, and the National Landcare Program Facebook page where possible.	No. articles
	Promote Landcare Gateway opportunities for groups to share news and event information	No. groups supported
	Promote group activity on the CMA website and social media platforms	No. groups supported
	Support group newsletters	No. newsletters
	Promote Wimmera group representation in state Landcare award nominations	No. nominations
	Provide opportunities for group president visits with Wimmera CMA Chair and CEO	No. activities
	Provide opportunities for groups to host events to celebrate anniversaries of Landcare in Victoria	No. events
	Promote opportunities for groups to invite Ministerial involvement in local activities	No. groups supported



Monitoring, review and evaluation

The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* requires CMAs to track and report on the implementation of management measures articulated in the RCS, and Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) are important elements of this plan. Wimmera CMA aims to collect data from all partner organisations delivering RCS objectives and management measures. MER for the delivery of this Wimmera Regional Landcare and Community Participation Plan will be integrated into that larger process. Wimmera CMA will manage, develop and implement a monitoring plan for partner organisations in accordance with the DELWP Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) framework. This data will be collected, where possible spatially, reviewed and reported on towards the end of the annual reporting period. Partners will be included in the review process. Using this data, a review of the management measures will be assessed by relevant Wimmera CMA advisory groups including the Wimmera Partnerships group. They are guided by a framework of analysis, design, delivery and review for all natural asset projects, including capacity-building and group support components.

Action planning for the subsequent year will be informed by that evaluation. This mechanism will allow for implementation tracking and adaptive management as required. It will also encourage collaboration and partnership building between stakeholders and the community.

The RCS highlights how the response of the environment to NRM activities, known as 'condition change', occurs over long timeframes and is also subject to other factors beyond the control of NRM organisations, such as drought and flood. Similarly, influencing change in farming practices is subject to other factors, such as external economic factors, that are beyond the influence of NRM organisations. The RCS commits to measurement of condition change and landholder practice change where specific funding is allocated for that purpose, recognising that the measurement of these changes is relatively resource intensive.

Wimmera CMA is also committed to supporting Victorian Landcare Program statewide evaluations led by DELWP, and National Landcare Program nation-wide evaluations led by the Australian Government.

References for further information

Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy:

<https://wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au>

Regional Land Partnerships:

<http://www.nrm.gov.au/regional-land-partnerships>

Environmental Volunteering Plan:

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/home/victorians-volunteering-for-nature>

Victorian Landcare Gateway:

<https://www.landcarevic.org.au/>

Victorian CMAs Community Engagement and Partnership Framework and Toolkit:

<https://viccatchments.com.au/strategic-priorities/strategic-frameworks/>

Barengi Gadjin Land Council Country Plan 'Growing What is Good'

<https://www.bglc.com.au/>