



Regional Landcare Support Plan



2018-2023

The North Central Catchment Management Authority acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners within the region, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in land and natural resource management.



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Introduction

Landcare is a well-established community-based movement in north central Victoria. Landcare groups successfully engage their communities to address local and landscape-scale issues by taking direct action through on-ground works, up-skilling their volunteers and working in partnership with government agencies and other stakeholders.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) recognises the important role community groups play in protecting and enhancing the natural resources of north central Victoria. It also recognises and values the significant volunteer movement in natural resource management (NRM) that is characteristic of the regional community. Dedicated community members are fundamental to NRM in north central Victoria and we have an incredibly enthusiastic and active volunteer community.

The plan was developed during January–June 2018. It builds on the previous plan, with revised input from the North Central CMA Regional Engagement Committee, Landcare Network Chairs, Landcare Network Facilitators and North Central CMA staff.

This Regional Landcare Support Plan explains how the North Central CMA does and will support Landcare and community based NRM groups in the region – working together to protect and enhance our natural assets.

Strategic alignment

Landcare groups and networks have a long history of successfully addressing NRM challenges by undertaking works that improve the health and condition of the environment and the sustainability of farming in the region.

A Landcare community that is active and engaged is critical for the successful implementation of the North Central CMA's Regional Catchment Strategy (2013–2019). A clear objective of the RCS is to work closely with our community. Landcare

provides a direct connection to community and, by working in partnership with our Landcare groups, we continue to strengthen our approach to protecting and enhancing our natural assets. It will also ensure that we realise the long-term vision for NRM in north central Victoria: A community active in protecting and enhancing the integrity of its catchment.

Our vision:

A community
active in protecting
and enhancing
the integrity of its
catchment.



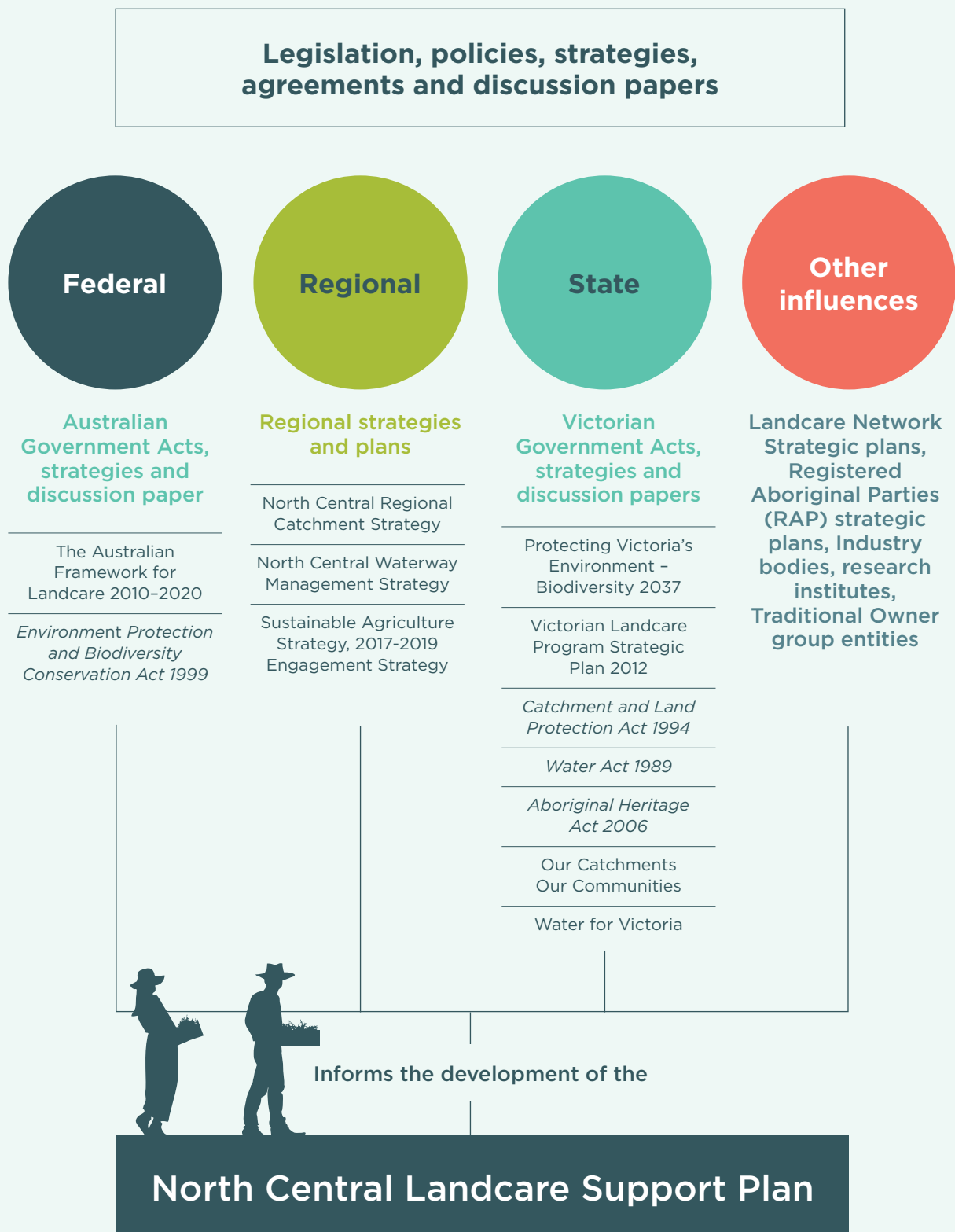


FIGURE 1. NORTH CENTRAL LANDCARE SUPPORT PLAN STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Regional Landcare Support Plan is to ensure the North Central CMA continues to be effective in supporting Landcare groups and networks to achieve their goals. To achieve this task, the Regional Landcare Support Plan outlines the five functions of Landcare* that the North Central CMA will target with its support: Operate, Engage, Collaborate, Do, Tell.

The North Central CMA aims to support Landcare in the region to:

Operate: effective and efficient groups and networks

Engage: communities in environmental stewardship

Collaborate: with others to enhance skills and possibilities

Do: on-ground works that make a difference

Tell: people about the successes and lessons

The five functions are linked in sequence as demonstrated in Figure 2.

The scope of the Regional Landcare Support Plan is limited to the North Central CMA and its support for Landcare in north central Victoria. It is not a strategic plan for Landcare.

The Regional Landcare Support Plan will guide Landcare support in north central Victoria over the next five years. It is designed to be flexible and allow the North Central CMA to respond to the changing circumstances and needs of the regional Landcare community.

*The Regional Landcare Support Plan has adopted the five functions of Landcare as outlined in the '2012 Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan – Supporting Landcare for the future'.

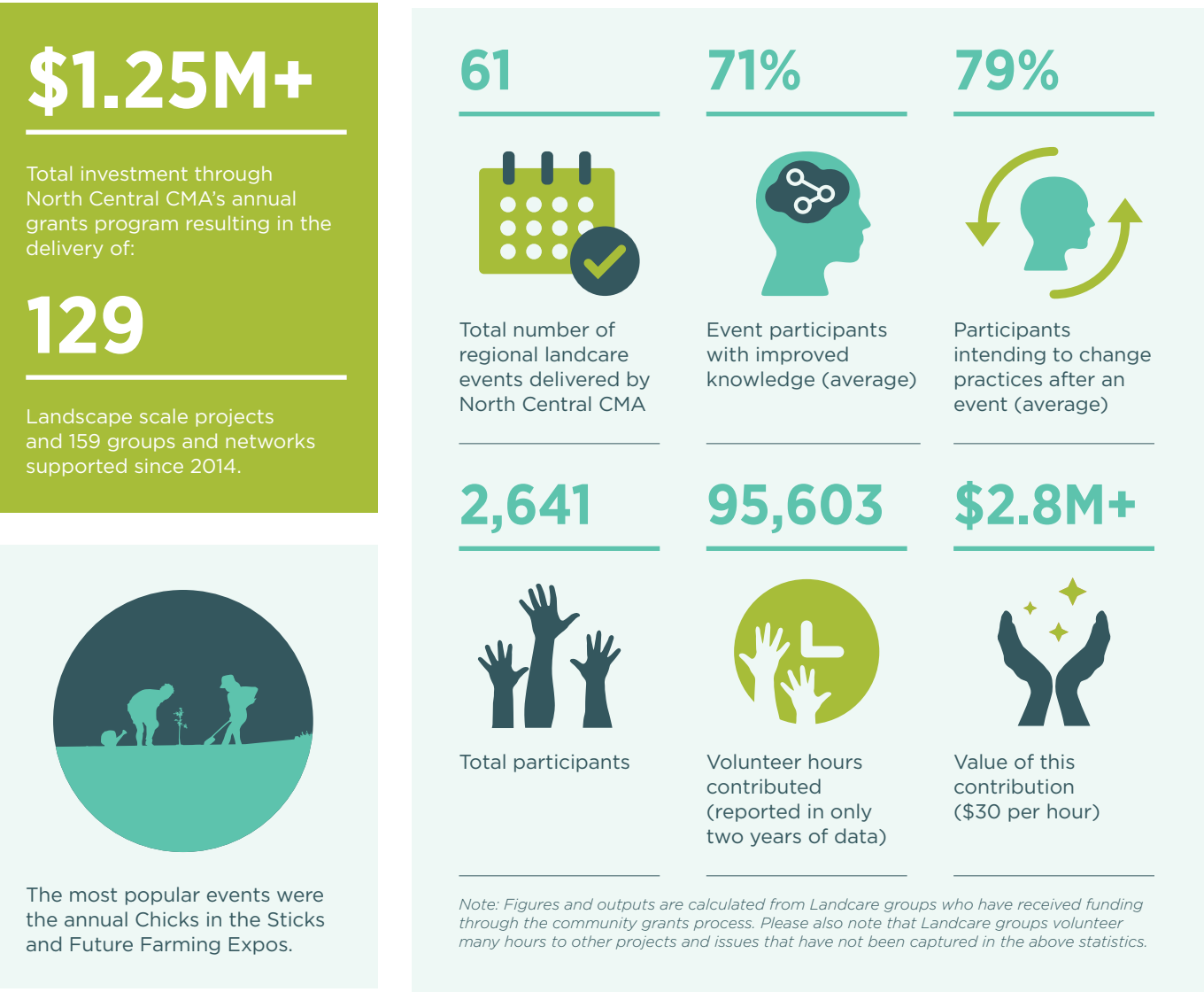
FIGURE 2. THE SEQUENTIAL LINKAGES BETWEEN THE FIVE FUNCTIONS OF LANDCARE



Key achievements

The support actions for the region set out in the previous plan were successfully achieved despite annual reductions across the four-year period in funding and resources.

2016–2018 activities, resources and events



Support Action Plan Improvements

Telling the story of Landcare is a fundamental support action of the plan. Upon reflection of the 2014–2018 Support Actions, the ‘Tell’ function of Landcare could be better supported in the future.

Targets relating to Landcare promotion, media releases, social media content and production of grant recipient case studies were not wholly fulfilled.

In addition, group health survey responses reflect volunteer recognition events are not overly well received in the North Central CMA region, Landcare volunteers prefer regional support to complete Landcare Award (or similar) nominations for their groups, rather than individual years of service recognition events.

Future activities, resources and events delivered through the North Central CMA Landcare team will focus on the highest priorities for Landcare groups, as reported in the annual group health survey. Data trends indicate the priorities are:

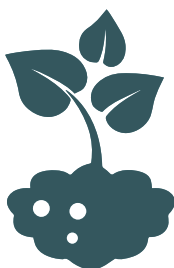
**Pest and
weed control**



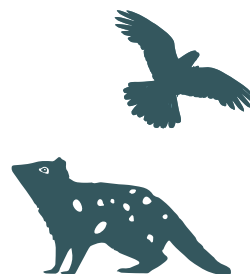
**Repairing
land
degradation
(e.g. erosion,
salinity)**



Revegetation



**Threatened
species
management**



**Capacity
building**



Landcare in north central Victoria

North central Victoria is the birthplace of Landcare. The grassroots movement began back in 1986 when a group of farming neighbours at Winjallok, near St Arnaud, recognised they could be more effective and have a greater impact if they addressed common NRM concerns together. The catalyst to start a Landcare group has not changed over the decades but the objectives and focus of individual groups vary greatly, with over 600 groups now operating across Victoria.

Landcare in the North Central CMA region has evolved over time and the number of community NRM groups has steadily grown beyond 160. Both the natural assets and the broader community of the region have benefited greatly from the innovative and progressive contributions of Landcare. Advocacy of the Landcare movement has continued to increase, aided by a Landcare support program that commenced in the region in 1997. The introduction of such a support program provided much needed assistance to the region's volunteer network as did the introduction of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program in 2012.

Landcare at present

Annually, Landcare groups are given the opportunity to take part in the 'Supporting Landcare in North Central Victoria Survey'. Survey results provide the North Central CMA with a picture of how Landcare in the region is travelling in terms of group health, focus and needs. Groups are asked to rate their overall strength using one of the categories listed in Table 1.

Issues and challenges

In 2017, more than 80% of the groups that took part in the survey, rated themselves as stable or above. This is consistent with previous results indicating most groups in the region are in good health and are active.

The remaining groups rated themselves as struggling, surviving or barely hanging on and it is these groups that require more support and assistance if they are to continue to function.

Groups are also asked to list their current greatest issues and challenges. These included:

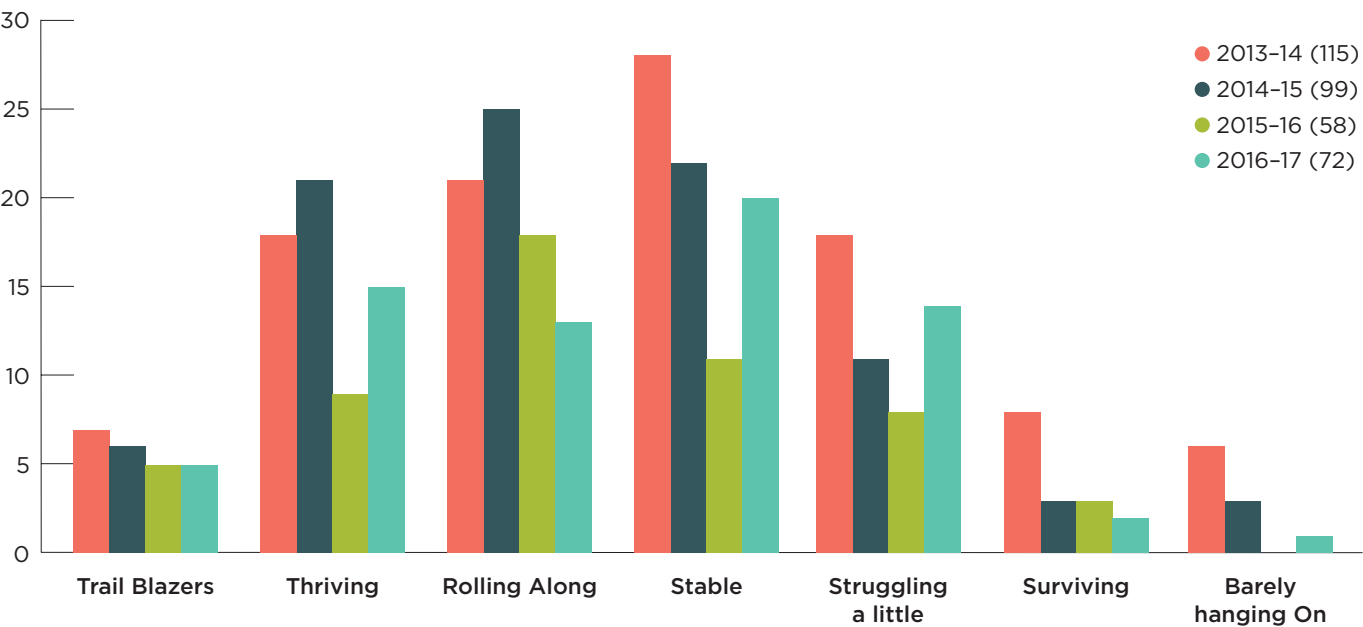
- Ageing membership.
- Difficulty in recruiting new members, including younger generations.
- Attracting and obtaining funding to undertake multi-year projects.
- Administration burdens associated with grant funding.
- Weather conditions, drought and flood.
- Land manager and policy changes impacting project delivery (e.g. OH&S, Site approvals, Child Safety Standards, cultural heritage approval processes).



TABLE 1. GROUP HEALTH CATEGORIES

Rating	Description
Trail Blazers	Our group has its own identity and strives for excellence. We are clear on what we are trying to achieve and our role in achieving it.
Thriving	We are very motivated and have an action plan that we actively work towards. We have good geographic representation from our local area.
Rolling Along	Our group has an action plan or plans to develop one. We feel we are making progress and are working within our current capabilities.
Stable	Our group is in a stable situation and achieving what it needs to.
Struggling a little	Our activities are often prompted by a funding round or a call from the support person. Our group feels like it is dwindling in interest and numbers.
Surviving	Our meetings are irregular and only a few core members come. There are little or no on-ground works happening.
Barely Hanging On	We have effectively stalled. We meet rarely (or have chosen to be in recess) and are not currently undertaking any group activities or projects.

FIGURE 3. TRENDS IN GROUP HEALTH RATINGS SINCE 2013 (NUMBER OF GROUPS SUBMITTING SURVEY)



Support

Landcare is well supported in the region (Figure 4). 137 active groups in the region are members of the region's eleven Landcare networks, which operate in varying degrees of formality. The network model supports local groups that were previously working in isolation.

Furthermore, more than 75% of Landcare groups in the region are supported by one of the eleven local Landcare Facilitators.

The Landcare Facilitators are employed through the Victorian Government's Landcare Facilitator Program, supporting the work of the Landcare community at a local-scale, assisting them to protect, enhance and restore their natural environment.

The North Central CMA directly supports Landcare across the entire North Central CMA region through the employment of two positions:

- **Regional Landcare Coordinator (RLC):** a Victorian government funded position that provides the overall coordination, strategic advice and advocacy for the Victorian Landcare Program within the North Central CMA region.
- **Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator (RALF):** a Australian government funded position that assists landholders to adopt management practices that sustain agricultural production.

Both roles provide a point of contact for Landcare groups and networks. They develop partnerships with industry and government enabling the successful delivery of strategic support to groups, resulting in a sustained growth in community awareness, on-ground action and increased community capacity.



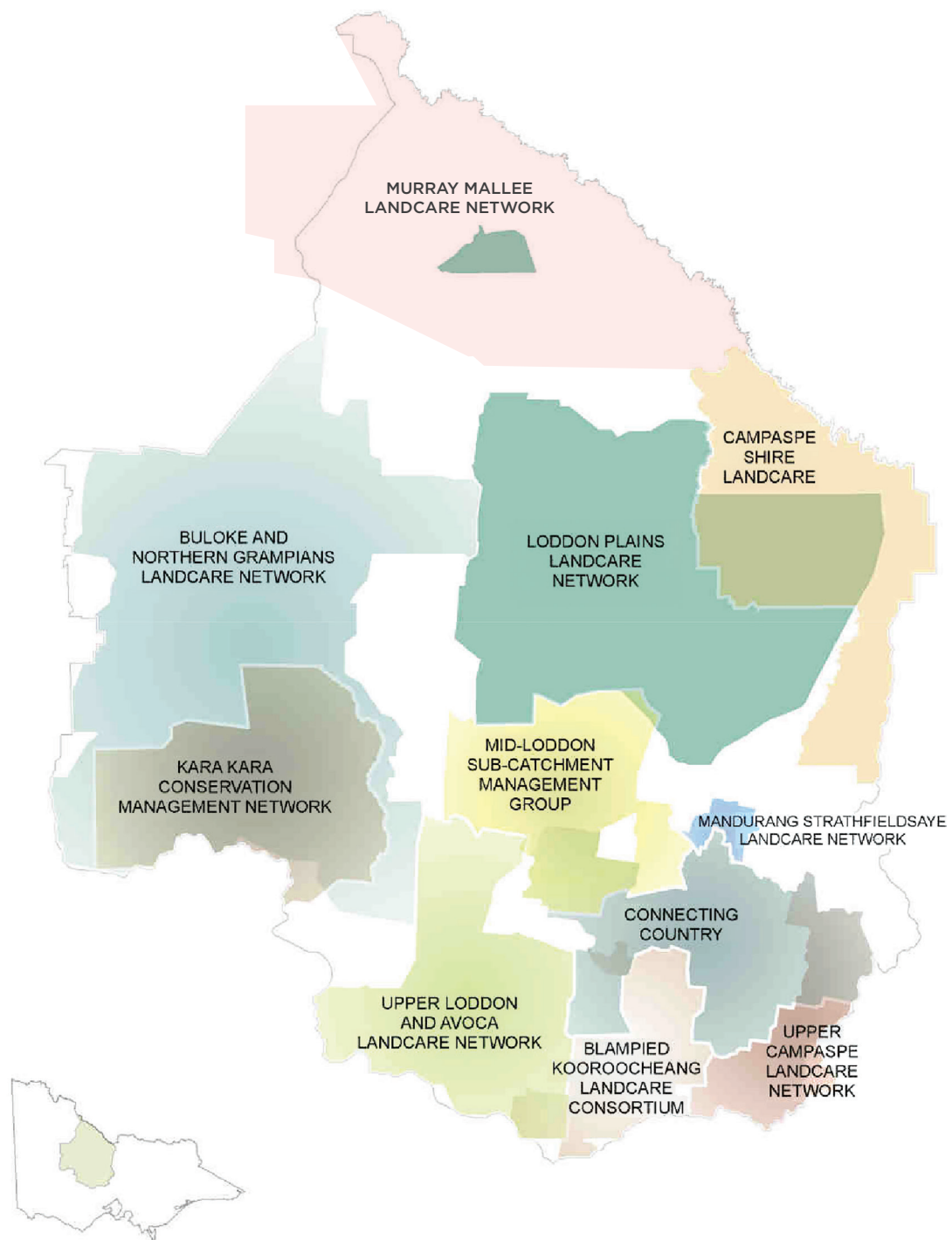


FIGURE 4. MAP OF THE NORTH CENTRAL CMA REGION SHOWS AREAS SUPPORTED BY LANDCARE NETWORKS, LANDCARE CONSORTIUMS, LANDCARE FACILITATORS AND SHIRE-BASED STAFF. THE AREAS NOT SHADED ARE SUPPORTED BY THE NORTH CENTRAL CMA'S REGIONAL LANDCARE COORDINATOR AND REGIONAL LANDCARE FACILITATOR.

Implementation

The implementation and success of the Regional Landcare Support Plan requires ownership from the North Central CMA corporate family including the Board, staff and the newly established Community Leaders Group and Community Connections Network (previously the Community Consultative Committee). The North Central CMA recognises Landcare belongs to the community, and respects its independence, autonomy and partnership approach.

The Community Project Leaders Group and Community Connections Network advocates strongly for Landcare, and has done so since the first community-based model (the Natural Resource Management Committee) was established in 2007. Members have strong links with Landcare groups and networks and their local communities.

As Landcare networks grow stronger and establish good governance practices they are increasingly taking on larger projects. The North Central CMA is keen to support and partner with these networks to undertake landscape-scale projects consistent with the RCS.

Exploring the best ways to foster strong partnerships to optimise the synergies between community based NRM groups and the North Central CMA is an ongoing work in progress.



Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Annually, the North Central CMA collects 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 the North Central Landcare Report Card.

As described in the Support Actions table, a review of the plan during the implementation as part of a continual improvement process will be undertaken.

Data will be collected at Landcare events to evaluate their success and to find out how they can be improved.

The North Central CMA also requires groups and networks reporting on their Victorian Landcare Grants (or similar) to document the successes and challenges of their completed projects to further inform common themes for targeted support.



Support actions



To ensure the North Central CMA continues to support Landcare effectively an action table has been developed (see Table 2). The actions align with the five functions of Landcare: Operate, Engage, Collaborate, Do, Tell. The North Central CMA's ability to achieve and deliver these activities will be subject to the availability of funding and resources.

TABLE 2. LANDCARE SUPPORT ACTIONS FOR NORTH CENTRAL VICTORIA

Actions	Quantity/ target	Timing					
			Operate	Engage	Collaborate	Do	Tell
Review and update the Regional Landcare Support Plan to ensure the plan is relevant and activities are achievable	1 review	Annually	✓	✓			
Coordinate and administer the Victorian Landcare Grants program	1 grants program	Annually	✓	✓			
Support groups to undertake on-ground works and capacity building activities through grants programs	1 grants program	Annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Support groups to meet basic operating costs through the grants programs	1 grants program	Annually	✓	✓		✓	
Support the formation of new groups and networks and reinvigorate groups coming out of recess		On-going	✓	✓		✓	
Celebrate and recognise Landcare volunteers in the region	1 campaign	Annually	✓	✓			✓
Work with groups and networks to identify and invest in training opportunities that assist them to build skills and capacity	2 training days	Annually	✓			✓	
Support individuals to increase knowledge and skills on sustainable land practices	2 events	Annually	✓	✓		✓	
Host Landcare Facilitator meetings	4 meetings	Annually	✓	✓	✓		
Provide training to the eleven Landcare Facilitators across the region	1 training day	Annually	✓	✓		✓	

Actions	Quantity/ target	Timing					
			Operate	Engage	Collaborate	Do	Tell
Provide support and resources to the Landcare networks to develop or update Strategic Plans through the North Central Grants programs		Annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Host a Landcare network chairs meeting between North Central CMA Landcare staff, CEO and Board Chair	2 meetings	Annually	✓	✓	✓		
Promote the use of the Victorian Landcare Gateway to groups and get them to maintain their page		Ongoing	✓	✓		✓	✓
Maintain a regional Landcare database of the groups and networks across the region	1 database	Annually	✓	✓			
Work with groups and networks to maintain maps in iMap		Annually	✓	✓	✓		
Collect information on group function and health through the 'Supporting Landcare in North Central Victoria Survey'	1 survey	Annually	✓	✓		✓	✓
Raise awareness and promote Landcare through the monthly regional newsletter the North Central chat	11 news-letters	Annually	✓	✓		✓	✓
Raise landholder and community awareness of NRM and Landcare at field days	1 stand	Annually	✓	✓		✓	✓
Support Landcare groups to connect with, and recruit and retain volunteers		On-going	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Encourage agencies and funding bodies to listen to Landcarers when developing planning, priority setting and policy		On-going	✓		✓	✓	
Work with and support groups and networks to develop projects and funding bids	2 workshops	Annually	✓	✓	✓		
Foster partnerships with groups and networks to deliver on-ground works and community engagement activities		Annually	✓		✓		
Increase the capacity and confidence of regional community leaders involved in agriculture, production and protection of natural resources	2 events	Annually	✓	✓			
Celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Landcare across the region	1 event	2021	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Actions	Quantity/ target	Timing	Functions				
			Operate	Engage	Collaborate	Do	Tell
Promote the Victorian and National Landcare Awards	1 campaign	Annually	✓	✓			✓
Produce media releases focused on North Central CMA grants programs	2 media releases	Annually	✓				✓
Produce case studies on Victorian Landcare Grants Projects undertaken by groups	4 cases studies	Annually	✓	✓	✓		✓
Produce a report card on Landcare achievements and group health	1 report card	March Annually	✓		✓		✓
Share Landcare group and network stories on Facebook and Twitter	12 twitter/ Facebook updates	Annually	✓	✓			✓
Support the engagement of youth in Landcare e.g. Intrepid Landcare	1 event	Annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support the engagement of Traditional Owner groups in Landcare	1 event	Annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



