

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority



Regional Landcare Plan 2013- 2018

People, Passion & Place



This Regional Landcare Plan is a framework developed to guide regional support for Landcare. The Plan is endorsed by the region's five Landcare Networks and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and it reflects the principles of the Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan.

The history of the Landcare relationship in this region pre-dates the formation of Victoria's CMAs; many Landcare groups go back over 25+ years to the days of "Soil Conservation" and "Tree Groups". There is a strong culture of group work that predates Landcare and the CMA, and both have benefited from this shared history to forge the existing partnership based on trust and mutual respect.

While the support structures which are in place in this region are important, it is the culture of co-operation, and the investment in people, which defines success. Landcare Networks, Landcare Groups and the WGCMA all recognise their interdependence on one another. The WGCMA is proud of its partnership with Landcare and is pleased to be seen as a leading partner that supports Landcare across the region.

Acknowledgements

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority acknowledges our region's five Landcare Networks and thanks them for helping develop this plan.



YARRAM YARRAM
LANDCARE NETWORK

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Regional Context

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) has one of the most diverse natural resource management regions in Australia. It extends from San Remo on the coast in the west to Lakes Entrance in the east and to Mount Howitt high in the Victorian Alps. It supports intensive agriculture and forestry industries, as well as the tourism industry, which is equally reliant on our natural resources.

The region has extensive brown coal resources associated with power generation, along with other extractive industries. Major water resources are relied upon for urban and rural communities (including part of Melbourne's water supply), the environment and industry. With population growth occurring across much of the region we must be mindful of the explicit value of these natural resources, not the least that of iconic features such as Wilson's Promontory, the Gippsland Lakes and associated wetlands.

WGCMA, through its Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) is committed to involve community groups and networks in on ground work, environmental surveys and monitoring as well as attracting corporate, philanthropic and government funding to undertake natural resource management activities. Community partners, like Landcare, provide information and support to extensive networks of land managers and community members throughout the region on best management practice techniques through research, development and extension activities. Community groups and networks will be encouraged to assist in implementing the RCS by contributing their time, labour, land and financial investment in projects that assist in working towards the RCS objectives. The Regional Landcare Plan is a way of augmenting this process in a way that supports and honours our Landcare partnerships.

Landcare is seen as a key Natural Resource Management (NRM) stakeholder and delivery partner in the region. To emphasise the importance of the landcare partnership, and to remain up-to-date with Landcare issues and trends the WGCMA constituted the Regional Landcare Forum (RLF) in 1999.

Landcare in the WGCMA region

Landcare in the south eastern corner of Victoria has a long and proud history, characterised by a committed and motivated grass roots community that have set about addressing Landcare/NRM issues across the region. Within the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) region there are currently five (5) Landcare Networks and 70 Landcare Groups. The Landcare community across the region has been successfully delivering best practice natural resource management for more than 25 years. Central to this success has been the dedicated and sustained efforts of individual landholders, and Landcare's local community leaders, working with highly skilled community based Landcare Coordinators and Facilitators (C&Fs) who work directly with, and support, rural and peri-urban communities. The region's five (5) Landcare networks are voluntary community-based incorporated bodies overseen by their own Boards and they provide substantial Natural Resource Management and Agricultural Services for their Landcare communities.

Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN)

Bass Coast Landcare Network is organised around NRM knowledge and activity, giving members a sense of joint enterprise and identity. The Network involves practices and ways of doing that are shared to a significant extent among members; this involves much more than simply proving technical knowledge and/or skills associated with NRM.

Landcare in Bass Coast began in 1987 and the Network formed in 2004. There are 10 Landcare groups over six catchments covering 120,000 Ha with members predominately involved in Beef, Dairy, Sheep, a variety of horticulture enterprises as well as some urban Landcare communities.

The BCLN vision is to be a lead organisation in demonstrating a range of possible best practice land management through the testing of ideas and driving innovation; the Network is proud to be a provider of 'high quality' environmental services to individuals and organisations. The Strategic direction is in six key areas;

1. Strengthen engagement with rural communities

2. Establish a comprehensive Land Stewardship education and training framework
3. Implement and continue to develop the Land Stewardship Program
4. Provide quality services and commercialise and publicise the successes of the BCLN
5. Promote new ways of thinking and doing, in environmental management practice
6. Develop and enhance the board and governance processes

Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network (LCLN)

Operating since 1999, with several iterations of size across the geographic area since this time, Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network (previously part of Wellington Catchment Care, then Lake Wellington Landcare Network) now encompasses two sub-catchments, Latrobe Central and West Gippsland. The LCLN is an incorporated association governed by a committed volunteer Board who represent the interests of 23 Landcare Groups and more than 500 members across a geographic area of approximately 600,000 ha.

The LCLN area includes vast areas of remnant Central Gippsland Plains Grassland and Forest Red Gum Grassy Woodland amongst other important vegetation community types and their corresponding fauna. The overarching vision and on-ground activity in the LCLN area has predominantly been towards achieving Biolinks that protect and enhance our environmental sustainability, as well as agricultural productivity.

The Network's Strategic Plan identifies six key areas of the LCLN decision-making and future directions, as identified by the Board and membership. These are;

1. Caring for the Land
2. Landcare Groups & Membership
3. Funding
4. Collaboration & Partnerships
5. Education, Communication & Promotions
6. Governance

Maffra & District Landcare Network (MDLN)

The Maffra and District Landcare Network (MDLN) established in 1998 and supports 16 community Landcare Groups across an area of some 75,000 ha. The network's eastern boundary is defined by the Perry River and the western boundary, shared with the Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network, has Cowwarr and Rosedale as reference points. The southern boundary is defined by the Latrobe River and the wetlands of Lake Wellington. Lake Wellington is part of the renowned Gippsland Lakes system and forms the largest navigable inland waterway in Australia. The Avon and Macalister River valleys at the foothills of the Victorian High Country and Great Dividing Range are the network's northern boundary.

MDLN seeks to support its Landcare community in creating healthy landscapes and sustainable communities through ten strategic areas of operation. These are;

1. Operating with strategic intent
2. Practicing good governance
3. Having a well-recognised and identifiable profile
4. Ensuring effective Landcare results are being delivered on the ground
5. Maintain and expanding collaborative partnerships
6. Communicating and engaging with people effectively
7. Developing people's capabilities
8. Grow participation in Landcare

9. Being effective advocates for Landcare
10. Monitoring, evaluating and reporting achievements and identifying improvement opportunities

South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN)

The South Gippsland Landcare Network formed in 1995 and comprises 19 groups and over 800 families who manage and farm the land. The success of the Network is due to the inspiring contributions made by the passionate individuals and volunteers across an area of 270,000 Ha. The network is bordered by the Strzelecki Ranges to the north and the Bass Strait to the south. To the south-west the network is characterised by the Gippsland Plains bioregion with its lowland coastal, alluvial plains and gentle undulating terrain which rises to the Strzelecki Ranges.

High rainfall and productive soils ensure South Gippsland's place as an important dry-land agricultural region, with strong dairy and beef industries. The regional townships of Leongatha, Meenyan, Foster, Mirboo North and Korumburra are located in the Network.

SGLN's vision is to preserve, protect and enhance the environment of South Gippsland through community lead action by working with government agencies and local businesses. The Network's Strategic Plan identifies six key areas to achieve this;

1. Caring for the Land
2. Landcare Groups and Membership
3. Funding
4. Collaboration and Partnerships
5. Education, Communication & Promotions
6. Governance

Yarram Yarram Landcare Network (YYLN)

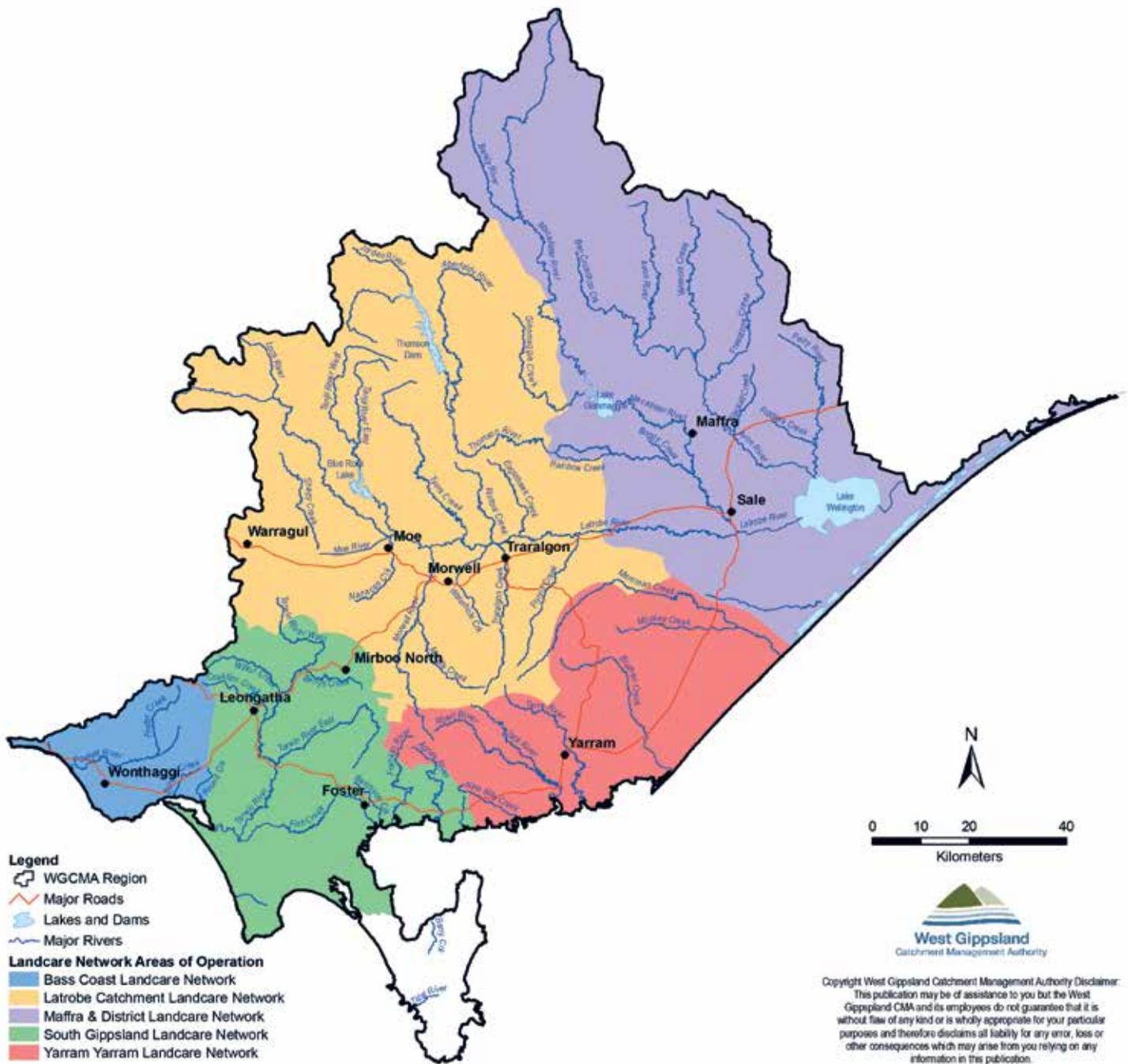
The YYLN was established in 1995 and covers a diverse area of approximately 118,000 ha from the temperate rainforests of the Strzelecki Ranges to the Ramsar listed wetlands of Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park, encompassing the Giffard Plains, along Ninety Mile Beach to Seaspray.

The YYLN is the umbrella organisation for 12 Landcare Groups. It provides support and strategic direction to Landcare volunteers across the district. Members are involved in; protecting remnant vegetation, revegetation, invasive plant and animal control, sustainable agriculture and environmental education. The Network's Landcare Groups provide a framework for locals to get together and take action. The major land-use industries of the region are dairy, beef, high-grade wool sheep, prime lambs and forestry.

The YYLN is a not-for profit, incorporated association, managed by a volunteer board with paid staff charged to manage the day to day running of the organisation and delivery of on-ground sustainable agricultural and environmental stewardship projects. The current YYLN strategic plan has seven key areas of focus;

1. Landcare Groups & Membership
2. Sustainable Agriculture/Production
3. Environmental Stewardship
4. Education, Communication & Promotion
5. Partnerships & Collaboration
6. Funding
7. Governance

Landcare's areas of operation in the West Gippsland Region



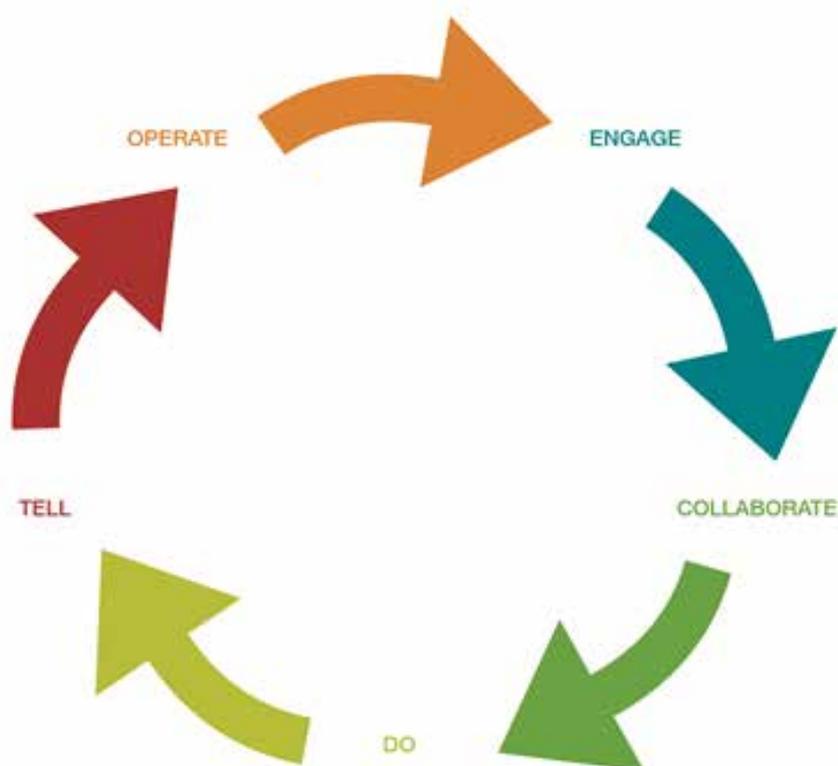
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Strategic Alignment

When Landcare is appropriately supported, coordinated and well governed it improves skills and inspires best practice to undertake on ground action that will create change in catchment condition resulting in improved catchment health and resilience.

The new Victorian Landcare Program Strategic Plan outlines the priorities for the Victorian Government to focus support for Landcare into the future. The plan identifies five functions for Government to support Landcare:

- **Operate** - efficient and effective groups and networks
- **Engage** - groups, networks and 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 in the Landcare story



1. OPERATE. Landcare networks reflect the needs and aspirations of their members. This requires regular, and reflective, Strategic Planning and a strong representative leadership that operates within a responsible governance framework. Landcare leaders need to be supported by professional Landcare staff employed in fair and equitable workplaces in a culture of Workplace Health & Safety.

Statement of Intent: Landcare will operate strategically, utilise best practice and undertake the highest governance standards to deliver outcomes that represent the aspirations and interests of grassroots members.

| Objectives | Example Activities |
|---|---|
| Ensure Landcare Networks are Strategic, Representative, Collaborative and well governed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain & Review Landcare Network Strategic Planning • Maintain strong and longstanding professional relationships • WGCMA's Quarterly Regional Landcare Forum • Landcare Network's GippsLandcare Consortium • WGCMA's Biennial Landcare Strategic Planning Event • Governance Training • Annual Landcare Group Health Scale Assessments |
| Support professional career pathways for Landcare staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WGCMA's Landcare Employment Policy & Procedure • Access to staff training and development opportunities • Professional and appropriate staff Position Descriptions • Annual staff work plans and performance reviews • Effective H/R and Employment Committees |
| Ensure Landcare retains capacity, reputation and skills to deliver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely and comprehensive reporting • Effective and open communication • Continuity of funding for Landcare support staff |

2. ENGAGE. It is important to ensure that Landcare groups are able to engage, and effectively communicate, with their members and other landholders. West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, various Government agencies, community networks, and other groups must also be engaged to ensure effective partnerships that help achieve desired actions and outcomes.

Statement of Intent: Landcare will utilise the best and most appropriate mechanisms to effectively engage with its members and partners

| Objectives | Example Actions |
|--|---|
| Optimise beneficial information flow between Landcare and the WGCMA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain Landcare community membership on the Regional Landcare Forum • Annual Regional Landcare Forum Report to WGCMA Board • Regular meetings between Landcare Chairs and WGCMA CEO • Regular Network Reports to the Regional Landcare Forum |
| Ensure there is regular information flow between agencies, industry and other stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and facilitate relationships with investors • Maintain Landcare presence at relevant forums like; GSAN, GCCN, SAG, • Maintain updated presence on the Landcare gateway |
| Support open Communication between Landcare Staff and Landcare Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain & review Network Communication Strategies • Ensure community focussed newsletters and communiques • Maintain Landcare network relationships with local media • Maintain regular Landcare Network newsletters |

3. COLLABORATE. Landcare is about people working together in their communities to achieve outcomes and improvements in their environment. The best outcomes occur when people achieve shared goals and they enjoy what they are doing.

Statement of Intent: Landcare will continue to share opportunities and demonstrate the benefits of working collaboratively. This includes shared responsibility to develop skills, and build capacity, to undertake best practice actions together.

| Objectives | Example Actions |
|--|--|
| Develop relevant projects with a range of partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop projects that will engage widely across the community • Access a range of funding sources • Multi-agency project steering committees • Develop projects that incorporate partners and cross boundaries • Involve investors in project planning and delivery |
| Support diverse project partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WGCMA continues to work collaboratively with Landcare networks in the region with grant funding opportunities • Develop, maintain and retain partnerships with potential investors |
| Ensure Landcare is inclusive, diverse and accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule activities timed to meet volunteer availability • Identify and target new groups that may support and enhance Landcare • Seek opportunities for landcare to be involved in existing events • Schedule social events, dinners and functions • Time group activities to encourage families to be involved |

4. DO. The protection and rehabilitation of our natural resources is a primary focus of Landcare groups in West Gippsland. Project planning must be long term and should be supported by at least 3 - 5 year funding cycles. Long-term partnerships with key stakeholders are essential. Projects need to be developed to link environmental, productivity and social parameters.

Statement of Intent: An important aspect of Landcare is the ability to undertake works and achieve outcomes. Landcare will continue to support members and others to undertake activities that improve and enhance our landscapes and communities.

| Objectives | Example Actions |
|--|---|
| Deliver long term integrated projects across the region | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver projects that reflect to Landcare Network priorities • Deliver projects that reflect Local Landcare Action Plans • Projects will integrate environment, productivity and social parameters • Where possible deliver 3 - 5 year projects that link to the RCS |
| Provide strong evidence of local community ownership of projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landcare is developing, funding and implementing projects • Deliver projects that achieve cross- boundary outcomes • Acknowledgment and celebration of achievement • Project outcomes demonstrate community participation • Ensure community representation on project steering committees |
| Ensure our Landcare community has the skills and capacity to deliver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver best practice methods and processes across the region • Develop skills and meet the needs of local Landcare Groups • Provide training opportunities for local Landcare members • Reflect and act on Landcare Group Health • Maintain VLG Small Maintenance Grants for active Landcare Groups • Ensure Group Action Plans remain relevant and linked to best practice |

| | |
|---|---|
| 5. TELL. Landcare is more than just planting trees. If more people are to be involved, the image of Landcare needs to accurately reflect the diversity and variety of activity. Promoting Landcare and its achievements is vital for continued and enhanced community support. | |
| Statement of Intent: Landcare has an effective approach and method to collect stories of success and promote these to a wide range of audiences. | |
| Objectives | Example Actions |
| That Landcare is well known and understood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver effective and relevant information in a variety of forums • Maintain a Landcare presence at farmers markets and shows • Maintain a presence on the Landcare Gateway website • Create Regional Landcare Forum reports • Publicise local involvement and collaborative engagement |
| Have investors and funders believe Landcare delivers good outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage landholders beyond existing membership of landcare • Develop and promote case studies of Landcare’s successful projects • Compile an Annual Regional Landcare Report Card |
| Ensure the contribution of Landcare volunteers is acknowledged | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seek media recognition of achievements • Nominate community members for recognition • Promote opportunities for community spokespersons |

Delivering on this plan

The WGCMA strongly supports Landcare and the mutual benefits it provides to achieve improved catchment outcomes. This plan is based on a position of mutual trust and respect and that the support offered, by WGCMA, to all Landcare Networks, and their Groups, is equitable.

The integration of the CMA, Landcare networks and Landcare groups within this region recognises the strengths and weakness and interdependence of each other. Importantly the presence of strong and effective Landcare networks within this region provides a critical interface between the WGCMA at the regional level and the Landcare groups at the community level. While the support structures which are in place in this region are important, it is the culture of co-operation and the investment in people which appear to be the defining ingredient for success.

The Regional Landcare Plan will be annually monitored and reviewed by the Regional Landcare Forum (RLF). The RLF is a quarterly gathering of Landcare representatives that is charged with ensuring the WGCMA Board remains “in touch” with Landcare and the region’s Landcare networks. The RLF provides advice and recommendations to the Board on regional Landcare trends and issues and provides a voice for the region’s Landcare Networks and the Landcare community. The membership of the RLF includes; two CMA Board members, at least one community Landcare member and the network Coordinator from each Landcare Network, the WGCMA’s CEO and a range of CMA staff including the Regional Landcare Coordinator.

The review process for the Regional Landcare Plan will include capturing specifics that will be incorporated into the Annual Regional Landcare Report Card.



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