



Landcare  
Australia

# The Landcare Landscape - 2011 Landcare Volunteering Survey Report

September 2011



# Foreword

In July and August 2011 a nationwide survey was conducted by Landcare Australia Ltd in order to capture the needs and challenges faced by volunteer Landcare groups ('Landcare' including Coastcare, Bushcare, 'Friends of', Rivercare and Dunecare groups). The survey was conducted to coincide with Landcare Week, which runs from September



5th to 11th and aimed to help raise awareness of the Landcare movement and the vital role it plays in repairing and protecting Australia's biodiversity and the uptake of sustainable production practices.

The 'Landcare Landscape' survey shows a passionate and dedicated movement of people who are concerned for the future of our natural resources and the need for support to assist them to continue with their valuable environmental and community work. The surveyed results showed that Landcare groups generally have between 11 and 50 members which most commonly undertake planting and weed management activities a few days per month with the majority stating that the main reason as to why they donate their time to landcare is due to concern for local environmental issues. The average age of landcare volunteers is over 50 yet there is also a healthy representation of members under 18 years of age and a steady and active recruitment of new members happening. It was stated that the major perceived barrier towards volunteering is the lack of time for many people and in order for groups to maintain active volunteers the most required needs are funding and new volunteers, respectively. Most landcare volunteer work is undertaken primarily on public land and 83% of respondents believe that the main aim of their groups' activities is to protect the local environment for future generations.

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# The Results

## Landcare Groups

### 1. Location of Landcare groups

A total of 653 Landcare volunteers took part in the survey. The majority of respondents were from groups based in NSW (33%), followed by VIC (26.5%), WA (13%), QLD (12%), TAS (5%), SA (4.4%), ACT (3.7%) and NT (2.8%).

### 2. Group membership numbers and participation

The majority of groups had between 20-50 members (28%) and between 11-20 members (24%) with just 7.4% of groups having the least amount of member (1-5).

As shown in figure 1, 33.2% of groups stated that their member base which regularly participated in group events was 6-10 volunteers, 26% stated that their regular member numbers range from 11-20, 20.1% have 1-5 regular members and 13% have 20-50 regular members.

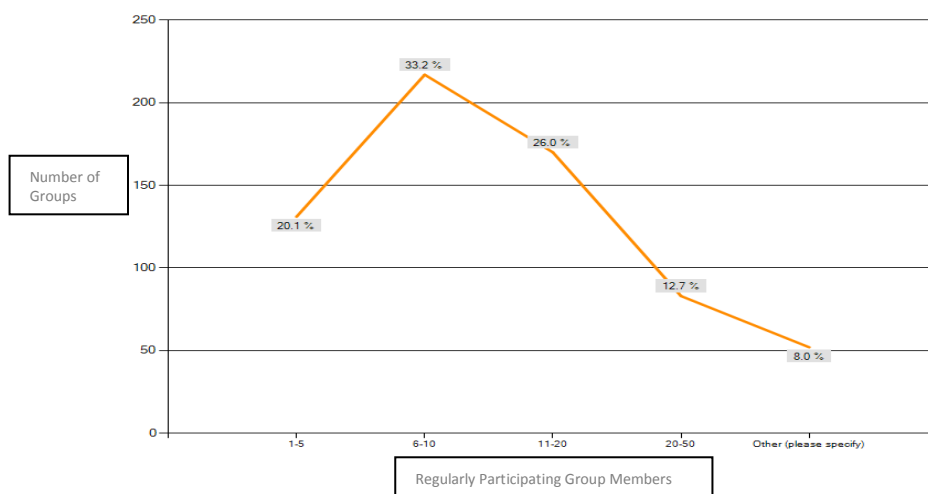


Figure 1. Group members whom regularly participate in group events.

### 3. What is the average age of Landcare volunteers?

When asked the average age of volunteers in the Landcare group 50.8% of respondents selected over 50 and 26.8% selected between 40 and 49. 12.1% selected 18 years old or less with only 2.4% of groups representing members with the average ages between 18 and 32, figure 2 demonstrates the drop in groups with an average age of between 18 and 32.

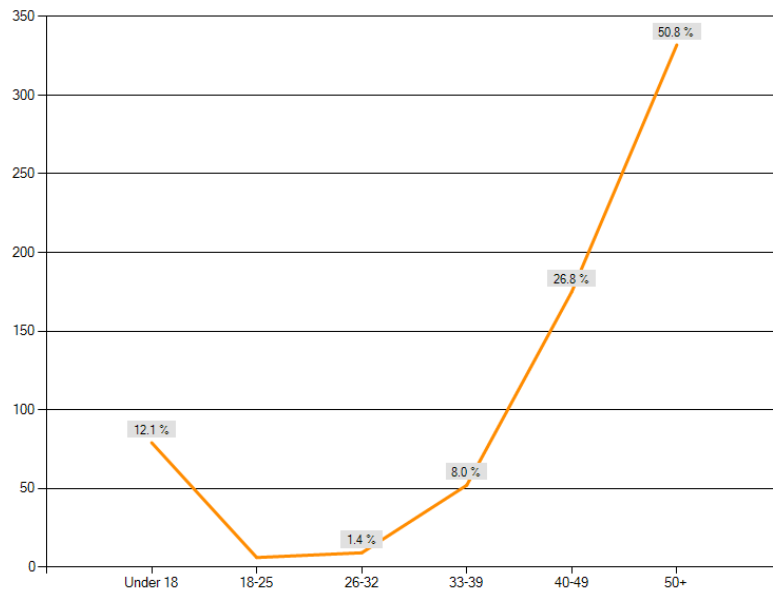


Figure 2. Average age of Landcare group volunteers

#### 4. How long have the Landcare groups existed?

Landcare groups stated that they have existed anywhere from 1 year to 100 years! Most volunteers stated that their group has been formed for around 10-20 years.

#### 5. How often do Landcare groups meet/ work?

28.5% of groups advised they hold a meeting/ working day 2-5 days/ month, 26% of groups advised that they meet up 1 day/ month, whilst 16.4% held a group event for ½ day a month. 'Other' answers ranged from meeting up every day to meeting up quarterly or whenever it is needed and many respondents advised that it depended on the season/ environmental conditions.

#### 6. Where do Landcare groups undertake most of their work?

The majority of groups (62.1%) advised that over 70% of the work they do is on public land, whilst 21.5% of groups work primarily (>70%) on private land. 16.4% of groups work equally on both public and private. As a general rule in rural areas Landcare groups working on private land would cover much larger areas compared to groups working in urban/ peri-urban areas on public land.

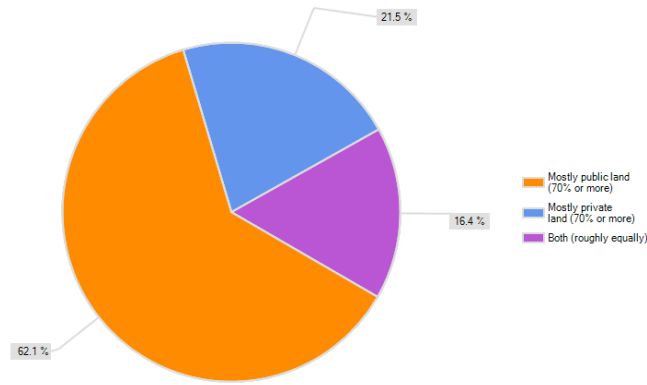


Figure 3. Landcare groups working on public/ private/ both land types

## 7. What is the overall aim of your group’s activities?

The most common reason, stated by 82.5% of Landcare groups, as to why they donate their time to Landcare is to ‘help protect the local environment for future generations’. Followed by 47.5% selecting that their aim is to ‘educate and inform people about natural resource management’, 36.7% advised it was to ‘help the local community’ and 14.4% advised that it was to ‘improve agricultural productivity’. ‘Other’ responses included:

“Social interaction and cohesiveness”

“Demonstrating sustainable farming practices”

“To save our diminishing biodiversity”

“To protect local environments for wildlife habitat”

## 8. Most common activities undertaken by volunteer groups

As figure 4 demonstrates, 60.8 % of groups surveyed advised that the most common activity undertaken by their Landcare volunteer groups is planting and weed management. Education and community awareness programs were also commonly undertaken activities with 13.9% of groups choosing it as their main activity. Common answers for ‘other’ included a combination of revegetation, weed removal and community awareness raising, including holding field days. The chart below outlines the most common activities as chosen by Landcare groups.

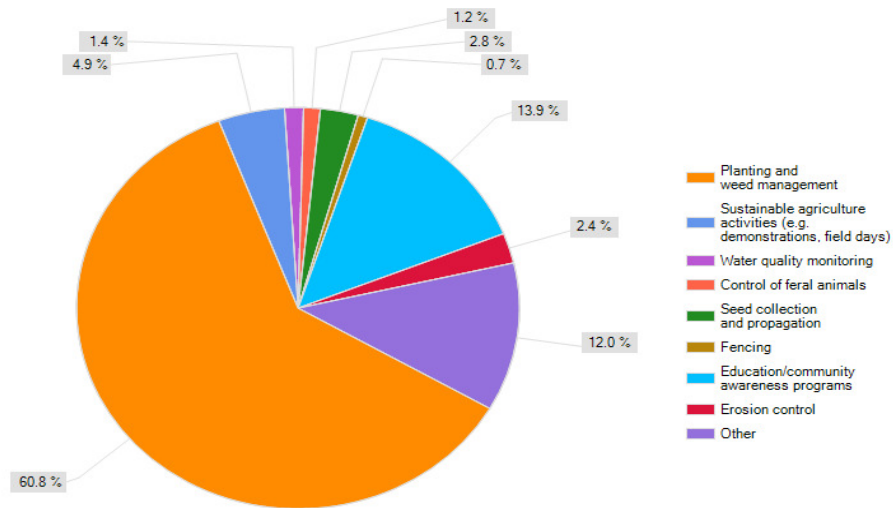


Figure 4. The most common activities undertaken by Landcare groups.

## 9. The Greatest needs of Landcare volunteer groups

Groups were asked to rank their greatest preference of needs in order to maintain their membership base. This was based on 1 being the greatest need, to 8 being the very least of their needs. 'Funding' ranked the highest with 47.3% of groups selecting it as their greatest need, followed by 42.8% of groups ranking 'volunteers' as their number one greatest need. The lowest ranking need for groups was 'assistance with volunteer recruitment', with 13.5% selecting it as their least required need. The chart below depicts the average ranks of each group need, showing that on average 'funding' was most commonly selected as the greatest need and 'tools and equipment' was on average the lowest ranking need of groups.

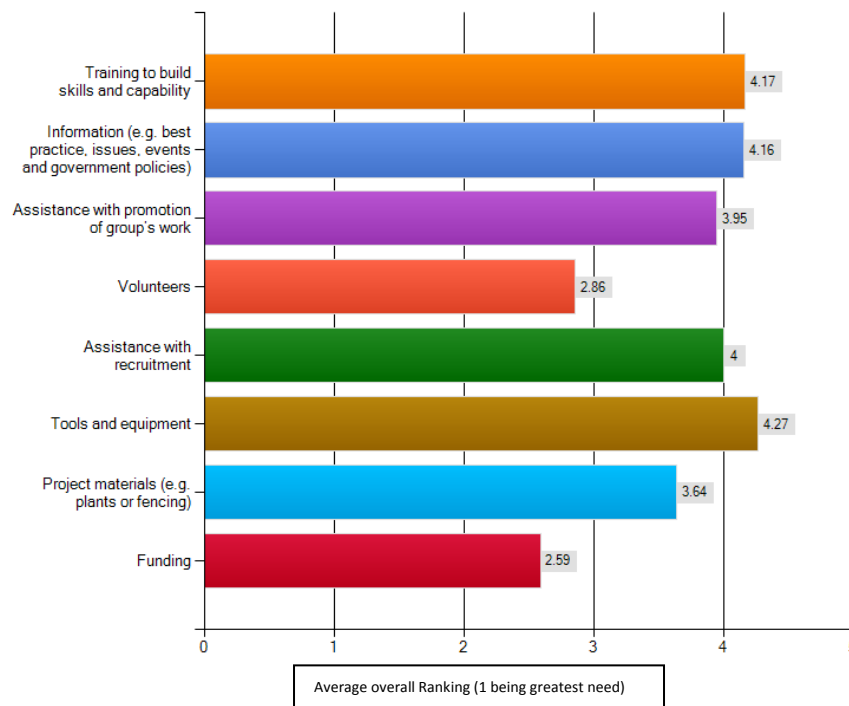


Figure 5. Average rank of greatest needs required for groups to maintain volunteer members

## 10. i) Recruitment of Volunteers

74.4% of surveyed groups actively recruit new volunteers. The main method of doing so is by word of mouth (70.8%), followed by local media. The chart below indicates the different methods employed by groups to recruit new volunteers.

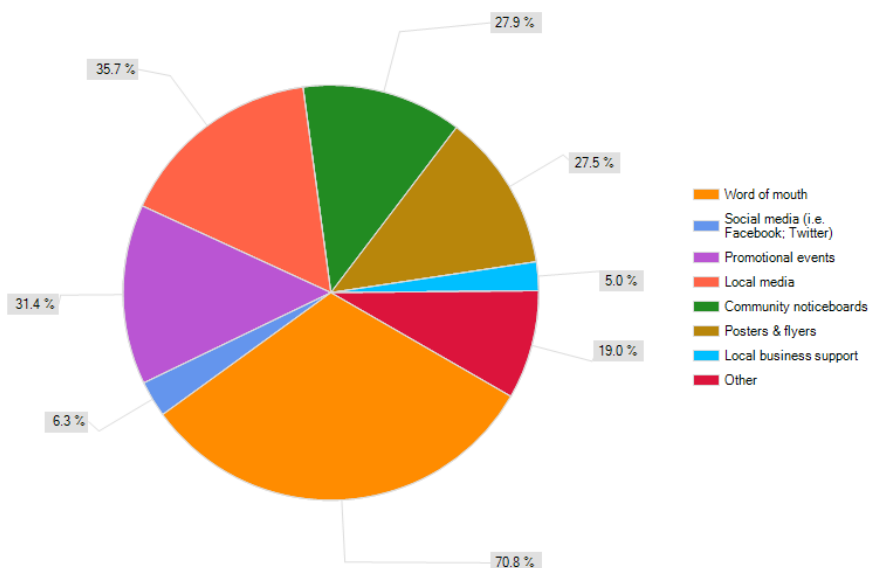


Figure 6. Methods currently used to recruit group members

## ii) What are the main barriers preventing increasing volunteer numbers?

As figure 7 demonstrates, 67.2% of groups stated that they consider many people don't volunteer primarily because of busy lives and the fact they do not have enough time, this was followed by the demand for volunteers across different competing organisations (35.2%) and also because they possibly do not know how to get involved (20.6%). Common answers for 'other' included:

"Declining rural populations, especially youth, and 'burn out' experienced by those volunteers left with all the responsibility"

"Younger generations 'don't care' or are 'not interested'"

"A lack of understanding or care for environmental issues, particularly caused by a detachment from nature in the urban environment"

"A lack of awareness of the benefits/ outcomes which volunteering achieves"

"A lack of motivation from the wider community to take on extra responsibility"

"Too busy on their own land"

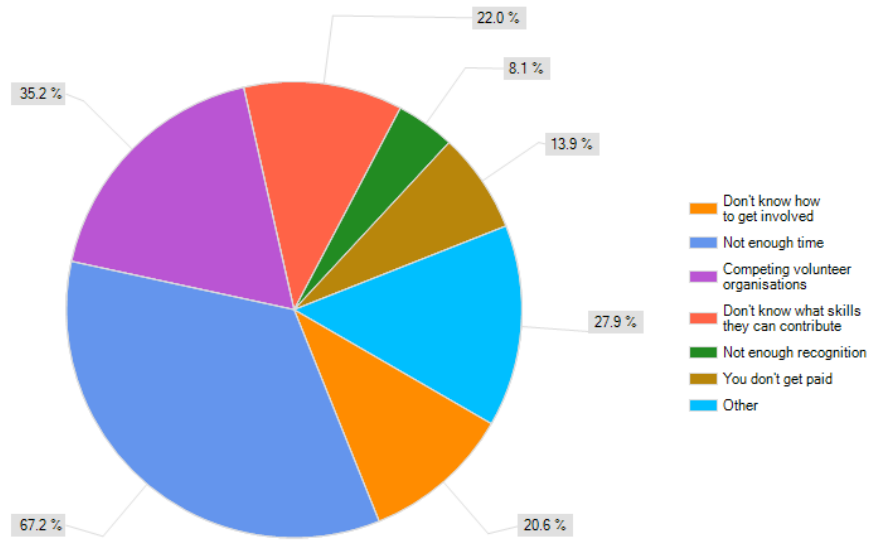
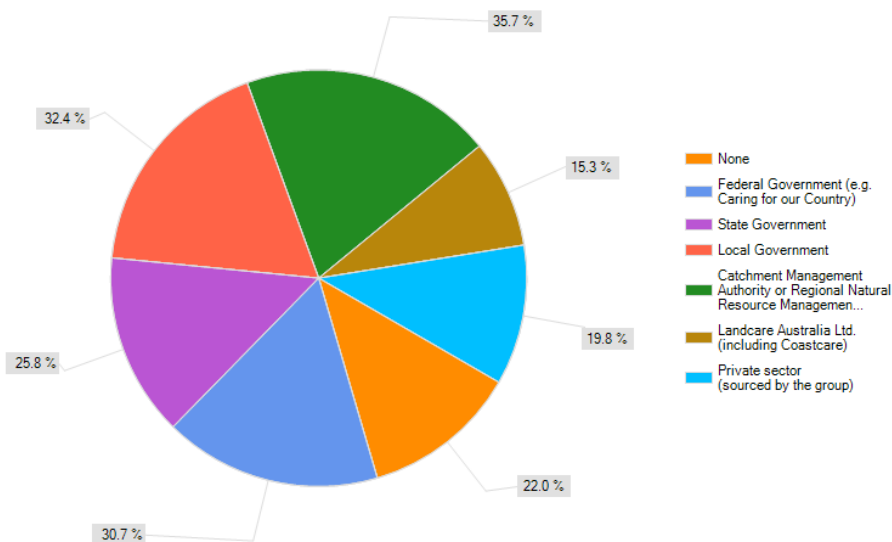


Figure 7. Predicted barriers towards volunteering

## 11. Funding avenues currently sought by groups

22% of groups advised that they have not received any funding in the last 12 months. Of those which have received funding the majority was from a Catchment Management Authority or Natural Resource Management body at 35.7%. Figure 8 depicts the different avenues of funding currently sought by Landcare groups.



## 12. Connections with Industry

The majority of Landcare groups surveyed (67.7%) advised that they did not have any connections with industry, such as farming or other production.

## 13. National Support Services

The majority of groups (74.6%) were aware of their Regional Landcare Facilitator with 58.6% of these having been in contact with their regional Landcare facilitator.

Landcare groups were asked to rate the importance of the following national support services in order to capture what services are highly valued by volunteer groups. Generally speaking groups considered most national support services to be important; below are the results:

53.8% considered the roles and activities supported by the Australian Landcare Council and the National Landcare Facilitator as 'important', 39.4% were unaware/undecided of the support service and 6.7% considered the service as 'unimportant'.

60.7% considered the National Landcare Awards as 'important', 23.3% were undecided/ not aware and 16% considered it as 'unimportant'.

65% considered the State Landcare Awards as 'important', 21.1% were undecided/ unaware and 13.9% considered them as 'unimportant'.

12.1% considered the McKell Medal (prestigious Australian award for excellence and achievement in natural resource management) as 'important', 79.4% were 'undecided/ unaware' of the medal and 8.5% considered it as 'unimportant'.

29.3% 'receive and read' the Landcare in Focus (quarterly publication distributed by Rural Press), 5.3% 'receive the Landcare in Focus but do not read it', and 65.4% are 'unaware of the Landcare in Focus quarterly publication'.

60.4% considered Landcare Week as 'important', 29.5% were 'unaware/ undecided' about Landcare Week and 10.1% considered it 'unimportant'. Of groups surveyed, 35.2% advised that they will be holding a Landcare Week activity in 2011. 25.8% of these would be holding an open-community working bee, 20.2% would be holding a regular volunteer working day, 15% planned on holding an open community tour/talk whilst many other volunteers stated that they will be joining in with other community events for Landcare Week, holding a local information stall or were not sure exactly what their plans were.

## 14. National Landcare Directory

51.5% of groups surveyed are registered on the [National Landcare Directory \(NLD\)](#) and of those not already registered 71.4% advised that they would be 'interested in registering their group'.

# Landcare People

## 15. Volunteer Demographics

## i) Age

65.9% of the Landcare volunteers surveyed were over 50. This closely corresponds to part 3, the average age of group members. Figure 9 shows all of the age brackets of Landcare volunteers surveyed.

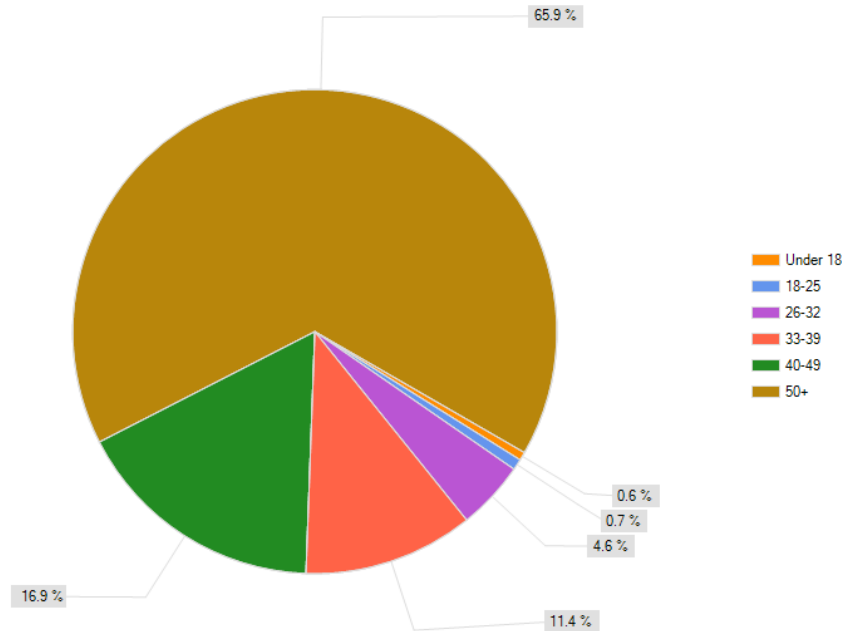


Figure 9. Age brackets of Landcare volunteers survey participants

## ii) Gender

59.8% of Landcare volunteers surveyed were female, 40.2% were male.

## iii) Occupation

Retirees were the most commonly chosen occupation as represented by 67.8% of the Landcare groups surveyed. Occupations also included 'professionals working outside the natural resource management sector', as chosen by 46.7% of those surveyed, and students and farmers representing occupations in 37% of surveyed Landcare groups.

## 16. Length of Volunteering

The Majority, 46.4%, of those surveyed advised that they have been volunteering for over 10 years. 22.8% of volunteers advised that they've been volunteering for 5-10 years, 14.1% for 3-5 years, 10.8% for 1-3 years and 5.9% for less and a year. This shows that most Landcare group members have been volunteering for some time, but that although new members are a minority there is still an active recruitment of new volunteers.

## 17. What drives Landcare volunteers to donate their time

The vast majority, 87.9%, of volunteers surveyed advised that the main reason as to why they think their group members donate their time to Landcare is due to 'concern for local environmental issues'. This was followed by 70.8% 'enjoy getting involved in a community activity', 60.1% 'concern for future generations' and 19.9% 'to improve farm productivity'. 'Other' responses include the comraderie aspect, conserving biodiversity, a personal appreciation of the outdoors and native bush and because they are retired and have useful skills such as report writing and project management which can be contributed to society.

## 18. Concerns raised about the future of Australia's natural resources

97.6% of respondents advised that they are concerned for the future of Australia's natural resources. A wide range of concerns were mentioned, and of these some of the most prevalent responses/ running themes were "Loss of natural landscape and habitat; loss of biodiversity; loss of species", "the spread of invasive weeds", "overuse of natural resources", "sustainable agriculture", "Ensuring the environmental awareness of future generations to prevent further degradation and to conserve biodiversity", "urban sprawl", "climate change" and "the huge effort required to bring about change".

## 19. Direct Quotes, Comments & Feedback

*"I work in a school and I have used the Landcare grants for creating vegetable patches and fruit trees. This has been incredible with a positive effect on the school environment and the production of home vegetable gardens. If Land Care do something well, it is Junior Land Care and tapping into the younger generation - showing them to re-connect with the soil, plants, the seasonal cycles and the freshness of real food."*

*"Local communities seem less able to address local environmental issues due to volunteer burnout and cynicism in the broader community. There is a sense that people think that the issues are overwhelming and they do not have enough time and energy in their lives to make a difference."*

*"The establishment of our regional NRM body has cut available funding to our regional Landcare group. Without funding we have little to do and therefore membership has significantly decreased. Due to this we are struggling to keep our head above water and the added pressure of most members being above and beyond 50 years also doesn't help the situation."*

*"Funds are difficult to apply for, applications are complex. Funding to have a coordinator help groups apply for funding is highly needed."*

*"Our group is struggling - in the last 2 years we have had difficulties in securing funding for projects we believe are relevant for our area. We are also struggling to get active volunteers to assist with our work. Current members are feeling overwhelmed with both their volunteer work and within their own businesses."*

*"Landcare needs more resources for on ground where there is the social capacity, less admin, less bureaucracy, money on ground for trees, for weed control, paying farmers for ecosystem goods and services, recognition and support of social capital/community capacity. We need to engage schools and indigenous Australians more effectively. THANK YOU :)."*

*"I love being in Landcare. It has given me something valuable to participate in, close to home. I produce an email newsletter that is used to inform any local resident who wishes to be on it, about what the Group is doing. People are actively encouraged to participate through the newsletter."*

Landcare Australia would like to thank all of those who took the time to participate in the valuable survey.