



# Exploring visions for the future of Landcare

## Workshop presented at EIANZ National Conference

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# Session overview

- 🌊 Part 1:
  - 🌊 Presentation on Landcare history, issues and outlook
- 🌊 Part 2:
  - 🌊 Visioning and Open Space Planning
- 🌊 Part 3:
  - 🌊 Sharing and looking for linkages



Photo by Su Wild-River

# Presenter background

- Two “round Australia” research trips investigating local delivery of environmental outcomes.
- “Integrating Themes” Coordinator for Land & Water Australia, 2001-2.
- Monitored and Evaluated the LWA Social and Institutional Research Program.
- Awards for Friends of Mongarlowe River project to protect the endangered Macquarie Perch.
- Rural landholder, undertaking a permaculture conversion on a small farm in Braidwood.
- Currently the District Landcare Coordinator for the Upper Shoalhaven and Upper Deua Catchments (SE of Canberra, in NSW).
  - Ran a similar session with Landcare Executives
- Wondering what the future holds...



Photo by Tim McCann

## Who else is here?

# Part 1: Landcare history, issues and outlook


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## A potted history

-  Six phases of Landcare

## Enduring cases for Landcare

## A grab bag of challenges and opportunities

-  Changing governance, conditions and demographics



# A Potted History of Landcare



# What is Landcare?

- 🌊 **Ethic:** a philosophy, influencing the way people live and work in the landscape while caring for the land (soil, water, biota)
- 🌊 **Movement:** local community action founded on stewardship and volunteerism, putting the philosophy into practice.
- 🌊 **Model** – a range of knowledge generation, sharing and support mechanisms, including groups, networks, facilitators and coordinators, government and non-government policies, structures, programs and partnerships influencing broad-scale community participation in sustainable resource management.



Source: [Coral Love, Evolution of Landcare in Australia](#), 2011. Poster by Annie Frank, commissioned by Land & Water Australia.

# Before Landcare – soil conservation as a national priority

## Soil conservation in Australia from the 1930s

- In 1936, following soil degradation threats to food and fibre production, Australian government requested all states to form soil conservation committees. The focus was on individual pastoralists.
- 1983 Victorian dust storm increased urgency for a landscape-scale ‘fix’. Victoria’s Landcare Program became the model adopted nationally.



# First Phase: Landcare approach across Australia, 1986-1991

- 🌊 Victorian Government developed the Landcare Program in 1986
- 🌊 based on principles of community based learning and action on broader land, not just soil, conservation.
- 🌊 Self-directed learning by farmer and community groups, supported by government and non-government programs, structures and resources.
- 🌊 Federal Community Landcare Support with research, public awareness, education and training influenced all jurisdictions to take up Landcare approach.
- 🌊 Integrated Catchment Management adopted WA, Qld.
- 🌊 National Landcare Facilitator project, Landcare Australia Ltd, Landcare groups established with government funding, but providing for 'arm's length' negotiations with government.
- 🌊 Initial goal of 2,000 Landcare groups



Photo by Su Wild-River

# Second Phase, Decade of Landcare, National Landcare, 1992-1996

- 🌊 1990s “Decade of Landcare”, arose from a joint National Farmers’ Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation proposal for Commonwealth action on land degradation.
- 🌊 National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development integrates economic and ecological considerations.
- 🌊 National Landcare Program receives \$260m over ten years plus \$46m over four years.
- 🌊 National Landcare Program provides:
  - 🌊 Community grants of up to \$15,000 per projects matching funds.
  - 🌊 Formal Partnership Agreements between Federal, state and territory governments for catchment planning and management, land management and sustainable agriculture.
  - 🌊 National component including National Landcare Facilitator Project, Advisory Committee and national projects.
- 🌊 International Landcare, Waterwatch, Coastcare and other programs.
- 🌊 3240 Landcare Groups operating by 1996.



# Third Phase, Natural Heritage Trust, 1997-2001

Natural Heritage Trust established from partial privatisation of Telstra brought significantly expanded resource base.

Natural Heritage Trust:

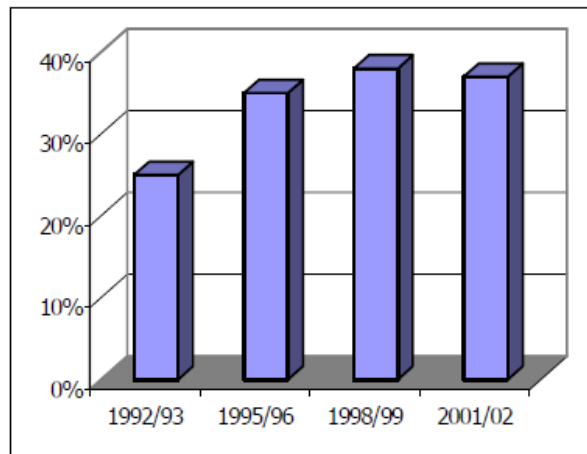
- Strategic capital investment to leverage other investment,
- Complementary environmental protection, NRM and sustainable agriculture consistent with national strategies.
- Framework for cooperative partnerships between communities, industry and all spheres of government.

Queries about sustainability of 1000+ Landcare facilitators

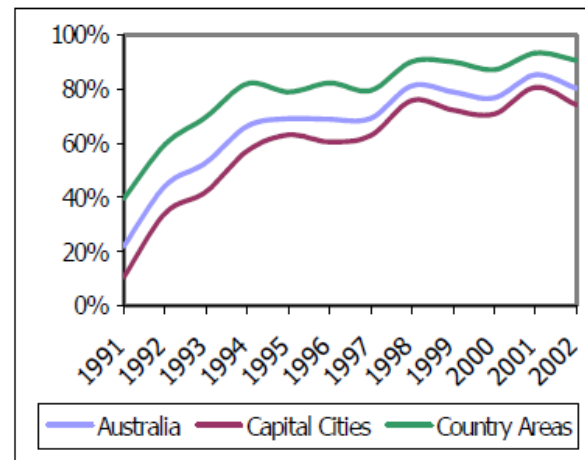
CSIRO review:

- property level improvements, but not regional level condition improvements.
- Poor monitoring and evaluation

**Figure 4. Landcare membership by farmers in Australia (ABARE 2003)**



**Figure 5. National awareness of landcare 1991- 2002 (LAL 2003)**



# 4th Phase, NHT extension, National Landcare Program 2002-2007

- Confirmation of regional delivery model, and direct Australian government funding of 56 regional bodies across all of Australia.
- \$1.4b over 7 years in National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality plus \$1.03b over 5 years for NHT2.
- NHT 2:
  - Objectives: Biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, community capacity building and institutional change.
  - Programs: Landcare, Bushcare, Rivercare, Coastcare.
  - Investment: Local, regional, national.
- National Landcare Program had \$159.5m over



## Natural Heritage Trust

*Helping Communities Helping Australia*

A Commonwealth Government Initiative



Photo by Su Wild-River

# Fifth Phase – Caring for Our Country, 2008-2013

- More than \$2b over 5 years.
- Goal of a more strategic and competitive approach to NRM.
- Regional model retained, and base-level funding provided to each region, resources for landscape interventions allocated competitively, to a greater range of groups, towards nationally significant priority assets.
- More centralised control, high transaction costs, narrower agenda.
- More than 6,000 Landcare groups and 100,000 Landcarers operating, but a significant decline in Landcare coordination staff.



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



# Lessons from Landcare

- From enabling communities to making them into instruments for policy implementation.
- External interventions diminish volunteer sense of self-determination.
- Loss of the principle that higher levels of governance are subsidiary to lower ones.
- Barriers to adoption persist, partly through the loss of one-to-one extension.
- Government roles need to strengthen local self-help efforts. Minimum funding levels are needed.
- A network-based culture grounded in credible commitment to collaboration is essential for trust and reciprocity.



- Community-based NRM is not the solution to all NRM problems, but need to be tailored-to-context.
- Community Based NRM is an important part of the social capital in rural areas, and is particularly needed where their institutions are in decline.

<http://www.researchgate.net/publication/264458051> The great experiment with devolved NRM governance Lessons from community engagement in Australia and New Zealand since the 1980s



# Current programs and priorities



# National Landcare Program Objectives and Outcomes

## Strategic objectives

### ***Strategic objective 1:***

Communities are involved in caring for their environment

### ***Strategic objective 2:***

Communities are protecting species and natural assets

### ***Strategic objective 3:***

Communities are managing landscapes to sustain long-term economic and social benefits from their environment

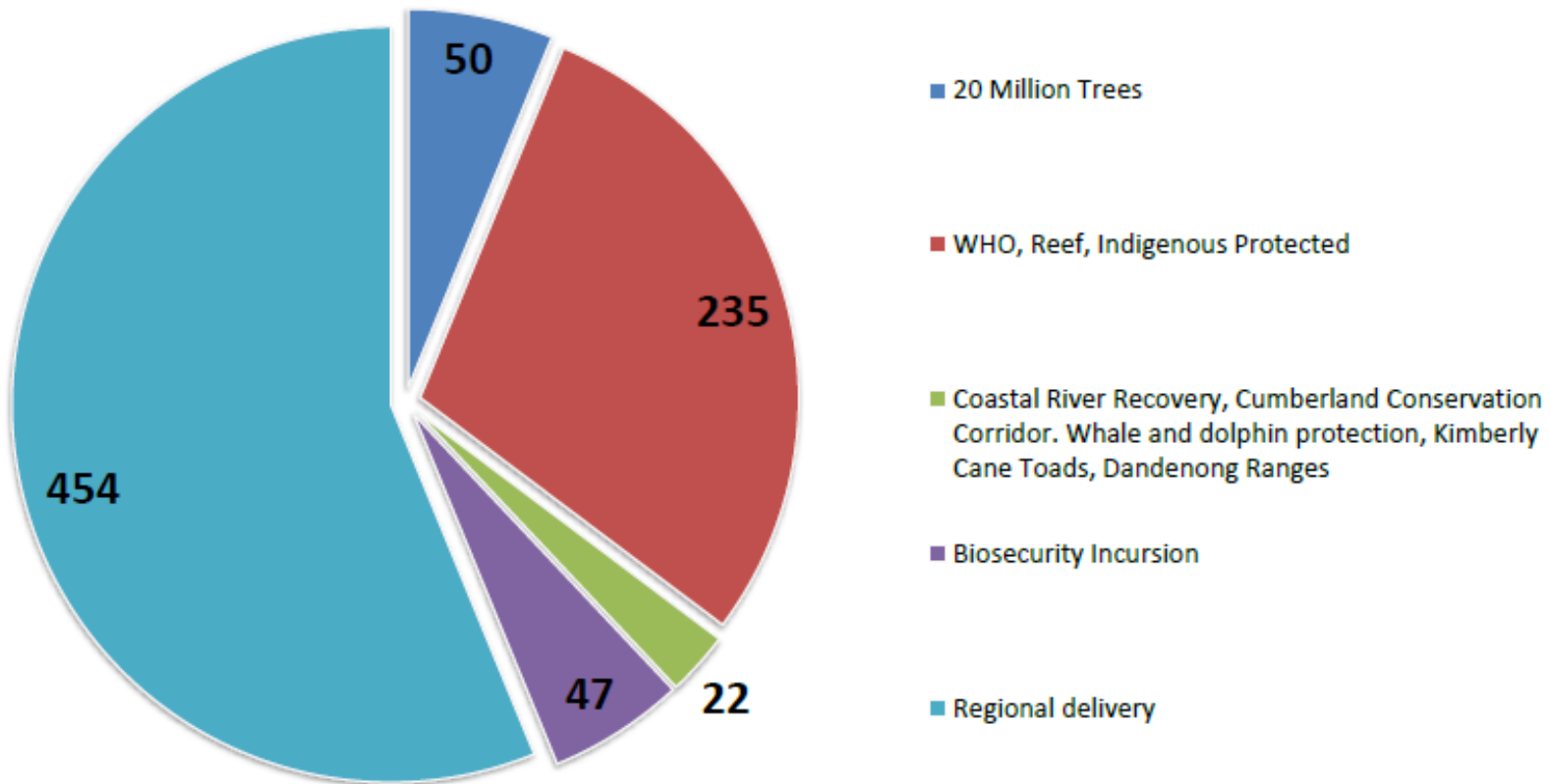
### ***Strategic objective 4:***

Farmers and fishers increasing their long term returns through better management of the natural resource base.

# Current Australian Government NRM budget

## Budget \$millions

Total = \$808m  
= \$202m per year



# Commentary from the 2014 National Landcare Conference

- 🌊 The trouble is that we have brought in these successive approaches and each one has undermined the latest, instead of seeing them as complimentary.
- 🌊 We have just seen the latest one with cutting Landcare funds to fund the Green Army. I can't see why you wouldn't build on one to create the other.
- 🌊 You don't defund 1.5 million people and fund 150,000 people. All of the drive behind Landcare has come from people who know their own areas, who need some assistance, but want to pick up the task themselves. You don't substitute that activity with a very small group of learners.



# The Senate enquiry

- Current senate enquiry into “The history, effectiveness, performance and future of the National Landcare Program”.
- Report timeframe extended from October to November 2014
- 73 submissions.
- 3 public hearings.

“since 2007, and under Caring for our Country, the governance of the community based management of Australian landscapes has shifted from a stable, long term, bilateral, engaged and evidence-based framework to a centralised, short term grants program, incurring massive transaction costs for regional and local organisations” (Allan Dale, Senate Enquiry, submission).

“in some locations, ‘cliques’ took over management of the group, making it unattractive to other landholders. In some locations, the farming community was under-represented and so-called ‘townies’, ‘blockies’ or ‘greenies’ coordinated the local group. This led to an overemphasis on conservation and a relative lack of focus on production issues in National Landcare Program many areas.”

[\(Ampt, submission 24\)](#)



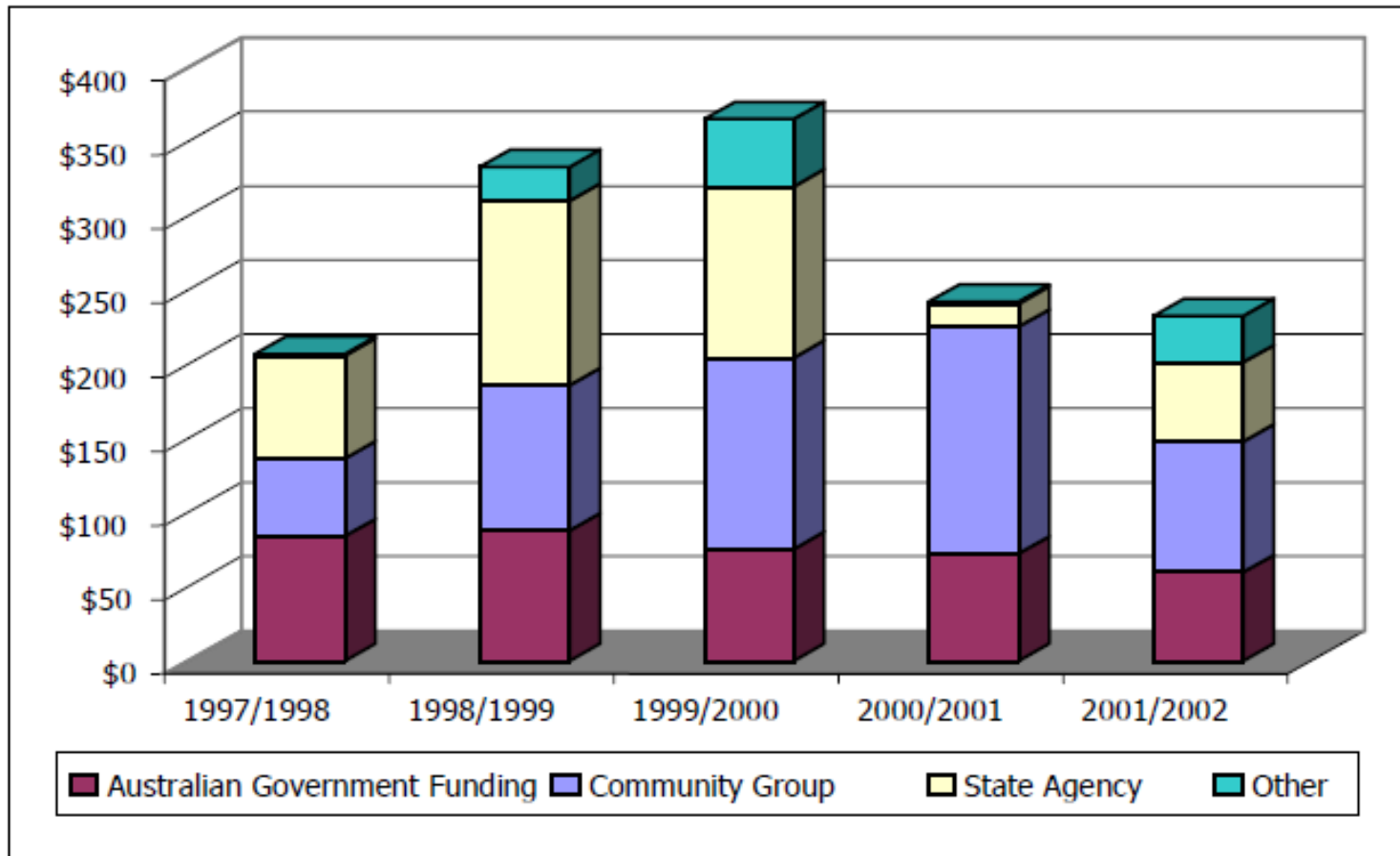


# Enduring cases for Landcare



# Business cases for collaborative NRM

Each dollar spent on Landcare leveraged at least \$2.60. ([CSIRO review of the National Landcare Program](#)).



# Landscape gains

Pic 1.



Rip lines for a revegetation site in the foreground, with a perennial pasture site in the background – April 2008.  
(Photo credit – Kerrie Plum)

Pic 2.



The same revegetation and perennial pasture site – August 2011  
(Photo credit – Kerrie Plum)

- Local landscape benefits are evident across Australia
- Even if the model hasn't yet been proven to deliver regional outcomes, does this mean it can't? Or that the right approach hasn't yet been developed?
  - Eg reasonable long-term funding for regional bodies.

# Landscape Legacies



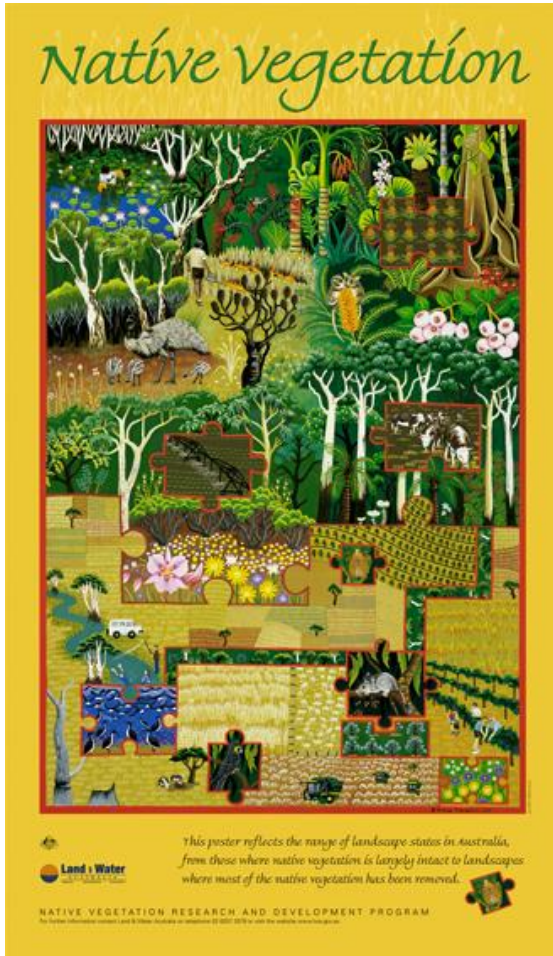
🌊 The local gains are clear and significant.

# Social Capital in the community

- It's about building the social infrastructure. I would hope it would be as permanent as any other infrastructure we build. Australia's got all of the elements of a world's best program, with grassroots landcare, regional bodies to address things regionally, and the ability to target assets at a national level.
- If we'd been developing Landcare as a social program then it would have been seen as the greatest success. But we are not so good at developing the indicators for that. (Andrew Campbell, 2014 National Landcare Conference).



# There's still a lot to do





# Key challenges and opportunities



# Retraction of relevant research investment

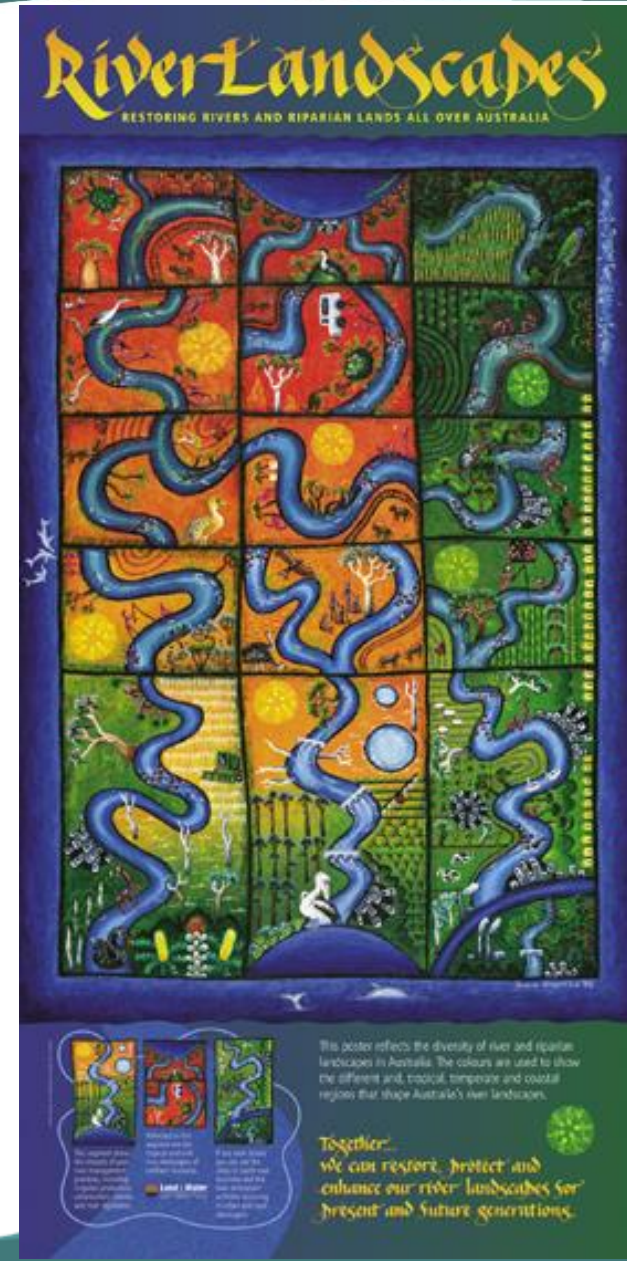
Land & Water Australia, Research and Development Corporation, “Knowledge for Managing Australian landscapes” 1990-2009

Completed/Transferred programs:

- Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge
- National Program Sustainable Irrigation
- Managing Climate Variability
- Australian Agricultural Natural Resources Online
- Weeds Research and Knowledge
- Climate Change Research Strategy for Primary Industries, including the
- Primary Industries Adaptation Research Network

Closed programs:

- Environmental Water Allocation
- Social and Institutional Research Program
- Innovations Program (Innovation Call, Postgraduate Scholarships, Senior Research Fellows)
- Native Vegetation and Biodiversity



## Short-term policy proposals in favour of long-term visions

🌊 We've been through the green army before. There's nothing wrong with getting young people working on the environment. But you don't take money away from Landcare for that. (Christine Forster at 2014 National Landcare Conference).



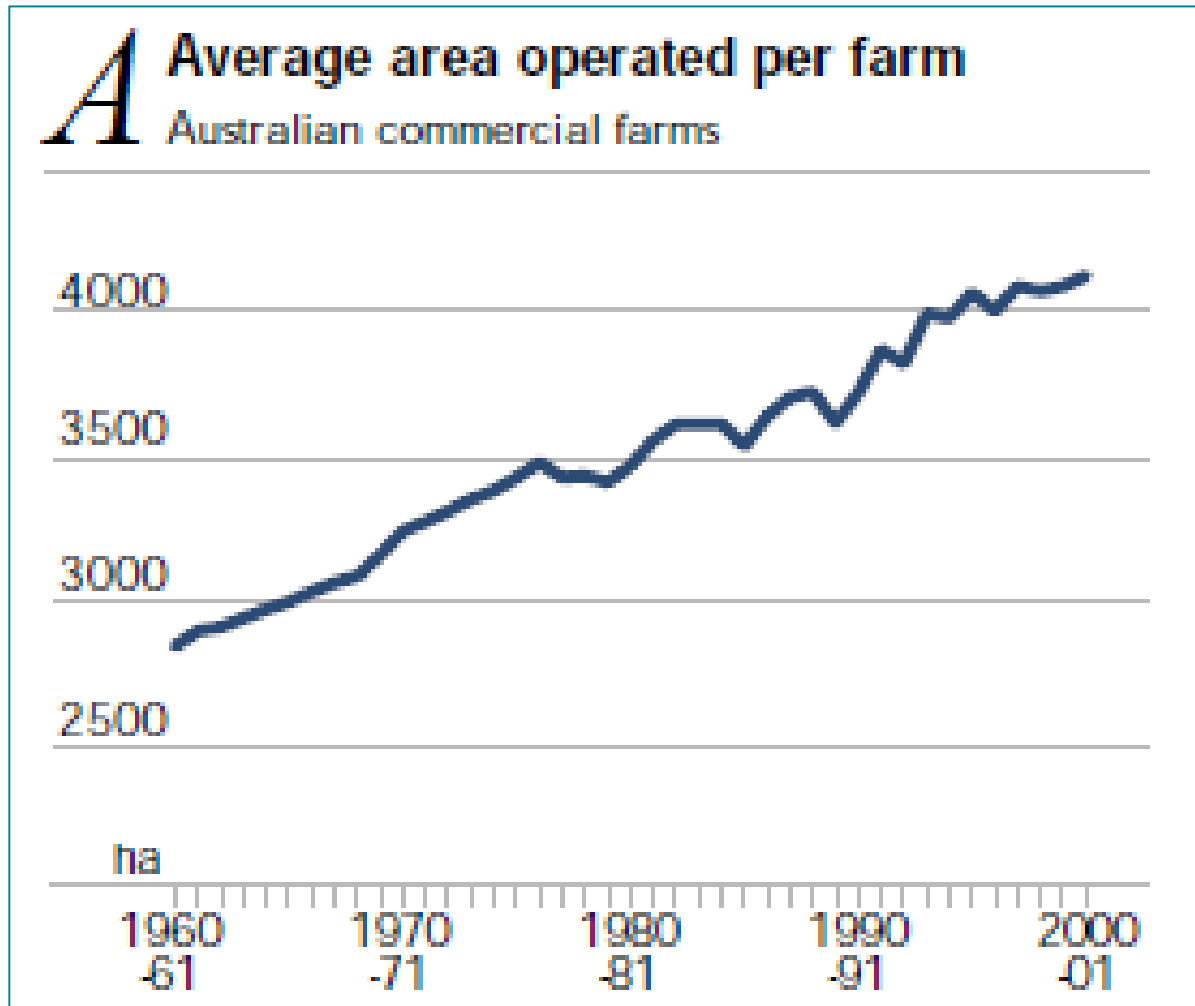
# Climate change and Landcare

## Increased:

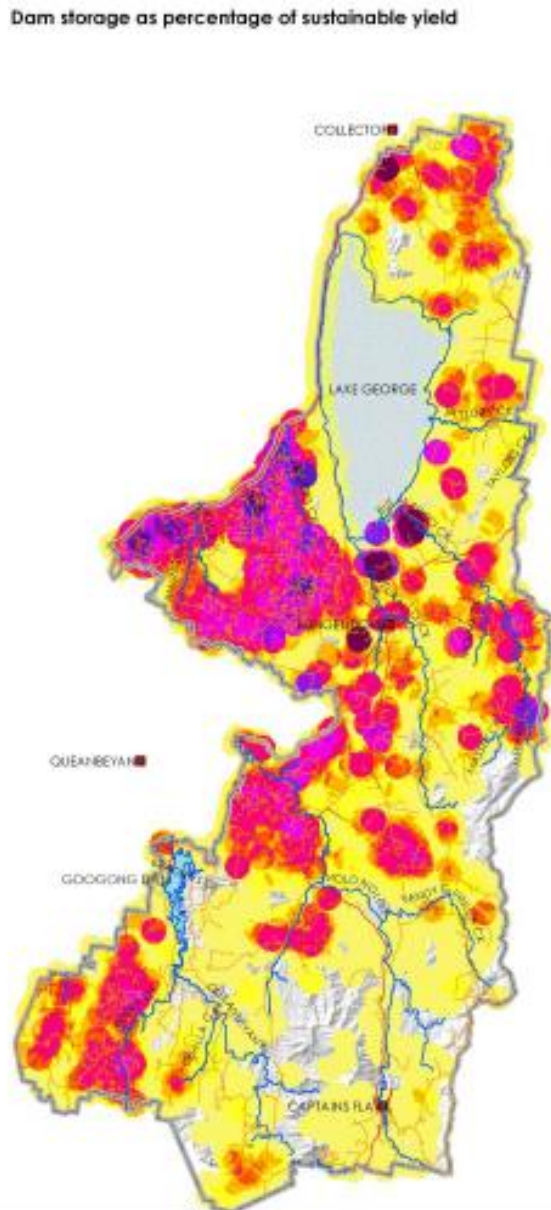
- Pressure on natural resources,
- Risks for farmers,
- Uncertainty about interventions



# Changing demographics of farms



Map 6 Dam storage as a percentage of the sustainable yield



Small block 'tree changers' and water security

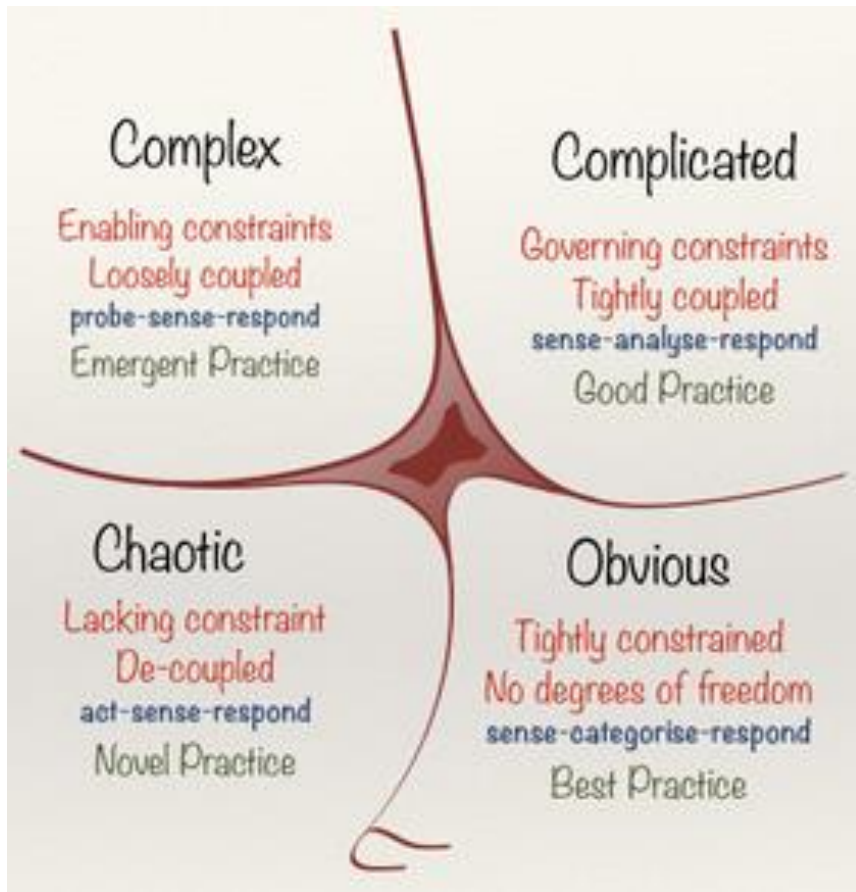
Map source:

<http://www.palerang.nsw.gov.au/images/documents/palerang/current/Planning/Final%20water%20docs/1%20water%20report%20june%202012.pdf>

# Changing demographics of landcare



# Land management as a complex problem

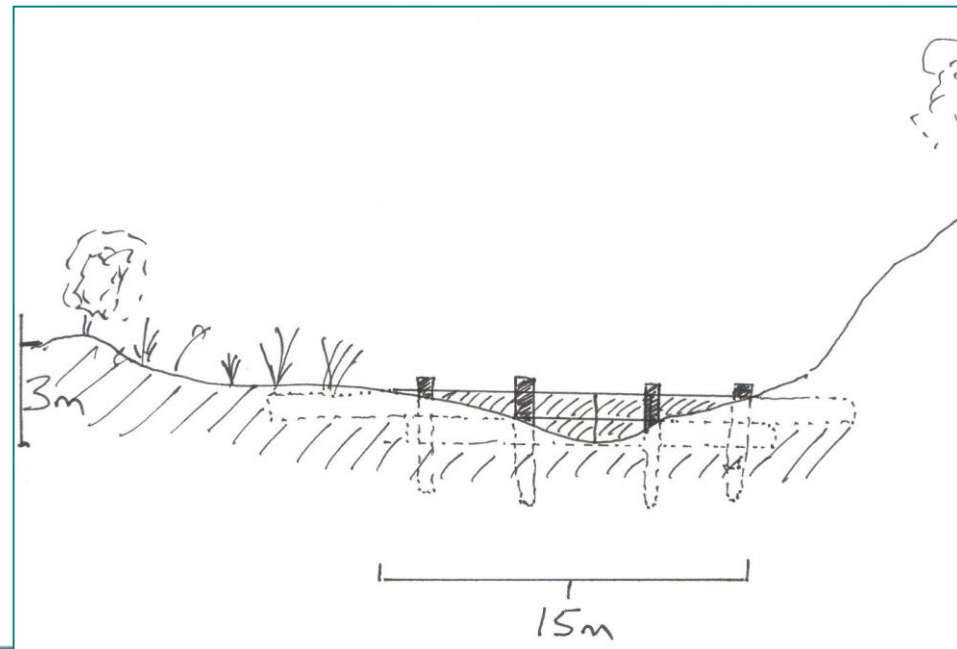


## So many different approaches

- Natural sequence farming,
- organic farming,
- permaculture,
- conventional farming approaches “bare earth policy”.

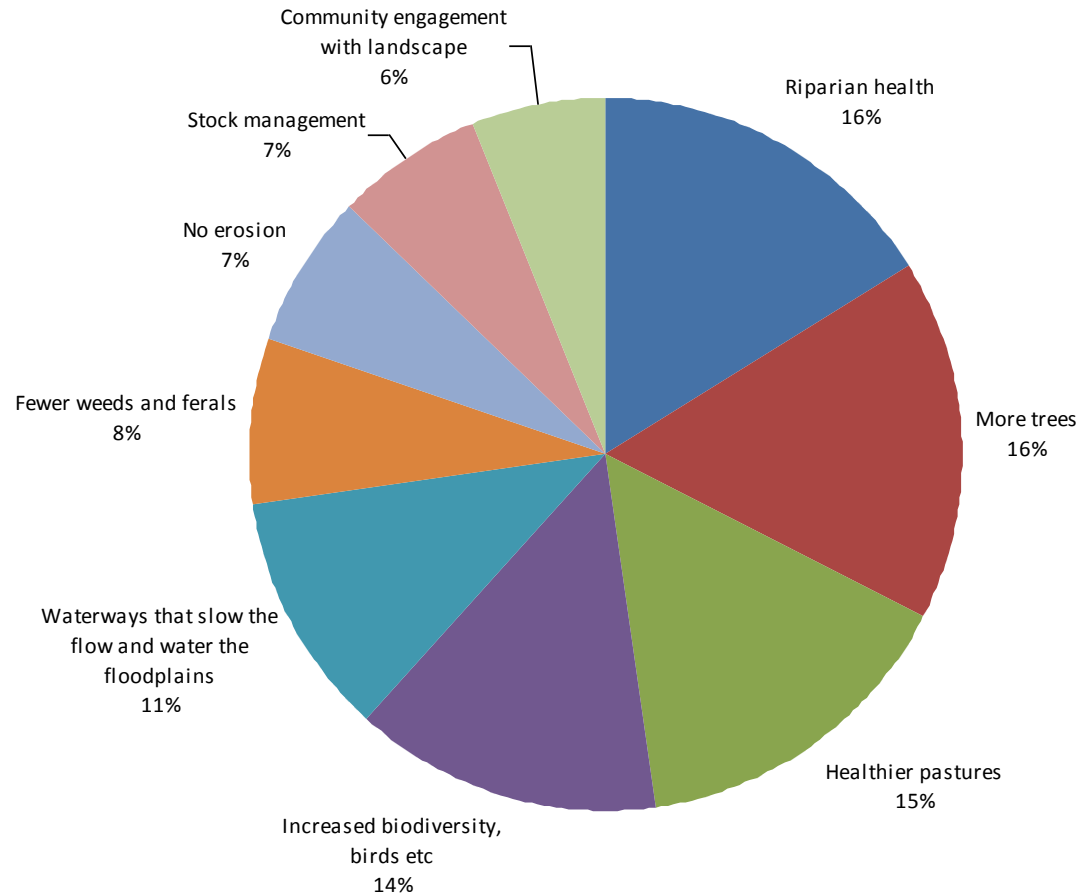
## Different perspectives

- Invasive native animals and plants



# Enduring visions

## Future landscape changes to arise from an upcoming 25 years of successful Landcare





# Future Visioning





# Imagine it is 25 years from now

 Landcare has been as successful as could reasonably be expected.

 Reflect on Landcare.

 What it has achieved.

 What has changed in the landscape.

 What changed in its delivery to achieve this?

 Write your personal thoughts





 Share your thoughts with one other

 Share the ones from both lists with the group






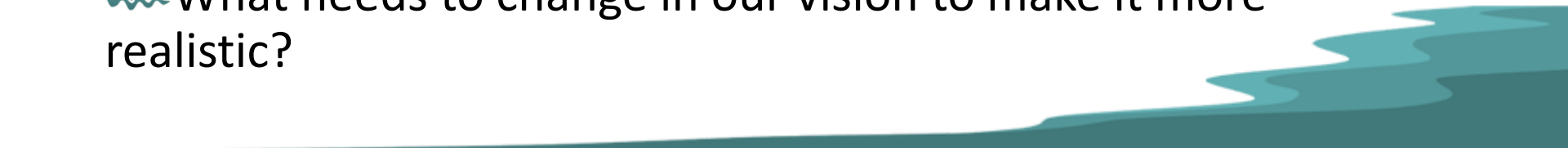



# Now think about what is happening now that might influence Landcare

-  Write your personal thoughts
  -  Share your thoughts with one other
  -  Share the ones from both lists with the group
- 



# How does that change our vision for the future?

-  Write your personal thoughts
  -  Share your thoughts with one other
  -  What needs to change in our vision to make it more realistic?
- 



# What are the most important contributions from broader environmental professionals?

 5 votes each

 Allocate however you want

