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The Australian Rangeland Society

NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAM

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AIM

The aim of the Australian Government's National Landcare Program (NLP) is to increase involvement by industry, farmers and the wider community in landcare and other natural resource management (NRM) activities.

WHY LANDCARE?

As managers of 60% of land and 70% of the water diverted for irrigation, farmer involvement is crucial in achieving the Australian Government's primary industry and NRM goals.

Landcare is a voluntary community group movement aimed at improving land management by putting sustainable agriculture into practice at local, regional and national levels. The NLP recognises that landcare is effective at getting in touch with both rural and urban communities, and at encouraging improved NRM practices amongst primary producers.

Surveys show that landcare is a key entry mechanism into other Australian Government programs and that its members are much higher adopters of sustainable practices. For example, landcare members are twice as likely to use minimum tillage and three times as likely to undertake soil testing. A recent review of the Program found that landcare practices have resulted in improved resource condition at the property level, which is contributing to off-farm public benefits and laying the foundations to meet catchments and regional targets on resource condition. The results of this review are available online at: www.daff.gov.au/landcarereview

Landcare remains a strong community movement that exists independent of government support. Nevertheless, the partnership with government through the NLP is important to ensuring coordinated approaches to NRM.

HOW IT WORKS

The Australian Government provided \$39.12 million for the NLP in 2003-04 under the *Natural Resources Management (Financial Assistance) Act 1992*. In the May 2004 Budget the Australian Government announced funding of \$159.5 million over four years for the NLP with \$39.3 million in 2004-05, \$40.2 million in 2005-06 and a further \$40 million in each of 2006-07 and 2007-08. Investment in landcare is also provided by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) to complement investment in sustainable NRM practices, conserving and restoring habitat and improving the condition of rivers and coastal and marine areas.

The NLP is administered by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and consists of two components:

1. National Component – Investments targeted at projects that have broad scale, rather than regional or local outcomes, and are most effectively undertaken at the national level. Areas of investment in 2003-04 have included:

- Landcare Support (including funding for the Australian Landcare Council, Landcare Australia Ltd and the National Landcare Facilitator)
- National Priority Projects
- Industry Partnerships

- Natural Resource Innovation Grants
- State Landcare Coordinators
- Monitoring and Evaluation

2. Community Support – Investments in on-ground actions. Projects complement priorities identified in accredited or interim NRM regional plans and investment strategies. They are undertaken in partnership and require matching contributions in cash or in-kind. Community Support is delivered via grants through the States to regional NRM bodies and other appropriate organisations.

Activities that have been funded under this component include training for sustainable pasture and cropping systems, promoting implementation of best practice management, demonstration and extension of innovative management techniques that link productivity and sustainability, farm forestry projects, and water management activities.

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

Future arrangements for delivery of the NLP, including announcements on project funding, can be found at www.landcare.gov.au or by contacting your State Landcare Coordinator.

NLP STATE LANDCARE COORDINATOR CONTACTS

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