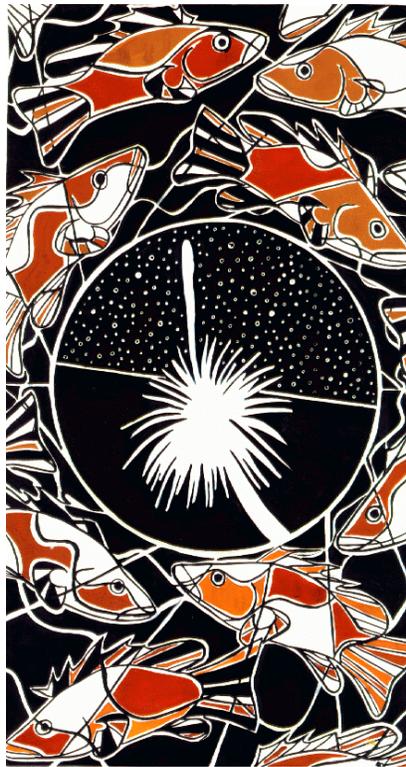


**JOHNSTONE CENTRE**  
**Report No. 165**

**Exploring working conditions and job related burnout in Queensland  
Landcare coordinators and facilitators**

**Ian Byron and Allan Curtis**

April 2002  
Albury, NSW



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## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In May 2001, a mail survey was undertaken with all (104) Landcare support staff in Queensland. This survey aimed to:

1. explore working conditions;
2. assess the extent of burnout (a form of job related stress);
3. identify factors related to burnout; and
4. identify strategies to manage burnout in Landcare support staff.

Of the 104 surveys sent out a final response rate of 71% was achieved.

This research followed a similar study in Victoria (Byron and Curtis 2001a) and was the first attempt to use a validated psychometric instrument to assess the extent of burnout amongst Landcare support staff in Queensland.

This research used a modified version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is the most widely accepted and validated burnout measure. The MBI measures burnout across three elements or sub-scales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.

Our findings confirmed this three-factor structure of burnout and suggested that these scales were reliable (able to produce consistent results). In addition, the association of independent variables with the sub-scales of the MBI were consistent with many of the factors identified in burnout literature as important contributors.

### **1.2 Results**

#### **1.2.1 Working conditions**

Most support staff had not been employed in their current position for very long (median 15 months) and 60% had no prior experience as a coordinator/facilitator. Given these findings of limited experience it is concerning that 42% of respondents had not completed any on-the-job training or skills development.

Survey data highlighted some very positive aspects about working as a Landcare coordinator/facilitator. Support staff reported high levels of general job satisfaction (72% positive), autonomy (89% positive) and skill variety (86% positive). Respondents also said that their work was very meaningful to them (86% agreed) and personally rewarding when they did their job well (95% agreed).

Most respondents (65%) indicated that they had a clear idea of what their employer expected. However, 48% reported that their employer had not articulated these expectations through clear goals and priorities. There was also evidence of role conflict with nearly half (47%) of respondents saying that the role their employer expected them to perform differed from the types of assistance requested by groups/members. This issue was particularly apparent for respondents employed by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (76% agreed).

Almost half of the respondents said that Landcare members had realistic expectations about what could be accomplished (48%) or what they should expect from a coordinator/facilitator (43%). Most respondents (65%) also said that the tasks they performed in their position were consistent with their personal view about the types of support groups/members require.

Support staff strongly believed that Landcare groups were making a significant contribution to improved natural resource conditions in their region (70% agreed) and nearly two thirds (63%) felt that Landcare members were aware of resource conditions. At the same time, two thirds (66%) felt that the scale of issues was beyond the capacity of Landcare groups alone to address. Seventy-three per cent of respondents also indicated that Landcare members continued practices that had a negative impact on the environment.

Most respondents (58%) said that Landcare members were willing to work cooperatively. However, difficulty in motivating participation amongst members and lack of enthusiasm were considered to be major constraints for around two thirds of respondents (65% and 66% respectively). In addition, over a third of respondents (41%) felt that the Landcare groups they worked with lacked strong leadership.

Survey data provided evidence of role overload with most respondents indicating that available time (78%), resources (63%), the geographic area (58%), and the number of groups they had to service (55%) were important limitations on their capacity to meet the expectations of Landcare groups/members. The availability of time (68%) and resources (47%) were also considered important factors limiting the capacity of respondents to meet the expectations of their employer.

Limited attention to performance feedback was an issue for a substantial proportion of respondents. The feedback channels explored in this research included Landcare members, employers/coworkers and the job itself. In each case, well over a third of respondents said they received little to moderate feedback about their performance (49% said little feedback from members, 40% said little feedback from coworkers and 45% said little or moderate feedback from the job itself). Considered collectively this suggests a deficiency in performance feedback.

Although survey data suggested that Landcare groups/members have a realistic idea about what can be accomplished it appears that employers and funding agencies may have unclear or unrealistic expectations, underestimated the requirements or are deliberately stretching the capacity of support staff. Without adequate feedback, the establishment of clear goals/priorities or adequate training/skills development, it is likely that support staff, who were generally highly motivated but relatively inexperienced, will have difficulty in setting boundaries to their work. That is, their own expectations about what they should accomplish may be unclear or simply unachievable given available resources. The perceived inability of support staff to provide services and meet expectations they considered realistic (see above) may help explain the fact that on average support staff worked nearly nine hours a week above their contracted time.

While most support staff were generally very satisfied with the various elements of their work explored in this research, over half (72%) were not satisfied with their level of job security (short-term contracts). Over one third (39%) were also dissatisfied with the pay and fringe benefits and the level of support and guidance they received from their employer.

### **1.2.2 Burnout**

High burnout in terms of a low sense of personal accomplishment was identified as an important issue for many support staff. Seventy-four per cent of respondents scored below the demographic norm and 53% were classified as having high burnout on this sub-scale. While not as widespread, emotional exhaustion also appears to be an issue for many Landcare support staff with over half of respondents above the demographic norm and 31% scoring high burnout (40% medium). Depersonalisation was far less of an issue for the vast majority of respondents.

Nearly half of all respondents indicated that they received little-moderate feedback about their work performance by actually undertaking the job itself. These individuals had significantly higher burnout on both the personal

accomplishment and emotional exhaustion sub-scales. This finding is likely to be partly explained by the reliance on problematic indicators of success such as change in resource conditions.

Less feedback from employers/coworkers was also a significant contributor to higher burnout on personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. With nearly half of the respondents reporting they received little feedback from employers/coworkers or Landcare members, these findings further highlight the deficiency in performance feedback for Landcare support staff.

Nearly two thirds of respondents indicated that the hours they were contracted to work were not adequate to provide the services expected of them and 74% of respondents said they were being pulled in too many directions at the one time. Both of these factors were significantly linked to higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale.

Survey data clearly indicated that most Landcare support staff had difficulty motivating participation and worked in regions where large proportions of landowners were not involved with Landcare. Both of these factors were significantly linked with higher burnout in terms of a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Approximately two-thirds of support staff also considered that lack of enthusiasm amongst Landcare members was an important constraint in performing their role. These respondents had significantly higher burnout on depersonalisation (ie. they were more likely to treat people impersonally).

Approximately one quarter of respondents indicated problems in terms of role conflict in that the tasks they performed were not consistent with their personal view about the types of support groups require. While only a small proportion of all respondents, these individuals had higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale.

Forty-two per cent of respondents said they were not satisfied with the level of training/skills development they had completed as part of their job. Respondents who reported that the level of training/skills development they had completed was inadequate, had significantly higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

There are five main strategies that appear critical in mitigating current levels of burnout and preventing future increases.

1. It is essential that Landcare support staff have the time and resources available to perform the role expected of them. This may be accomplished by revising expectations, employing more support staff, providing more resources or some combination of these strategies. Employers and government also need to help support staff place a limit on the work they do and their own expectations. This should be included as part of training for Landcare coordinators.
2. Clear intermediate indicators of success need to be developed across a range of expected outcomes. Bailey *et al.* (1989) suggested that employers and employees need to work together to develop goals that are relevant, specific, achievable, and observable. While the possible outcomes in any given situation are clearly many and varied, the important point is that outcomes need to be considered across a range of areas.
3. Feedback about progress towards achieving outcomes needs to be incorporated into Landcare support positions. Campbell (1998) concluded that interaction with coworkers (people working in similar situations) was an important source of feedback for Landcare support staff. Landcare groups and members also need to be encouraged to provide constructive feedback to Landcare coordinators. This does not necessarily have to be a formal process rather employers and groups should be included in discussions about the need and best way to incorporate feedback to support staff.

4. Landcare support roles need to be funded beyond current short-term contracts. Being forced to work and plan within a 2-3 year time frame (at best) severely limits the potential for strategic facilitation without which, efforts to manage complex long-term social and environmental problems are likely to have limited success. Short term-contracts are also likely to discourage experienced individuals from applying for positions.
5. Investment in training Landcare support staff needs to be increased. Training programs are considered to be important interventions to help staff develop skills necessary to perform their job and manage burnout (Cherniss 1980a; Pines and Aronson 1988). Campbell (1997) discussed the need for Landcare facilitators to balance technical knowledge about natural resource management with group facilitation or community development skills. It is unlikely that a single individual will be highly trained in both areas, highlighting the need for on the job training or skills development.

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 Background to the research project**

Landcare coordinators and facilitators play a critical role in the functioning of many Landcare groups (Curtis 2000). Landcare group activity has increased significantly in recent years, primarily as a result of increased government funding for on-ground work (Curtis 2000). At the same time there has been a substantial withdrawal of state government extension support for Landcare groups. These trends have combined to increase the demands on Landcare coordinators and facilitators and have prompted concerns that burnout may be affecting Landcare support staff (Campbell 1997).

The term burnout refers to a process where continued exposure to stressful situations leads to a syndrome characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach *et al.* 1996). Byron and Curtis (2001b) concluded from preliminary studies in Victoria that burnout was an issue for some Landcare participants and suggested that there was significant potential for burnout to increase rapidly. Byron *et al.* (1999) also suggested that burnout was likely to be an issue for Landcare coordinators.

In response to these concerns Land and Water Australia funded Charles Sturt University (CSU) to undertake research to explore the assessment and management of burnout in Landcare members, leaders and coordinators. As part of this larger project and in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, researchers at CSU undertook a survey of all Queensland Landcare support staff in May 2001.

A similar study has been undertaken with Victorian Landcare support staff (Byron and Curtis 2001a). Regional studies of Landcare members and leaders are also being undertaken in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

The focus of this report is on findings from the Queensland study of Landcare support staff. Information will be relevant to a range of stakeholders, including those who employ Landcare support staff.

### **2.2 Research objectives**

The aims of this research were to:

1. provide a descriptive account of the working conditions of Landcare support staff;
2. identify and validate a burnout measure that can be used with Landcare support staff;
3. identify the extent that Landcare support staff in Queensland were experiencing burnout;
4. explore the causal links between burnout and key variables; and
5. identify management actions that would reduce burnout and/or increase the capacity of Landcare support staff to provide improved coordination/facilitation for Landcare groups.

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (refer to section 5.2) and the need to survey all Landcare support staff across the state, meant that a mail survey was the most appropriate method of data collection.

In May 2001, mailed surveys were sent to all Landcare coordinators and facilitators in Queensland (104). This sample included all Landcare coordinators, facilitators, and individuals identified as providing Landcare coordination/facilitation as part of their role. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines provided up to date mailing lists.

Survey questions covered a range of topics that previous experience with Landcare support staff and relevant literature suggested would be likely to relate to burnout and/or the ability of individuals to provide support to Landcare groups (Byron and Curtis 2001a).

Draft versions of the survey were pre-tested with four Landcare support staff, one each from Victoria and New South Wales and two from Queensland. Survey design and mail out procedures followed Dillman's (1979) Total Design Method. This approach includes presenting the survey in a distinctive booklet format, including a cover letter that clearly explains the purpose and relevance of the survey, using reminder/thank you cards, and a second mail out to individuals who did not return the first survey.

Prior to the development of the survey a series of presentations were made to Landcare coordinators. These presentations outlined the aims of the project and the topics the survey was likely to cover. These presentations were used to generate a discussion about the types of factors that were likely to be important given the aim of the project and thus guided the development of the survey instrument. Major topic areas covered in the survey are listed below.

### **3.2 Survey topics**

#### **3.2.1 Employment conditions**

Campbell (1997) considered that short-term contracts and lack of training/skills development were important conditions affecting the capacity of Landcare support staff to provide coordination/facilitation services. Questions in the survey covered aspects such as the type of employer, length of contract, training/skills development courses completed as part of their work, and previous experience.

#### **3.2.2 Workload**

Both the quality and quantity of workload are considered important factors linked to burnout (Maslach and Leiter 1997). Survey questions covered a range of topics including hours contracted to work, actual hours worked, number of groups and members serviced, time spent on various activities, and feelings of being pulled in too many directions at the one time.

#### **3.2.3 Role clarity and employer expectations**

Literature on burnout emphasises the importance of organisations clearly defining roles and responsibilities for employees and articulating these as clear and realistic expectations (Cherniss 1980a; Maslach and Leiter 1997).

Questions were developed to assess the extent that Landcare support staff felt they had a clear idea of their employer's expectations, that these expectations were consistent with those of Landcare groups, that their employer had set clear goals and priorities for them to work towards, and that they had adequate time and resources to meet expectations.

### **3.2.4 Role clarity and Landcare member expectations**

In the context of Landcare coordinators and facilitators the importance of role clarity and expectations could also be extended to include Landcare members. Questions were included to examine the extent tasks performed were consistent with respondent's personal views about the support required by groups/members, the extent groups/members had realistic expectations, and the time and resources available to meet these expectations.

### **3.2.5 Group participation and outcomes**

The extent and nature of participation by Landcare group members is likely to be an important influence on work conditions and perceptions of work by Landcare support staff. These topics were covered by survey questions exploring Landcare member/group levels of participation, cooperation, leadership effectiveness and a very limited range of possible Landcare group outcomes.

### **3.2.6 Performance feedback**

Malsach (1982) stated that monitoring and feedback about performance are needed to promote engagement with work and reduce burnout. Survey questions were developed to assess the degree of feedback support staff received from Landcare members. The survey instrument also included questions from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman and Oldham 1980) relating to monitoring and feedback from employers, coworkers, and the work itself.

### **3.2.7 Elements of the job**

A number of statements from the JDS were used to explore the work elements for Landcare support staff (Hackman and Oldham 1980). The JDS was designed to diagnose a work setting with regards to the variables considered critical in understanding an individual's work motivation. The questions explored characteristics of the job (eg. autonomy), experienced psychological states (eg. meaningfulness of work), affective outcomes (eg. potential for growth and personal development), and context satisfaction (eg. job security). Where autonomy, meaningfulness, potential for growth, and satisfaction are high, a worker's position and significance in an organisation is reinforced, promoting engagement and reducing the potential for burnout (Maslach and Leiter 1997).

### **3.2.8 Background personal information**

Various researchers have reported relationships between demographic variables such as age and gender with burnout. Survey questions covered basic demographic variables such as age, education, gender and some specific questions that the research team felt may influence burnout such as previous membership of a Landcare group, skills development/training undertaken, and time lived in the local area.

## 4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

Findings in this report have been presented so they can be interpreted without understanding the statistical methods used. However, for those who are interested to know how we approached the task of data analysis a brief explanation of the statistical methods used is given below.

Statistical analysis included in this report consists of descriptive statistics, Spearman rank order correlations, Gamma correlations, non-parametric chi-square tests, stepwise multiple regression, principal components factor analysis, alpha estimation, and confirmatory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the AMOS program (Arbuckle 1997). All other statistical analyses used the SPSS software package.

Spearman rank order correlations were used to identify hypothesised relationships between variables. For example, lower job satisfaction was hypothesised as being linked to higher levels of burnout. Spearman rank order correlations rank respondents on each variable from highest to lowest and determine the extent that there is a relationship between ranks on the two variables. For cases exploring the relationship between two ordinal variables Gamma correlations were used. A negative correlation coefficient or  $r_s$  indicates that a higher score on one variable is linked to a lower score on the other. The value of  $r_s$  can range from 1 to  $-1$  with higher values (either negative or positive) indicating a stronger relationship.

Kruskal-Wallis chi-square tests were used to determine the presence of significant differences across continuous variables for two or more independent groups. For example, the Kruskal-Wallis chi-square was used to determine if there were any significant differences on the level of burnout in Landcare support staff based on their employer. The value of the chi-square statistic or  $\chi^2$  indicates the strength of the difference between groups on a given variable with a higher value indicating a larger difference. The Pearson chi-square test was used to determine the presence of differences across ordinal or binomial data for two or more independent groups. For example, the Pearson chi-square test was used to determine if there were significant differences across employer groups in the gender of Landcare support staff.

Stepwise multiple regression was used to better determine the extent that a number of independent variables or factors identified by correlation or chi-square tests contributed to the observed scores on a dependent variable, in this instance burnout. Using this approach only variables that significantly improve the explanatory power of the model are included. The  $R^2$  statistic provides a measure of the amount of variance explained by variables in the model. The t statistic for each variable in the model can be used to indicate the relative importance of each variable. While stepwise multiple regression assumes a normal distribution on the dependent variable for each level of the independent variable, accurate results can be obtained for non-normal samples if the sample size is large (Green *et al.* 2000).

Principal components factor analysis was used to reduce a large set of overlapping variables to a smaller set of underlying factors. Statistics computed in this procedure include factor loadings or the correlation between items and the factor.

Cronbach alpha estimates were used to assess the internal consistency of the burnout scale. This test of reliability measures the extent to which a scale has the ability to produce consistent results. De Vaus (1991) suggested that an alpha value above 0.70 indicates that a scale is reliable.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the degree to which the data fitted with the hypothesised 3-factor structure of burnout as defined by the MBI (See below). Various fit statistics are reported including the goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), non-normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). With the exception of the RMSEA,

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where a score between 0.05-0.08 indicates reasonable fit, values below 0.90 indicate that the fit could be improved.

## **5.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO BURNOUT**

### **5.1 What is burnout?**

The term burnout was first used to describe a social problem identified in the 1970's in human service occupations in the USA (Maslach and Schaufeli 1993). Research investigating burnout has since embraced a broad range of occupational and volunteer settings around the globe. While there is no single accepted definition of burnout, literature highlights a number of central elements. These core characteristics of burnout are that:

- it is not simply an end state but a process;
- some form of exhaustion is a crucial element;
- it involves a negative shift in a person's perception; and
- it is associated with problems of reduced professional effectiveness and accomplishment (Freudenberger and Richelson 1980; Maslach 1998; Pines and Aronson 1988).

The widespread use and acceptance of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) has led to the general acceptance of the associated multi-dimensional definition of burnout. The MBI defines burnout as a process where continued exposure to stressful situations leads to a syndrome characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach *et al.* 1996).

- Emotional exhaustion is characterised by a lack of energy and feelings that one's emotional resources are used up. Individuals often become frustrated and feel that they are not able to give of themselves as they have in the past.
- Depersonalisation refers to a tendency towards an unfeeling or impersonal response towards others. Individuals become detached, callous and cynical towards others and/or their organisation.
- Reduced personal accomplishment involves a negative evaluation by individuals of their competence and successful achievement. This is often accompanied by a perception of lack of progress or even lost ground (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; Golembiewski *et al.* 1998).

### **5.2 Measuring burnout**

The MBI is the most widely used and accepted burnout measurement tool (Schaufeli *et al.* 1993). The MBI consists of 22 statements (nine for the emotional exhaustion sub-scale, five for the depersonalisation sub-scale and eight for the personal accomplishment sub-scale) with a seven-point response option (Maslach *et al.* 1996) [Appendix 1].

To assist with MBI interpretation, the MBI test manual includes demographic norms for each sub-scale and provides cut-off points that allow scores to be assigned as high, medium, or low. The demographic norm values are the mean MBI sub-scale scores for a sample of 11,000 human service employees. The demographic norms and the high, medium and low cut-off points are not designed to provide an absolute measure or determinant of the point where an individual is burnt out. Rather, these measures can be used to provide a relative assessment of the degree of burnout in a sample and variables linked to higher burnout scores for each sub-scale.

The MBI does not combine sub-scale scores to give an overall measure of burnout as each sub-scale measures a distinct component of burnout and it is common for sub-scales to have different relationships to the same variable. As a result Maslach *et al.* (1996) recommended that all statistical analysis be conducted with the separate sub-scale scores.

This project used a slightly modified version of the MBI. Modifications were made to ensure that scale items were worded and scored in a manner that was appropriate for Landcare support staff. The term recipient is used

in MBI items to refer to the individuals that an employee provides services for. This term caused some confusion in the authors' earlier research (Byron *et al.* 1999) and a decision was made to replace this term with Landcare members. The original seven-point scale used to score items in the MBI ranged from 0 "never" to 6 "every day". As many Landcare support staff are employed in part-time positions this scale was replaced with 0 "this statement does not reflect how I feel" to 6 "this statement does reflect how I feel". Maslach *et al.* (1996) recommended that research that modified the MBI should provide independent evidence of scale validity and reliability (refer to section 6.10).

### **5.3 Factors that contribute to burnout**

Three different sets of factors have been identified as contributing to burnout. Most authors identify individual, organisational, and societal factors (Freudenberger 1982; Maslach 1998) [Table 1]. The main organisational factors cited as contributing to burnout are:

- high activity levels;
- unclear goals, plans and expectations;
- poor monitoring and feedback processes; and
- poor leadership/support (Freudenberger 1982; Maslach and Leiter 1997).

The authors' previous research on burnout in Landcare participants confirmed the importance of these factors in the Landcare setting (Byron and Curtis 2001b). The work setting or organisational factors are considered the major contributor to burnout and it is the organisational setting where interventions are most likely to have an impact (Cherniss 1980a; Maslach and Leiter 1997). For these reasons, organisational factors were given the highest priority in this study of burnout in Landcare support staff.

Table 1 provides a summary of individual, organisational and social factors identified as contributing to the experience of burnout. Note that the variables that are highlighted are those addressed in this research project.

**TABLE 1**  
**Factors identified as contributing to burnout**

Cherniss (1980a)	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓								✓		✓
Cherniss (1980b)	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓							
Edelwich & Brodsky (1980)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓					✓	✓					✓	
Maslach (1982)	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓				✓								✓	✓	✓	✓
Farber (1983)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓									✓				✓
Pines & Aronson (1988)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓											✓		✓
Greising (1991)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓														✓
Cherniss (1995)				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓												
Maslach & Leiter (1997)	✓	✓				✓	✓																
Byron & Curtis (2001b) Landcare members		✓		✓					✓	✓													
Victorian Landcare support staff (Byron & Curtis 2001a)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓										✓			
Queensland Landcare support staff (this report)		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓										
<b>Factors contributing to burnout:</b>																							
Autonomy																							
Workload																							
Insufficient resources																							
Lack of success indicators																							
Inadequate training																							
Lack of recognition \ rewards																							
Coworkers																							
Poor supervision \ monitoring \ feedback																							
Unclear goals \ expectations																							
Unreasonable expectations																							
Variation																							
Focus on negative																							
Value conflicts																							
Empowerment																							
Work and self actualisation																							
Career expectations																							
Breakdown of community																							
Social factors (not specific)																							
Age																							
Gender																							
Marital \ family status																							
Education																							
Personality variables																							

Organisational Factors

Societal Factors

Individual Factors

\* Note that the variables that are highlighted are those addressed in this research project.

## **6.0 RESULTS**

Results from this research project are presented in two main sections.

The first section provides information describing the work setting for Queensland Landcare support staff including:

- employment details;
- workload;
- role clarity and employer expectations;
- role clarity and Landcare member expectations;
- group participation and outcomes;
- performance feedback; and
- elements of the job.

The second section outlines information about burnout in Queensland Landcare support staff including:

- the reliability and validity of the MBI instrument used;
- the level of burnout; and
- factors associated with burnout.

As a general guide, the authors consider a significant issue exists where 30% or more of respondents have indicated a problem on a particular variable. This approach has been widely accepted in previous research published by the authors. In this report this level has been referred to as a substantial minority or a substantial proportion.

### **6.1 Response rate**

An overall response rate of 71% was achieved. Of the 104 surveys sent out, 72 were returned and completed with a further three either returned to sender or returned because the person was no longer employed in a Landcare support role.

### **6.2 Employment details**

#### **6.2.1 Employer**

Respondents were asked to indicate who they were employed by. These responses were then grouped to form four main employer groups: Landcare groups or group networks; The Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM); Catchment Management Committees (CMC); or other (mainly local government). Landcare groups or group networks were the most common employer with 44% of support staff. The DNRM (30%) and CMC (22%) were the next most common employers. Only a small proportion of Landcare support staff were employed by other groups (4%).

It was expected that there would be some significant differences across certain variables based on these employer groups. Each variable included in the project was analysed to identify any significant differences based on employer. Where significant differences were observed they have been reported.

### **6.2.2 Time in current position**

Respondents were asked to indicate the length of time they had been employed in their current position. Forty-five per cent of respondents had been employed in their current position for less than one year (median 15 months) [Table 2].

### **6.2.3 Length of existing contract**

The survey included a question asking respondents to indicate the total length of their existing contract. In contrast to the complex long-term issues Landcare is attempting to manage, most Landcare support staff are operating in short-term positions. Thirty-six per cent of respondents said their current contract was for 12 months or less, with a median of two years [Table 2].

### **6.2.4 Previous employment**

Sixty per cent of respondents said that they had not been employed as a coordinator/facilitator prior to beginning their present position. There were significant differences between the employer groups on this variable ( $\chi^2 = 11.244$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). The proportion of respondents reporting no previous employment ranged from 88% for CMC to 33% for DNRM. This finding is likely to reflect the longer organisational history of DNRM. Of those respondents who had previous experience the median was 4.5 years employment as a coordinator/facilitator [Table 2].

### **6.2.5 Training**

Respondents were asked if they had undertaken any formal skills development or training course as part of their job. Despite the finding that many support staff had limited work experience, 42% cent of respondents said that they had not completed any formal skills development or training course as part of their job.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent they thought their level of skills development or training completed as part of their job was adequate. Respondents were asked to select a response option from a five-point scale ranging from “very inadequate” to “very adequate” with a “not sure” option in the middle. These response options were then collapsed into three groups “very inadequate/inadequate”, “not sure”, and “very adequate/adequate”. Fifty-one per cent of respondents said that the skills development and training they had completed was very inadequate/inadequate (14% unsure, 35% very adequate/adequate) [Table 2]. As might be expected, respondents who had not completed any skills development/training were significantly more likely to report inadequacies ( $r_s = 11.240$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ).

**TABLE 2**  
**Employment details**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Employment details	n	All n=69	Landcare group n=31	DNRM n=21	CMC n=16	Other n=3
Median time in months employed in current position	70	15	18	10	16	12
% previously employed as a coordinator/facilitator	72	40%	39%	67%	12%	33%
Median number of years previously employed as a Landcare coordinator/facilitator	37	4.5	4.5	6.3	3.0	2.0
Median length of current contract in months	61	24	24	13	24	12
% completed skills development/training	72	58%	65%	52%	50%	67%
% considered skills development/training adequate	72	35%	45%	21%	25%	0%

### 6.3 Workload

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions relating to both the quantity and quality of their workload including:

- the number of groups/members serviced;
- the time spent on work; and
- the breakdown of their time across various activities.

#### 6.3.1 Number of groups/members serviced

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of groups and the combined membership of all groups that they serviced as part of their job. Survey data indicated that each respondent supported a median of three groups and 100 members. There were significant differences on these variables based on the employer groups ( $\chi^2_{\text{groups}} = 23.398$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2_{\text{members}} = 11.788$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ).

With a median of two groups, support staff employed by CMC and Landcare groups or networks provided support to the least number of groups. Support staff employed by DNRM serviced the largest number of Landcare groups and members with a median of 15 groups and 273 members per support staff [Table 3]. When taking into account these differences it is important to note that there was no significant difference in the hours worked between employer groups.

#### 6.3.2 Time at work

The survey asked respondents to indicate the number of hours per week they were contracted to work. The majority of respondents (82%) were contracted to work for more than 30 hours per week with a median of 36 hours [Table 3].

Respondents were also asked how many hours they actually worked per week over the past month. Findings indicated that Landcare support staff in Queensland worked a median of 45 hours per week or nearly nine hours over their contracted time.

The survey also included a question that asked respondents to indicate if the hours they were contracted to work were sufficient to provide the services expected of them. This question used a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree”, to “strongly agree” with “not sure” in the middle. Sixty-two per cent of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the hours they were contracted to work were not sufficient to provide the services expected of them [Table 3]. It is important to note that the survey was sent out after the deadline for Natural Heritage Trust funding applications and in a time usually associated with moderate workloads.

**TABLE 3**  
**Elements of workload**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Elements of workload	n	All n=69	Landcare group n=31	DNRM n=21	CMC n=16	Other n=3
Median number of groups serviced	69	3	2	15	2	3
Median number of members serviced	67	100	110	273	60	38
Median hours contracted to work per week	70	36	36	36	36	36
Median actual hours worker per week	70	45	44	45	45	42
% indicating contracted hours not sufficient	69	62%	55%	71%	67%	67%

### 6.3.3 Time spent across various activities

Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of their time spent on various activities over the last month. Survey data indicated that respondents spent most time on one-on-one contact with members (median 20% of time), group contact (median 20%), and the preparation of funding submissions/reporting (median 20%). Respondents reported spending the least time doing on-ground work (median 10%) and preparing newsletters and mail outs (10%) [Table 4].

A second question asked respondents how many individuals they had various types of contact with. Landcare support staff reported making individual contact (either in person, by telephone, through letters or via E-mail) with an average of 110 individuals a fortnight or 55 individuals per week. The most common method of communicating was through e-mail (median of 35 individuals per fortnight) [Table 5].

**TABLE 4**  
**Percentage of time spent on various activities**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Activity	n	1%- 20%	21%- 40%	41%- 60%	61%- 80%	81%- 100%	Median
One-on-one contact with members	69	75%	22%	3%	0%	0%	20%
Group contact of various types (eg. education / planning)	69	59%	26%	15%	0%	0%	20%
Preparation of funding submissions/reporting	69	68%	19%	12%	0%	1%	20%
Doing on-ground work	69	83%	14%	3%	0%	0%	10%
Newsletters / mail outs	69	93%	6%	1%	0%	0%	10%

**TABLE 5**  
**Level of contact with individuals per fortnight**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Activity	n	Number of individuals						Median
		Less than 10	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+	
Sent e-mail	68	13%	16%	15%	16%	12%	28%	35
Spoke with on the telephone	70	7%	23%	30%	14%	10%	16%	25
Spoke with in-person	69	17%	18%	29%	13%	7%	16%	25
Sent letter / news letter	67	28%	19%	8%	2%	7%	36%	25
<b>Total</b>	67	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>110</b>

## 6.4 Role clarity and employer expectations

Five questions were included in the survey exploring the clarity of employer expectations, the adequacy of time and resources to meet expectations, and the extent employer expectations were consistent with the assistance requested by groups/members. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent they agreed or disagreed with statements using a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with a “not sure” option in the middle. To simplify interpretation, these response options have been collapsed into three groups “strongly disagree/disagree”, “not sure”, and “strongly agree/agree”. A “not applicable” response option was also included for respondents employed by a Landcare group or network unable to make a distinction between their employer and the wider membership. Only a very small proportion of respondents felt unable to make this distinction [Table 6]. This finding suggests that even support staff employed by a group or network were able to identify specific individuals as their employer. It was not possible to ascertain whom these respondents identified as their employer from the data collected in this survey.

Survey data showed that the majority (65%) of respondents felt they had a clear idea of what their employer expected of them. However, a substantial proportion of employers appear to have difficulty articulating these expectations, with nearly half (48%) of the respondents indicating their employer had not set clear goals and priorities. In addition, many respondents felt that they did not have adequate time (68%) or resources (47%) to meet the expectations of their employer.

There were also indications of role conflict with 47% of respondents indicating that the role they were expected to perform by their employer was often different to the type of assistance Landcare groups request [Table 6]. There were significant differences across the employer groups on this variable with 76% of DNRM employed respondents indicating role conflict compared to 27% for Landcare group or network employed respondents ( $\chi^2 = 48.511$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

While support staff appear to have a reasonable idea of their employer’s broad expectations, survey data suggests that limited time and resources combined with conflicting demands from Landcare groups/members are undermining the capacity of many support staff to meet these expectations. These issues are likely to be compounded by the lack of goal and priority setting processes to articulate employer expectations.

**TABLE 6**  
**Role clarity and employer expectations**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Statement	n	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Strongly Agree / Agree	N/A	Mean
I do not have enough time to meet the expectations of my employer	71	19%	9%	68%	4%	3.89
I have a clear idea of what my employer expects from me in this position	71	17%	17%	65%	1%	3.73
The role I am expected to perform by my employed is often different to the kind of assistance Landcare groups/members request	71	37%	15%	47%	1%	3.24
I do not have adequate resources to meet the expectations of my employer	71	41%	11%	47%	1%	3.18
My employer has set clear goals and priorities for me to work towards	71	48%	13%	36%	3%	2.86

## 6.5 Role clarity and Landcare member expectations

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements exploring the clarity and appropriateness of Landcare member expectations. These questions used the same five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with a “not sure” option in the middle. Again, these response options have been collapsed into three groups “strongly disagree/disagree”, “not sure”, and “strongly agree/agree”.

A majority (65%) of Landcare support staff felt that they performed tasks that were consistent with their personal views about the type of assistance Landcare groups and members required.

In addition, 48% of respondents said that Landcare members had realistic expectations about what can be accomplished (23% disagree) and 43% said members did not expect too much from them (28% said they did) [Table 7].

Despite these findings, 74% of respondents felt like they were being pulled in too many directions at the one time and 61% agreed that they were expected to do things that were not part of their job description. Forty-eight per cent of respondents also agreed that they were asked to provide technical advice in areas where they had little knowledge [Table 7].

Survey data also suggested there were some problems in terms of Landcare support staff meeting the expectations of Landcare members. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents said they did not have enough time to meet the expectations of Landcare members and 63% said they did not have enough resources. Over 50% also reported that the geographic area and number of members they were expected to service limited their ability to provide some of the types of support that groups/members required [Table 7]. Respondents who reported servicing more groups were significantly more likely to report that time ( $r^s = 0.307$ ,  $p = 011$ ) and the number of groups they had to service ( $r^s = 0.475$ ,  $p < 001$ ) were important limitations.

Notwithstanding the finding that support staff were generally comfortable with the expectations of Landcare members, role overload appears to be an important barrier limiting the capacity of a majority of respondents to meet these expectations.

**TABLE 7**  
**Role clarity and Landcare member expectations**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Statement	n	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean
I do not have enough time to meet the expectations of Landcare groups/members	72	11%	11%	78%	4.00
I feel as though I am being pulled in too many directions at the one time	72	18%	8%	74%	3.85
The geographic area I am expected to service limits my ability to provide some of the types of support that I feel groups should have	70	29%	13%	58%	3.54
I am expected to do things that are not part of my job description	71	35%	4%	61%	3.52
I do not have adequate resources to meet the expectations of Landcare members/groups	72	25%	12%	63%	3.51
The type of tasks I perform are consistent with my personal views about the type of assistance Landcare groups/members should have	72	24%	11%	65%	3.44
The number of groups I am expected to service limits my ability to provide some of the types of support that I feel groups should have	69	33%	12%	55%	3.35
Landcare members have realistic expectations about what can be accomplished	72	23%	29%	48%	3.28
I am asked to provide technical advice in areas where I have limited knowledge	71	46%	6%	48%	3.04
I feel that Landcare groups/members expect too much of me	69	43%	29%	28%	2.55

## 6.6 Group participation and outcomes

The survey included a range of statements relating to the extent and nature of participation by Landcare members and the outcomes from participation. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent they agreed or disagreed with these statements on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with a “not sure” option in the middle. These were latter collapsed into three groups “strongly disagree/disagree”, “not sure”, and “strongly agree/agree”.

Survey data highlighted problems in motivating participation for many respondents. Sixty-six percent of support staff agreed that it was difficult to get Landcare members to become more actively involved in Landcare activities. In addition, 65% said that lack of enthusiasm in Landcare members made their job more difficult and 53% said there was often poor attendance at activities that Landcare members said they wanted. The majority of Landcare support staff (83%) also indicated that large proportions of Landowners were not involved in Landcare [Table 8].

However, most support staff felt that Landcare members were willing to work cooperatively (58% agreed) and were receptive to new ideas (55% agreed). There was less certainty about the extent that Landcare groups had strong leadership (41% disagreed, 15% unsure) and group cohesion (34% disagreed, 24% unsure) [Table 8].

While the majority of Landcare support staff (63%) said they felt appreciated and received acknowledgment for the work they do, survey data highlighted a lack of constructive feedback with only 29% of respondents saying that members provide constructive feedback about how they can improve their coordination [Table 8]. Interestingly, respondents employed by a Landcare group or network reported receiving less acknowledgment from members than other employer groups, with only 39% saying they felt appreciated and received acknowledgment compared to 86% for DNRM ( $\chi^2 = 23.610$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ). This is an issue particularly given the earlier finding that support staff employed by an organisation other than DNRM were significantly less experienced.

Responses to questions exploring a very limited range of possible Landcare group outcomes were mixed. On the one hand, 63% of respondents said members were aware of resource conditions and 70% felt that Landcare groups were making a significant contribution to improved natural resource conditions in their region. At the same time, 73% of respondents agreed that Landcare members continue some practices that have a negative impact on the environment and 66% felt that the scale of environmental issues were beyond the capacity of Landcare groups alone to address [Table 8].

**TABLE 8**  
**Group participation and outcomes**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Statement	n	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Not Sure	Strongly Agree / Agree	Mean
A large proportion of Landholders are not involved with Landcare	72	13%	4%	83%	4.03
Landcare members continue some practices that have a negative impact on the environment	70	11%	16%	73%	3.76
Lack of enthusiasm amongst Landcare members makes my job more difficult	72	20%	15%	65%	3.71
Landcare groups I work with are making a significant contribution to improved conditions of natural resources in the area	72	16%	14%	70%	3.69
The scale of environmental problems in the region/regions I work are beyond the capacity of Landcare groups alone to address	72	23%	11%	66%	3.65
It is difficult to get Landcare members to become actively involved in Landcare activities	72	22%	12%	66%	3.64
I feel well appreciated and receive acknowledgment for the work I do	71	27%	10%	63%	3.51
Landcare members are aware of natural resource conditions in their area	72	19%	18%	63%	3.50
Landcare members are willing to work cooperatively	71	15%	27%	58%	3.46
There is often poor attendance to activities that Landholders say they want	70	26%	21%	53%	3.43
Landcare members are receptive to new ideas	71	21%	24%	55%	3.30
Overall there is a strong cohesion within the Landcare groups I work with	71	34%	24%	42%	3.10
Overall the Landcare groups I work with have strong leadership	72	41%	15%	44%	3.06
Landcare members provide constructive feedback on how I can improve coordination/facilitation	72	49%	22%	29%	2.67

## 6.7 Elements of the job

This research used a number of statements from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) to explore a range of work elements for Landcare support staff (Hackman and Oldham 1980). The JDS was designed to diagnose a work setting with regards to the major class of variables considered to be critical in understanding an individual’s work motivation. The full version of the JDS uses a series of over 70 questions to explore a range of:

- job characteristics;
- psychological states;
- affective outcomes; and
- context satisfaction.

Due to space limitations, the survey to Landcare support staff used a shortened selection of 21 statements. Instead of relying on multiple measures for each element included in the JDS, a single item was selected for each of the main themes assessed by the JDS. While there are some limitations to this approach these questions were included to assess the importance of job elements in explaining burnout.

### 6.7.1 Job characteristics

Respondents were asked to describe their job by indicating how much of a particular characteristic their job had on a scale from one “very little” to seven “very much” with four “moderate”. Responses were then collapsed into three groups “little” (one-three), “moderate” (four) and “much” (five-seven).

Respondents indicated that their position involved a large degree of cooperative work (91% said much) and autonomy (89% said much). Survey data also indicated that Landcare coordination/facilitation involves a lot of skill variety with 86% of respondents saying that their job required them to use a variety of skills and talents. Most respondents (71%) also indicated that they felt their job was important and significant. The extent of task identity was less clear, with 41% of respondents indicating that their job involved only a little amount of work that was a whole identifiable piece of work. A substantial proportion of respondents also reported that they received little or moderate feedback about their performance from the job itself (45%) and from managers and coworkers (58%) [Table 9].

When considered in conjunction with earlier finding of limited feedback from Landcare members, survey data highlighted problems with performance feedback (refer to section 6.6).

**TABLE 9**  
**Job characteristics**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Job Characteristic	n	Little	Moderate	Much	Mean
Extent job requires cooperative work with other people	72	3%	6%	91%	6.32
Extent job requires you to do many different things using a variety of your skills and talents	72	7%	7%	86%	5.86
Extent of autonomy	71	3%	8%	89%	5.70
How significant or important is your job	71	11%	18%	71%	5.20
To what extent does the job itself provide you with information about your performance	72	24%	21%	55%	4.40
To what extent do managers or coworkers let you know how well you are doing	72	40%	18%	42%	3.92
Extent job involves doing a whole identifiable piece of work	70	41%	21%	38%	3.90

### 6.7.2 Experienced psychological states and affective outcomes

Respondents were asked to indicate how they personally felt about various aspects of their job using a seven-point scale from one “strongly disagree” to seven “strongly agree” with four “neutral”. These responses were then collapsed into three groups “disagree” (one-three), “neutral” (four) and “agree” (five-seven).

Ninety-three per cent of respondents indicated that they felt personally responsible for their work, and 64% thought that they should take personal credit or blame for the results of their work. The meaningfulness of the job for Landcare support staff was also very high; 89% agreed with the statement “the work I do is very meaningful to me”. Survey data indicated that many Landcare support staff have difficulties in terms of their knowledge of results. Forty-one per cent of respondents said that they often had trouble figuring out if they were doing well or poorly in their job [Table 10]. Again, this confirms the earlier findings of lack of attention to feedback and feedback agents (refer to sections 6.6 and 6.7.1).

Almost all respondents reported general job satisfaction (72%) and personal satisfaction from doing the job well (95%) [Table 10].

**TABLE 10**  
**Experienced psychological states and affective outcomes**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Statement	n	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Mean
Feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well	71	1%	4%	95%	6.18
Feel a very high degree of personal responsibility for the work I do on this job	71	3%	6%	91%	6.07
The work I do is very meaningful to me	71	6%	8%	86%	5.62
Generally very satisfied with this job	71	17%	11%	72%	5.18
I should personally take credit or blame for the results of my work on this job	71	18%	18%	64%	4.70
I often have trouble figuring out whether I am doing well or poorly on this job	71	41%	10%	49%	4.03

### 6.7.3 Context satisfaction

The survey also asked respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their job. These questions used a seven-point scale from one “very dissatisfied” to seven “very satisfied” with four “neutral”. These responses were then collapsed into three groups “dissatisfied” (one-three), “neutral” (four) and “satisfied” (five-seven).

While general job satisfaction, independence, internal work motivation and growth satisfaction were all high for Landcare support staff, most respondents were not satisfied with the level of job security (72% dissatisfied). A substantial minority of respondents (39%) also said they were dissatisfied with the pay and fringe benefits they received and the level of support and guidance from their employer [Table 11].

**TABLE 11**  
**Context satisfaction**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Aspect of job	n	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Mean
Amount of independent thought and action I can exercise	71	4%	4%	92%	6.10
The amount of challenge	71	3%	8%	89%	5.97
Degree of respect and fair treatment from employer	71	14%	6%	80%	5.42
Feeling of worthwhile accomplishment from doing job	71	14%	7%	79%	5.23
Amount of growth and personal development from doing job	71	23%	10%	67%	4.79
Pay and fringe benefits	71	39%	11%	50%	4.20
Support and guidance from employer	71	39%	13%	48%	4.08
Job security	71	72%	8%	20%	2.70

## 6.8 Summary

Most support staff had not been employed in their current position for very long (median 15 months) and 60% had no prior experience as a coordinator/facilitator. Given these findings of limited experience it is concerning that 42% of respondents had not completed any on-the-job training or skills development.

Survey data highlighted some very positive aspects about working as a Landcare coordinator/facilitator. Support staff reported high levels of general job satisfaction (72% positive), autonomy (89% positive) and skill variety (86% positive). Respondents also said that their work was very meaningful to them (86% agreed) and personally rewarding when they did their job well (95% agreed).

Most respondents (65%) indicated that they had a clear idea of what their employer expected. However, 48% reported that their employer had not articulated these expectations through clear goals and priorities. There was also evidence of role conflict with nearly half (47%) of respondents saying that the role their employer expected them to perform differed from the types of assistance requested by groups/members. This issue was particularly apparent for respondents employed by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (76% agreed).

Almost half of the respondents said that Landcare members had realistic expectations about what could be accomplished (48%) or what they should expect from a coordinator/facilitator (43%). Most respondents (65%) also said that the tasks they performed in their position were consistent with their personal view about the types of support groups/members require.

Support staff strongly believed that Landcare groups were making a significant contribution to improved natural resource conditions in their region (70% agreed) and nearly two thirds (63%) felt that Landcare members were aware of resource conditions. At the same time, two thirds (66%) felt that the scale of issues was beyond the capacity of Landcare groups alone to address. Seventy-three per cent of respondents also indicated that Landcare members continued practices that had a negative impact on the environment.

Most respondents (58%) said that Landcare members were willing to work cooperatively. However, difficulty in motivating participation amongst members and lack of enthusiasm were considered to be major constraints for

around two thirds of respondents (65% and 66% respectively). In addition, over a third of respondents (41%) felt that the Landcare groups they worked with lacked strong leadership.

Survey data provided evidence of role overload with most respondents indicating that available time (78%), resources (63%), the geographic area (58%), and the number of groups they had to service (55%) were important limitations on their capacity to meet the expectations of Landcare groups/members. The availability of time (68%) and resources (47%) were also considered important factors limiting the capacity of respondents to meet the expectations of their employer.

Limited attention to performance feedback was an issue for a substantial proportion of respondents. The feedback channels explored in this research included Landcare members, employers/coworkers and the job itself. In each case, well over a third of respondents said they received little to moderate feedback about their performance (49% said little feedback from members, 40% said little feedback from coworkers and 45% said little or moderate feedback from the job itself). Considered collectively this suggests a deficiency in performance feedback.

Although survey data suggested that Landcare groups/members have a realistic idea about what can be accomplished it appears that employers and funding agencies may have unclear or unrealistic expectations, underestimated the requirements or are deliberately stretching the capacity of support staff. Without adequate feedback, the establishment of clear goals/priorities or adequate training/skills development, it is likely that support staff, who were generally highly motivated but relatively inexperienced, will have difficulty in setting boundaries to their work. That is, their own expectations about what they should accomplish may be unclear or simply unachievable given available resources. The perceived inability of support staff to provide services and meet expectations they considered realistic (see above) may help explain the fact that on average support staff worked nearly nine hours a week above their contracted time.

While most support staff were generally very satisfied with the various elements of their work explored in this research, over half (72%) were not satisfied with their level of job security (short-term contracts). Over one third (39%) were also dissatisfied with the pay and fringe benefits and the level of support and guidance they received from their employer.

## **6.9 Validity and reliability of the MBI**

Findings from statistical analyses used to test the validity and reliability of the modified MBI used in this research are reported to demonstrate the appropriateness of the methods used. However, an understanding of these analyses is not required to interpret the results from the MBI (section 6.11).

This study of burnout in Landcare support staff in Queensland coincided with a replicate study undertaken with Victorian Landcare support staff. Some of the analyses used to establish scale validity and reliability are more powerful with larger sample sizes. Hence, the Victorian and Queensland data sets were combined when assessing the factorial validity and reliability of the modified MBI.

### **6.9.1 Validity**

The term validity refers to the extent that the scale is measuring some part of a distinct concept (de Vaus 1991). There has been considerable attention in burnout literature to replicating the three-factor structure of burnout in a range of occupational settings (Boles *et al.* 2000; Bynre 1993). Drawing on this literature the factorial validity of the modified MBI used in this project was assessed by two methods, principal components factor analysis (PCA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

The results from PCA indicate general support for the three-factor structure of burnout in the MBI with most items loading significantly on their hypothesised factors. Item 12, item 6 and Item 16 however did not load highest on their hypothesised factors. Item 12, “I feel very energetic” which is part of the personal accomplishment sub-scale loaded more highly on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale. This finding has been observed in other research (Boles *et al.* 2000; Byrne 1993; Schaufeli *et al.* 1994), and item 12 has been considered a problematic item in the MBI. From a theoretical perspective it seems reasonable that this item would be strongly related to emotional exhaustion which is often characterised as a lack of energy and feelings that one’s emotional resources are exhausted. Item 16, “Working with Landcare members directly puts too much stress on me”; and item 6, “Working all day with Landcare members is a real strain for me”, which are part of the emotional exhaustion sub-scale loaded more highly on the depersonalisation sub-scale. Golembiewski *et al.* (1998) and Schaufeli *et al.* (1994) also reported similar findings. Indeed, these items seem to fit both the depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion sub-scales.

Results from CFA also provided support for the three-factor structure of burnout as measured by the MBI. The three-factor structure was compared against a one-factor structure with all items loading on a single factor, and a two-factor structure where emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation were combined to form a single factor (personal accomplishment the second factor). In all instances results demonstrated that the three-factor structure was a superior fit to the data. However, fit measures indicated that the fit could be improved, with statistics below the generally accepted levels of 0.90 for GFI, AGFI, NNFI and CFI [Table 12]. Given the findings from PCA and the consistency of findings from this investigation with other research using the MBI, items 12, 16 and 6 were deleted and CFA repeated. Research investigating the factorial validity of the MBI has also consistently found that the model fit can be improved if the errors of item 1, “I feel emotionally drained from work” and item 2, “I feel used up and the end of a workday” are allowed to correlate (Byrne 1993). These modifications improved the fit of the model but most of the fit statistics remained just below the accepted levels [Table 12]. These findings indicate that the model could be improved, however the results are comparable with previous research investigating the validity of the MBI and suggest that the three-factor structure of burnout is valid for Landcare support staff. To facilitate comparisons of MBI scores in this research with those obtained by other researchers (ie the demographic norms) items 12, 16 and 6 were still included when calculating the MBI sub-scale scores.

**TABLE 12**  
**Confirmatory factor analysis of the modified MBI**  
**Victorian and Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=201)**

Model	Chi-square	DF*	GFI*	AGFI*	NNFI*	CFI*	RMSEA*
3 factor 22 item scale	490	206	0.82	0.78	0.79	0.81	0.08
3 factor 19 item scale	293	148	0.87	0.84	0.87	0.89	0.07
2 factor 22 item scale	642	208	0.77	0.71	0.68	0.71	0.10
2 factor 19 item scale	449	150	0.82	0.77	0.74	0.77	0.10
1 factor 22 item scale	763	204	0.70	0.64	0.59	0.63	0.12
1 factor 19 item scale	609	151	0.73	0.66	0.59	0.64	0.12

Note: \*DF = degrees of freedom, \*GFI = goodness of fit index, \*AGFI = adjusted goodness of fit index, \*NNFI = non-normed fit index, \*CFI = comparative fit index, \*RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

The modified MBI also demonstrated convergent validity with sub-scale scores showing significant relationships in the expected direction with variables found to be linked to burnout in other research including age, job satisfaction, unclear goals and expectations, and poor monitoring and feed back processes (see later discussion of factors linked to burnout).

While these findings indicate issues with some specific items in the MBI, the consistency of these findings with other research suggest these are issues with the construction of the MBI as opposed to issues with the validity of applying the MBI to Landcare support staff.

### **6.9.2 Reliability**

The term reliability refers to the ability of a scale to produce consistent results. Reliability of the modified MBI used in this study was assessed using Cronbach alpha estimates as a measure of internal consistency. This approach has been widely cited as an effective method for assessing the reliability of the MBI (Boles *et al.* 2000; Byrne 1993; Maslach *et al.* 1996).

All items in the emotional exhaustion sub-scale were found to be reliable with an alpha value for emotional exhaustion of 0.88. The alpha value for depersonalisation was 0.63, which is below the commonly accepted value of 0.70.

Results from the reliability analysis indicated that three depersonalisation items, those referring specifically to Landcare members, were not answered consistently with the depersonalisation items that did not refer to Landcare members. Similar findings have been found with teachers and items referring to their students (Abu-Hilal and Salameh 1992). Abu-Hilal and Salameh (1992) stated that this finding was likely to be a reflection of the attitudes of these teachers to their students as the students were not considered to be a major source of stress. This also seems a likely explanation in the Landcare setting and, as is discussed in later sections of this report, most Landcare support staff do not consider Landcare members a major source of stress.

One item in the personal accomplishment sub-scale, “In my work I deal with emotional problems very calmly” was found to be unreliable. When this item was deleted the alpha value for the personal accomplishment scale was 0.70.

Results from the reliability analysis indicate that the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment sub-scales of the modified MBI are reliable. The depersonalisation sub-scale had an alpha value just below the 0.70 indicating some inconsistency in responses between questions relating to Landcare members and two more general questions. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) stated that values below 0.70 are sometimes found on depersonalisation and may be a result of the sub-scale containing only five items. Depersonalisation is also considered to be the least robust component of burnout (Schaufeli *et al.* 1993).

## **6.10 Level of burnout**

Two methods are used in this report to make a relative assessment of the level of burnout in Landcare support staff in Queensland.

- 1) The mean scores on each sub-scale of the modified MBI are compared with the demographic norm values (mean score for 11,000 human service employees) outlined in the MBI test manual.
- 2) Using the cut-off points provided in the MBI test manual respondents were assigned as high, medium or low burnout on each sub-scale.

Higher levels of burnout are indicated by:

- high emotional exhaustion, denoted by scores above the demographic norm or a high burnout assignment;
- high depersonalisation, denoted by scores above the demographic norm or a high burnout assignment; and
- reduced personal accomplishment, denoted by scores below the demographic norm or a high burnout assignment.

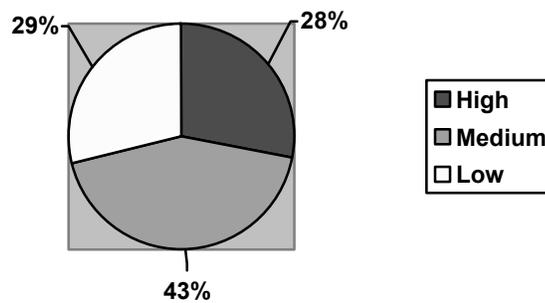
Note scores above the demographic norm (below for personal accomplishment) or high burnout classifications only provide a relative measure of burnout.

### 6.10.1 Emotional exhaustion

The mean score on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale for respondents was 21.97 compared to the demographic norm of 20.99. Sixty per cent of respondents scored above the demographic norm [Table 13].

Using the high medium and low cut-off points, 29% of respondents were classified as having low burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion, 43% medium and 28% high [Figure 1].

**FIGURE 1**  
**Level of emotional exhaustion**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

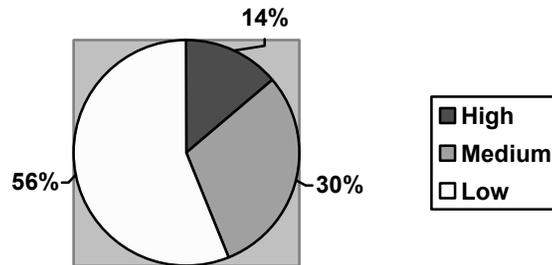


### 6.10.2 Depersonalisation

The mean score for respondents on the depersonalisation sub-scale was 7.00 compared to the demographic norm of 8.73. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents reported levels of depersonalisation above the demographic norm [Table 13].

Using the high, medium and low cut-off points, 56% of respondents were classified as having low burnout in term of depersonalisation, 30% medium and 14% high [Figure 2].

**FIGURE 2**  
**Level of depersonalisation**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

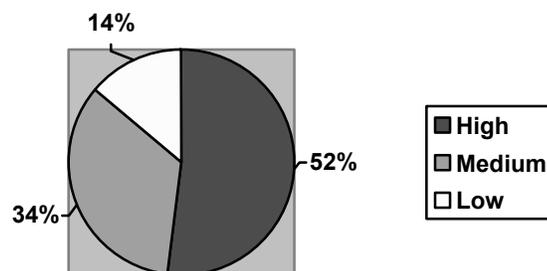


### 6.10.3 Personal accomplishment

Keeping in mind that low scores on personal accomplishment reflect high burnout, with a mean of 30.94, 74% of respondents had scores below the demographic norm of 34.58 on the personal accomplishment sub-scale [Table 13].

Using the cut-off points from the MBI test manual, 14% of respondents had low burnout in terms of reduced personal accomplishment, 34% medium, and 52% high [Figure 3].

**FIGURE 3**  
**Level of burnout on personal accomplishment**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**



**TABLE 13**  
**Mean burnout scores for Landcare coordinators/facilitators**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

n	Mean	Demographic norm	Above/below norm (high burnout)
<i>Emotional exhaustion</i>			
72	21.97	20.99	60%
<i>Depersonalisation</i>			
72	7.00	8.73	37%
<i>Personal accomplishment</i>			
72	30.94	34.58	74%

There were no significant differences in burnout scores for Landcare support staff based on the region they worked in or who they were employed by.

#### 6.10.4 Summary

Of the three elements of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment was the sub-scale where most respondents appeared to be experiencing high burnout. There were also indications that emotional exhaustion is an issue for Landcare support staff with nearly two thirds of respondents above the demographic norm and 28% scoring in the high burnout range. Depersonalisation was far less of an issue for the majority of respondents. This finding appears to be linked to the perception that Landcare members or their expectations are not a major source of stress (refer to section 6.5).

When considering the level of high burnout assignments collectively, 28% of respondents had a high level of burnout on at least two of the three MBI sub-scales.

### 6.11 Factors related to burnout

The results from bivariate correlation and stepwise multiple regression analyses were used to identify significant relationships between burnout and hypothesised antecedents. Stepwise multiple regression provides a more powerful indication of a significant relationship than bivariate analysis as variables are entered in stages and only those that make a significant contribution to the explanatory power of the model are included. Three separate stepwise multiple regression analyses were undertaken, one for each sub-scale of the MBI. Specific results from bivariate analysis are presented in the discussion (section 6.13) where there was a significant relationship and a substantial proportion (more than 30%) of respondents indicating a problem on a particular variable.

#### 6.11.1 Factors related to emotional exhaustion

Using stepwise multiple regression higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale was significantly associated with Landcare support staff who:

- reported receiving little information about their work performance from doing the job itself ( $t = 3.217, p < 0.004$ );
- felt they were being pulled in too many directions at the one time ( $t = 3.026, p = 0.002$ );
- reported that the skills development and training completed as part of their job was inadequate ( $t = 2.907, p = 0.005$ );
- were dissatisfied with the level of support and guidance from their employer ( $t = 3.351, p = 0.001$ );
- reported little feedback about their performance from managers and coworkers ( $t = 2.342, p = 0.023$ );

- reported the hours they were contracted to work were not sufficient to provide the services expected of them ( $t = 2.217, p = 0.031$ ).

These factors explained 59% of the variance in scores on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale ( $R^2 = 0.59, F = 12.506, p < 0.001$ ).

### **6.11.2 Factors related to depersonalisation**

Using stepwise multiple regression higher burnout on the depersonalisation sub-scale was significantly associated with respondents who:

- reported Landcare members did not appreciate or acknowledge their work ( $t = 3.151, p = 0.003$ );
- felt Landcare groups/members expected too much from them ( $t = 3.999, p < 0.001$ );
- were less satisfied with the degree of growth and personal development received from their work ( $t = 3.384, p = 0.001$ );
- had lower general job satisfaction ( $t = 2.294, p = 0.026$ );
- were less satisfied with the degree of respect and fair treatment they received from their employer ( $t = 2.447, p = 0.018$ );
- reported lack of enthusiasm from Landcare members made their job more difficult ( $t = 2.999, p = 0.004$ ); and
- reported that the groups they worked with had not made a significant contribution to improved resource conditions ( $t = 2.328, p = 0.024$ ).

These factors accounted for 74% of the observed variation in scores on the depersonalisation sub-scale ( $R^2 = 0.74, F = 22.181, p < 0.001$ ).

### **6.11.3 Factors related to personal accomplishment**

Using stepwise multiple regression higher burnout on the personal accomplishment sub-scale (ie. lower scores) was significantly associated with respondents who:

- reported receiving little information about their work performance from doing the job itself ( $t = 4.477, p < 0.001$ );
- reported the tasks they performed were not consistent with their personal view about the type of assistance Landcare groups/members require ( $t = 3.899, p < 0.001$ );
- reported difficulty in getting Landcare members to become more actively involved ( $t = 2.164, p = 0.034$ );
- reported little feedback about their performance from managers and coworkers ( $t = 2.410, p = 0.019$ ); and
- reported a large proportion of landholders in their region were not involved with Landcare ( $t = 2.167, p = 0.034$ ).

These factors explained 60% of the variance in scores on the personal accomplishment sub-scale ( $R^2 = 0.60, F = 17.853, p < 0.001$ ).

## **6.12 Discussion of factors related to burnout**

The following discussion largely concentrates on factors linked to higher burnout on the personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion sub-scales (ie. the sub-scales where high burnout was most prominent). These factors are discussed in terms of five main themes: performance feedback, role conflict, role overload, group participation, and training/skills development.

### **6.12.1 Performance feedback**

Nearly half of all respondents indicated that they received little-moderate feedback about their work performance by actually undertaking the job itself. These individuals had significantly higher burnout on both the personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion sub-scales. This finding is likely to be partly explained by the reliance on problematic indicators of success such as change in resource conditions.

In recent years, the NHT and other government programs have placed a large emphasis on accomplishing on-ground works. With long lead times between action and effect for most environmental works and the relatively small scale of these works to date, using change in resource condition as a measure of success is likely to foster high burnout.

Less feedback from employers/coworkers was also a significant contributor to higher burnout on personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. In addition, lack of feedback from Landcare members was linked to higher burnout on the personal accomplishment sub-scale under bivariate analysis ( $r_s = 0.294$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). With nearly half of the respondents reporting they received little feedback from employers/coworkers or Landcare members, these findings further highlight the deficiency in performance feedback for Landcare support staff.

An important aspect of managing burnout is ensuring employees are aware of their progress (Pines and Aronson 1988). Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) stated that lack of criteria or inappropriate criteria for measuring success were important contributors to burnout. Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) concluded that to mitigate burnout organisations need to set realistic goals, focus on processes not end results, and consider these elements within an appropriate time frame. In this context, the development of clear intermediate indicators of success across a range of possible outcomes is vital. These issues are clearly articulated in the following unsolicited comments written on surveys.

*The current push for output focused accountability measures take no account of the awareness-raising role we play. Change in thought and practice takes years not 12 months as the current funding cycle seems to expect.*

*Landcare is well situated to be very effective in local NRM, jeopardised mainly by insecurity of funding for wages, high turnover of project officers leading to loss of valuable network mechanisms and ongoing project development.*

*Due to inadequate long-term government planning and funding on environmental issues, the Landcare movement lacks depth and long term goals. Also because many coordinators are NHT funded, there is insufficient time to develop, and implement long term sustainable strategies to solve many environmental problems.*

### **6.12.2 Role overload**

Various measures of workload were linked to higher levels of burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale. Nearly two thirds of respondents indicated that the hours they were contracted to work were not adequate to provide the services expected of them, and these individuals had significantly higher burnout on emotional exhaustion.

Survey data also highlighted that the majority of respondents indicated that: the number of groups they were expected to service limited their ability to provide the services expected of them; they had insufficient time to meet expectations; and they had insufficient resources to meet expectations. Each of these factors was significantly linked to higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion component under bivariate analysis.

These findings are consistent with previous research and literature on burnout. Maslach (1982) stated that high workloads contribute to burnout by creating an overload that exceeds an individual's physical and emotional resources. The complexity of the workload also needs to be considered, as it is common for an individual to perform several roles that can drain both physical and mental energy (Maslach and Leiter 1997). Seventy-four per cent of respondents said they were being pulled in too many directions at the one time and these individuals also scored significantly higher on emotional exhaustion. According to Pines and Aronson (1988) high workloads contribute to burnout by placing people in a position where expectations are increased and subsequently, failure to meet expectations becomes more likely.

While most Landcare support staff felt Landcare members had realistic expectations (refer to section 6.5), a large proportion appear to be finding it difficult to meet these expectations, particularly given limited time and resources. Lack of time and resources were also important constraints for Landcare support staff in meeting their employer's expectations (where their employer was not a Landcare group or network). This evidence and the earlier finding that Landcare support staff were working longer hours than they were contracted for suggests that employers and government funding bodies may have unrealistic expectations of Landcare and Landcare support staff. It appears that employers and government are either underestimating the requirements, or deliberately stretching the capacity of support staff.

*Expectations placed upon coordinators from external sources (other community groups, landholders, schools, local and state government employees etc) to implement, attend, and coordinate various activities is five fold times the amount possible (for me anyway).*

These issues are likely to be complicated by findings indicating a lack of feedback, unclear goals/priorities and limited training or skills development. Without this support Landcare support staff, who were generally highly motivated but relatively inexperienced, will have difficulty in setting boundaries to their work. As a result their own expectations about what they should accomplish may be unclear or simply unachievable given available resources.

### **6.12.3 Group participation**

Widespread participation is considered one of the most important elements in sustaining effective community-based conservation groups (Selin *et al.* 2000). Survey data clearly indicated that most Landcare support staff had difficulty motivating participation and worked in regions where large proportions of landowners were not involved with Landcare. Both of these factors were significantly linked with higher burnout in terms of a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Approximately two-thirds of support staff also considered that lack of enthusiasm was an important constraint in performing their role. These respondents had significantly higher burnout on depersonalisation (ie. they were more likely to treat people impersonally).

Many rural communities in Australia are being increasingly marginalised as a result of the government's pursuit of economic rationalism. In response to declining terms of trade and the globalisation of agricultural production the Australian government removed protective barriers to trade, exposing the economy to international market forces (Share *et al.* 1991). In contrast, many international competitors are receiving record levels of protection and support placing Australian producers at a comparative disadvantage, forced to obey distorted market signals (Jeffreys and Munn 1996; Lawrence 1992). Many rural people are forced to adjust by expanding production, working land harder, seeking alternative enterprises, supplementing on-property income with off-property income, or leaving agriculture. Consequently, the capacity of rural people to commit time and resources to Landcare is limited despite its important social and environmental benefits.

*Community downturns and seasonal conditions continue to have the most significant impact on landholders ability to be involved in on-ground and group activities.*

*I do get frustrated at the lack of group support but believe this is due to the current depression of the rural community. They lack time.*

#### **6.12.4 Role conflict**

Approximately one quarter of respondents indicated problems in terms of role conflict in that the tasks they performed were not consistent with their personal view about the types of support groups require. While only a small proportion of all respondents, these individuals had higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale. Maslach and Leiter (1997) and Cherniss (1980a) stated that burnout is more likely to occur when there is conflict between the organisational and individual perspective about a role or clients demands. A much higher proportion of support staff reported that their employer's expectations were different to the types of support requested by group/members, however this variable was not directly linked to higher burnout.

#### **6.12.5 Training/skills development**

Respondents who reported that the level of training/skills development they had completed as part of their job was inadequate, had significantly higher burnout on the emotional exhaustion sub-scale. Forty-two per cent of respondents said they were not satisfied with the level of training/skills development they had completed. As may be expected there was a significant relationship between dissatisfaction and individuals who reported that they had not completed any training/skills development as part of their job ( $\chi^2 = 11.240$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). Cherniss (1980a) stated that individuals who receive good training for a position are less likely to develop negative attitudes toward that job, and as a result, experience lower levels of burnout.

*This position requires one to be extremely flexible, multi-talented, with strengths in conflict management, listening skills, empathy for rural landholders, financial management and promotion and marketing to name a few.*

It is highly unlikely that any individual would be highly skilled and trained across the diverse range of natural resource management and community development skills necessary to facilitate and coordinate Landcare groups. Clearly where provision is made for training in these areas burnout is reduced and individuals become more engaged with their work.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS**

The following discussion of possible management interventions provides strategies for intervention based on aggregate data collected from Landcare support staff in Queensland. In making recommendations consideration was given to the extent:

- there was a substantial concern across the state on a particular variable;
- this variable was linked to higher burnout on a particular sub-scale of the MBI; and
- high burnout on this sub-scale was an issue for a substantial proportion of support staff.

Findings from this research suggest that management interventions to reduce burnout in Landcare support staff and increase their capacity to provide improved coordination/facilitation should aim to:

1. increase the sense of personal accomplishment; and
2. reduce the level of emotional exhaustion.

Specific actions that may help achieve these outcomes are outlined below.

### **7.1 Introduce measures to reduce role overload**

It is essential that Landcare support staff have the time and resources available to perform their role adequately. Survey data indicated considerable role overload with many respondents indicating insufficient time and resources to meet either the expectations of their employer or Landcare groups/members. This implies that employers and government funding bodies are either deliberately stretching the capacity of support staff or have underestimated the resources required to meet expectations.

To overcome this mismatch, employers/government funding bodies either need to adopt more modest expectations, employ more support staff, provide more resources or some combination of these strategies. Employers and government also need to help support staff place a limit on the work they do and their own expectations. This should be included as part of training for Landcare coordinators. To the extent that expectations are revised they need to be clearly stated and communicated to all relevant stakeholders. With the number of Landcare groups increasing and the expectation for Landcare groups to deliver improved resource conditions (Byron *et al.* 2001), revision of expectations, the employment of more support staff and provision of greater resources appear necessary to mitigate burnout.

### **7.2 Develop clear intermediate indicators of success across a range of expected outcomes**

In line with the growing expectation for Landcare groups to achieve improved environmental outcomes, change in resource condition appears to be an important indicator of achievement for support staff. However, the scale and complexity of environmental issues, the magnitude of works needed, the problematic nature of some recommended practices and the time required to see on ground results suggest that change in resource condition is a highly problematic measure of accomplishment (Curtis *et al.* 2000).

Literature on burnout emphasises the importance of clear, realistic and intermediate indicators of success in promoting engagement and reducing burnout (Maslach and Leiter 1997). Bailey *et al.* (1989) suggested that employers and employees need to work together to develop goals that are relevant, specific, achievable, and observable. While using change in resource condition could be considered as a relevant and specific goal or indicator of success, the extent that it is achievable or observable in most instances is highly questionable, particularly in the short-term.

Campbell (1997) stated that there was no clear rationale behind the funding for support staff but suggested that their role included fomenting group synergy, promoting efficient use of human resources, helping groups to develop a sense of shared purpose and stimulating interaction among stakeholders.

While the possible outcomes in any given situation are clearly many and varied, the important point is that outcomes need to be considered across a range of areas. Even where the ultimate goal may be to affect change in resource conditions the development of intermediate indicators of success requires a more detailed understanding of the requirements that would facilitate this change. For example, in order to effect a change in resource conditions groups may first need to reach some agreement with respect to the need for change, develop a shared goal or vision, identify and engage the relevant stakeholders, plan and then undertake action. To simply aim for changed conditions is jumping the gun, as any one of the elements mentioned above would represent an important achievement in itself and would require substantial time and effort. Furthermore, to undertake on-ground work by itself without addressing alternative outcomes misses the point of participative approaches to natural resource management.

### **7.3 Incorporate feedback about progress towards achieving outcomes**

The development of intermediate indicators of success across a range of outcomes is likely to largely overcome the difficulties reported by support staff in evaluating their performance by doing the job itself. However, employers/coworkers and Landcare groups/members are also important feedback agents that need to be incorporated. Support staff need to work with these people to develop processes to provide ongoing feedback.

Employers of Landcare support staff need to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of their employees. This process should be undertaken in consultation with the Landcare groups and members that support staff will be working with. Once established, these roles and responsibilities should form the basis of feedback about the performance of support staff.

Campbell (1998) concluded that interaction with coworkers (people working in similar situations) was also an important source of feedback for Landcare support staff. The provision for this interaction is vital to help support staff cope with burnout (Campbell 1998). This interaction may be as simple as holding an informal social meeting every month for all support staff in a region, regardless of their employer. The provision of the funding and time needed for this type of interaction should be included in the employment contract for Landcare support staff.

Landcare groups and members also need to be encouraged to provide constructive feedback to Landcare coordinators. While this may seem to place additional demands on the already limited time of these volunteers, the benefits in terms of reduced burnout in support staff are likely to far outweigh any costs. Again, there does not have to be a formal process established for this feedback, rather groups and members should be included in discussions about the need and best way to incorporate feedback.

### **7.4 Fund support roles beyond current short-term contracts**

The ability of Landcare support staff and Landcare in general to mitigate the issues highlighted in this research will be seriously undermined by the persistence of short-term contracts. Being forced to work and plan within a 2-3 year time frame (at best) severely limits the capacity for strategic facilitation, without which efforts to manage complex long-term social and environmental problems are likely to have limited success. The persistence of short-term contracts may also deter more experienced individuals from applying for Landcare support positions.

To overcome the persistence of short-term contracts those responsible for employing Landcare support staff will require some base level of funding beyond that obtained for any specific project. To the extent that Landcare support positions continue to be funded as part of specific projects, job insecurity and burnout are likely to persist.

In addition, the formation or consolidation of social bonds and group cohesion are important foundations underlying the capacity of Landcare to contribute to improved natural resource management. Where there is a continual turnover of support staff, these foundations will weaken as members tire of having to establish working relationships with each new coordinator/facilitator.

## **7.5 Increase investment in training**

Campbell (1997) discussed the need for Landcare facilitators to balance technical knowledge about natural resource management with group facilitation or community development skills. It is unlikely that a single individual will be highly trained in both areas, highlighting the need for on the job training or skills development. Discussions with Landcare support staff from the DNRM suggested areas where support staff may require training include:

- natural resource management in their region;
- conflict resolution;
- group dynamics;
- project management;
- marketing;
- communication/networking;
- listening skills;
- group facilitation;
- team building; and
- employer/employee relations.

Training programs are also considered to be important interventions to help staff develop skills necessary to manage burnout (Cherniss 1980a; Pines and Aronson 1988). Training/skills development programs should help support staff clearly identify their roles and responsibilities and facilitate realistic expectations about working in a particular organisation. For Landcare support staff these training programs could be used to:

- develop clear intermediate indicators of success;
- improve processes for enhancing feedback from employers, coworkers and Landcare members;
- place a limit on the work they do and their own expectations;
- highlight typical stresses and problems associated with working as a coordinator/facilitator and suggest ways these can be managed; and
- raise awareness of burnout and how it can be managed.

The provision of appropriate training will have a large impact on the capacity of Landcare support staff to implement a range of management techniques that will enable them to manage burnout.

## **7.6 Ongoing assessment of burnout and working conditions**

Attempts to mitigate burnout in Landcare support staff and enhance their capacity to support improved natural resource management outcomes must incorporate ongoing monitoring of working conditions, including burnout. Longitudinal research is essential to provide relevant information about the changes in working conditions over time and the effectiveness of various management strategies. Given the high turnover of Landcare support staff and the impact of current policy arrangements follow up surveys should be completed at least every three years.



## 8.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 8.1 Age

**TABLE 14**  
**Respondents age in years**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

<b>n</b>	<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>61-70</b>	<b>Mean</b>
72	39%	22%	26%	10%	3%	36.97

### 8.2 Gender

**TABLE 15**  
**Gender**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	72	46%
Female		54%

### 8.3 Education

**TABLE 16**  
**Years of post primary school education**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

<b>Post primary education</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>0-6</b>	<b>7-10</b>	<b>Over 10</b>	<b>Mean</b>
% of respondents	72	29%	57%	14%	8.19

## 8.4 Years lived in the local area

**TABLE 17**  
**Years lived in the area where coordination/facilitation provided**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Years lived in area	n	<2	2-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	Over 40	Mean
% of respondents	69	25%	39%	20%	3%	7%	6%	11.07

## 8.5 Member of a Landcare group

**TABLE 18**  
**Landcare group membership**  
**Queensland Landcare support staff, 2001 (N=72)**

Previously a member of a Landcare group	n	%
Yes	72	44%
No		56%
Number of years a member of a Landcare group		
1-2 years	32	27%
3-5 years		17%
6-10 years		30%
11-15 years		23%
Over 15 years		3%

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## **10.0 APPENDIX 1**

### **General content of scale items in the modified Maslach Burnout Inventory (adapted from Maslach *et al.* 1996)**

#### **Emotional Exhaustion**

1. Emotionally drained from Landcare.
2. Used up after Landcare activities.
3. Fatigued by Landcare.
4. Working with Landcare members a strain.
5. Burned out from Landcare.
6. Frustrated by Landcare.
7. Working too hard on Landcare.
8. Working with Landcare members stressful.
9. At end of rope.

#### **Depersonalisation**

10. Treat Landcare members impersonally.
11. More callous.
12. Landcare hardening me emotionally.
13. Don't care about Landcare members.
14. Blamed for problems

#### **Personal Accomplishment**

15. Understand how Landcare members feel.
16. Deal with problems effectively.
17. Have a positive influence through Landcare.
18. Energetic.
19. Relaxed with Landcare members.
20. Exhilarated by working with Landcare members.
21. Accomplished a lot.
22. Deal with emotional issues calmly.

*Note: Full wording of original scale items appears in Maslach et al. (1996).*