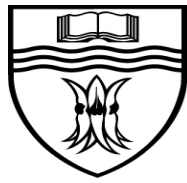


Charles Sturt University



INSTITUTE FOR

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SA Landcare Survey 2005 Final Report

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Contents

Acknowledgement	
Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	6
2. Data collection and analysis	6
3. Results	7
3.1 Membership information	7
3.2 On-ground work and activities	8
3.3 Community education and capacity building	9
3.4 Assistance from outside the group	12
3.5 Topics discussed by the group	15
3.6 Peak Landcare organisations	16
3.7 Group operations	17
3.8 Resource allocation	20
3.9 Constraints facing the groups in 2005	20
3.10 Views about the outcomes of group activities	22
3.11 Support from government	24
3.12 Coordinator employed by the group	25
References	26

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Executive summary

Introduction

As a result of the formation of NRM Boards across the State and the implementation of South Australia's (SA) natural resource management (NRM) legislation, the NRM Act 2004; there has been a perception that Landcare Groups have been dislocated. Although NRM community groups are not specifically identified in the NRM Act 2004, a key emphasis of the new arrangements is to engage with the community and to support and enhance the involvement of community groups in NRM. The Landcare movement is an excellent example of how the community delivers NRM.

The NRM Council, which reports to the Minister for Environment & Conservation, recommended that the SA Landcare Committee, through the Department of Water Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC), undertake a review of the status of Landcare in South Australia based on the recent National review. Researchers at Charles Sturt University (CSU) were commissioned to survey South Australian Landcare groups to gather information about the status of Landcare and identify ways that engagement and participation of Landcare and like groups could be enhanced.

In August 2005 surveys were posted to 242 South Australian Landcare groups by researchers at Charles Sturt University (CSU). One hundred and forty-seven surveys were returned in the scheduled period, giving a response rate of 61%. After removing surveys returned by groups that had disbanded and surveys that were incomplete, there were 83 useable surveys.

The survey focused on group operation and activities in the period June 2004 to June 2005. The 2005 survey included questions seeking information about: group membership, leadership roles and level of member participation; on-ground work performed; involvement in community capacity building; linkage of plans with regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) Board priorities; perceptions of group outcomes; perceptions of constraints affecting the achievement of group priorities; value of peak Landcare organisations, including group views about the value of support provided by these organisations; and priorities for the allocation of government resources to Landcare.

Engaging industry and wider community

The median number of members per SA group is 12 in 2004/05, a decline from 22 members per group in 1993. Groups are still recruiting new members with 57% of groups reporting new members, and new members are 16% of the total membership. By comparison, in 1993, 72% of groups reported new members and new members were 11% of the total membership.

Participation in group activities for the preceding year was reported as being 'about the same' or 'higher' in 80% of groups. This is similar to the findings of the 1993 survey when participation was 'about the same' or 'higher' in 77% of groups. At the same time, a majority of respondents said that 'there are only a few highly active members in our group' (64% agreed/strongly agreed); and a substantial minority (34% agreed/strongly agreed) said that 'our participation rate has fallen sharply in the last two to three years'. Twenty-one percent of all members did not attend any group activities in 2004/2005, suggesting that the attrition rate is higher than the recruitment rate. These trends should be investigated further. There continues to be a gender imbalance in the leadership positions with women less likely to

undertake the role of chairperson (21%) but they are more likely to take the role of secretary (61%). Nonetheless, 41% of the leadership positions are held by women as compared to 28% in the 1993 survey.

Recommendation #1 DWLBC commissions a project to verify the extent of Landcare member attrition identified in this survey, the reasons for attrition, and ways to address this issue. This investigation should include focus groups and interviews with Landcare group leaders and coordinators.

Engaging the wider community is an important part of Landcare activity. In 2005 the median number of visitors helping or studying the work of Landcare groups in SA was 10 – the same as in 1993.

The 2005 survey provided strong affirmation of participant's perceptions of the value of the volunteer Landcare movement for most topics related to engaging landholders and the wider community and building social capital. For example, 74% of respondents said their group had 'some/much/a high level of success' in attracting widespread participation; 75% for building trust amongst landholders; and 75% for enhancing a sense of community. As well, 68% of respondents said their group had 'some/much/a high level of success' for improving communication between landholders; and 54% for contributing to greater cooperation amongst landholders.

Peak Landcare organisations

Respondents were asked to assess the value of the peak Landcare organisations to their group. The peak organisation most valued ('high/ medium') was the SA Landcare Association. Access to information was the most valuable service provided to groups by peak organisations. However, this was the only service rated at high/ medium value by over 20% (up to 25%) of respondents. Services that were not perceived to be of high or medium value to groups included 'helped us understand regional issues' (3% to 6%); and 'increased our ability to lobby government and influence legislation' (6% to 8%).

The most frequently listed entities providing assistance to groups were government organisations - Local Government (61%) and the NRM Boards (formerly Catchment Water Management Boards (CWMB)) (52%). The non-government organisation Greening Australia was the third most frequently listed supporting entity (41%). The federal government was specifically identified as a contributor by 34% of respondents.

The total value of cash and materials received by the respondent groups was \$1.4 million. Survey data suggest that non-government cash assistance to groups was 7% of government assistance in 2004/05 (down from 33% in 1993). Very few respondents (5% or less) reported assistance from the National Landcare Facilitator Project, Indigenous groups, SA Landcare Committee and SA Farmers Federation. The CWMB and Envirofund (19% of respondents each) were the most commonly listed sources of government funding.

On balance, survey data suggest a generally positive view of NRM Boards. There appears to be a need for improved engagement between NRM Boards and some Landcare groups.

Recommendation #2: DWLBC establishes a working group comprising members of NRM Boards and Landcare group representatives to identify ways of improving the relationship between NRM Boards and Landcare groups. As a starting point, the working group would need to articulate the desired outcomes of Board/ Group interactions.

Most respondents agreed that 'their group has more influence on what they do than the Regional NRM Board, or government agencies' (66% agreed/strongly agreed); only 25% agreed/strongly agreed that 'funding priorities do not match those of the regional NRM plan'; and only 25% agreed/strongly agreed that 'in the last two to three years the Regional NRM Board or CWMB did less with groups to implement on-ground work and this reduced member participation'. These data balance concerns that Regional NRM Boards increasingly see Landcare groups as minor partners in delivering catchment management. However, 46% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that 'the group had no input into the preparation of the regional NRM plan', and only 21% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that 'establishing NRM Boards increased the support that the groups received from government'. There were however a large proportion of 'fence-sitters' (46% neutral) on this topic.

Property plans

Thirty-four percent of respondents said that most members were active in preparing or updating property plans. Fifty-two percent of the respondent groups had an action plan and most of these plans had been disseminated to their members (82%).

Fifty-seven percent of respondents had a positive view of the contribution of their group to the outcome of increased appreciation of how actions on a farm can lead to catchment impacts.

Sustainable management practices

Survey data suggest that SA groups continue to contribute to the development of more sustainable management practices. In the past 12 months the respondent groups held 83 field days, with 2,500 people attending, and established 59 demonstration sites. In the last two years 73% of respondent groups were also active in monitoring projects involving water quality (46%), remnant vegetation health (37%) and the survival of planted trees and shrubs (37%).

Most survey respondents had a positive view of the success of their group over the longer-term on outcomes related to:

- increased understanding of what biodiversity conservation involves (86% said 'some/much/high level of success')
- contributed to changed land management practices (60%)
- increased understanding of what sustainable farming involves (59%).

On-ground work

SA groups undertook substantial on-ground work in the period surveyed. On-ground work included fencing to manage stock access and improving water quality/river health, re-vegetation, habitat protection, and pest animal control. Activities undertaken by the respondent groups in 2004/05 included: fencing erected in group projects, fencing to improve vegetation management, and weed control projects.

While the survey focussed on group activity in the past 12 months, a section in the survey also gathered perceptions of longer-term outcomes. This information suggests that groups

have facilitated learning and action that has contributed to changed management and these changes can be expected to lead to positive longer-term outcomes. For example, most respondents said that their group had:

- brought more resources into their area to address land/water degradation (64%)
- completed important on-ground work (93%)
- improved the condition of land and water resources (79%)
- increased agricultural productivity (48%).

Effectiveness of organisations

Most respondents were satisfied that government provided adequate/excellent support to Landcare groups, including provision of advice and information on land management (81%); assistance with grant applications (72%); money or materials to manage land and water degradation (64%); and coordinating on-ground group activities (64%). However the combined responses were divided on the adequacy of support for other services including 'strategic action planning' (52% adequate/excellent); 'leadership and management training for group leaders' (49%); and 'assistance with group administration' (46%). Most respondents think 'Government expects Landcare members to do too much of the work of fixing land and water degradation' (69%).

Survey data suggest that the majority of SA groups demonstrated important features of effective local organisations with strong group norms and sound organizational arrangements. For example, respondents agreed/strongly agreed that 'people are willing to compromise: decisions are acceptable to most members' (89%); 'resources were shared fairly amongst members in their group' (74%); 'there was a strong social connection or bond in their group' (72%); 'the group took time to review achievements' (69%); 'provided new members with background information about the group' (66%); and 'the group publicly acknowledges the contributions of members to projects' (61%).

Notwithstanding the generally positive findings identified above, survey data suggest that the areas of landholder participation and group leadership require further investigation and probably, renewed investment of Landcare support resources. For example, a majority of respondents said that 'there are only a few highly active members in our group' (64% agree/strongly agree, mean 3.6); and that 'leaders in our group are overworked (52% agree/strongly agree)'. It seems that many groups struggle to find willing leaders as only 53% agreed/strongly agreed that 'there is usually someone willing to take on leadership roles in our group'. A substantial minority (34%) agreed/strongly agreed that 'our participation rate has fallen sharply in the last two to three years'.

Recommendation #3: DWLBC commissions a study to identify ways of improving support for Landcare leaders. Topics to be explored should include leadership training; ways of enhancing leadership succession planning; and changes to regional support structures and processes, including reporting/administration requirements. Focus groups with Landcare leaders and support staff are likely to provide useful information.

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of particular constraints facing their group in the next 12 months. Respondents most frequently identified the 'need for simpler processes for groups to obtain access to government programs' (77%); that 'landholders participate in the group' (70%); and that 'funds are available for on-ground work' (65%).

1. Introduction

Australians have invested heavily in voluntary approaches to the management of environmental problems. In line with this approach, Landcare groups have emerged as an important delivery mechanism for Commonwealth and State programs aimed at achieving improved environmental outcomes. The South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity (DWLBC) is responsible for government support for Landcare in South Australia (SA).

In May 2005 staff from the DWLBC in South Australia approached Jonathan Sobels and Professor Allan Curtis from Charles Sturt University (CSU) to conduct a survey of South Australian Landcare Groups. The DWLBC wanted information to underpin decisions about future government support for the peak SA Landcare bodies and Landcare groups. This final report provides a summary of all the survey data following Report 1: Relationships of Landcare groups with peak bodies and government.

2. Data collection and analysis

The survey drew heavily on questions developed by Allan Curtis over the last twelve years, including a survey of South Australia groups in 1993 (Curtis et al 1994), and six surveys in Victoria from 1992 to 2004 (Curtis et al 1993; Curtis and Van Nouhuys 1999; Curtis and Cooke 2005). For the SA survey, the CSU team also drew on a report by O'Connor (2003) and input from DWLBC, including staff consultation with key stakeholders.

The research instrument was a mailed survey sent to SA Landcare groups selected using a database containing over 330 groups, including Landcare groups, urban "friends of ..." groups, and school-based Waterwatch groups.

The survey topics approved by DWLBC were:

Section A: Your group and its activities

- 1 Your group and its members, including data on recent attendance, farmers or non-farmers, recruitment and retention, presence of people in group executive roles, and level of activity compared to last year
- 2 On-ground work by your group, including extent of on-ground work such as fencing and re-vegetation activity
- 3 Community education and capacity building work, including demonstration sites, field walks, preparation of property and group area plans, linkage of plans with regional priorities of Integrated NRM Boards, level of involvement by groups in developing their plans, monitoring environmental variables, and promotion/educational activities
- 4 Assistance from outside the group, who had provided any assistance and a dollar value of cash and in-kind support
- 5 Topics discussed by your group, those topics that currently form the major focus of the group

Section B: Your views about the group and Landcare

- 6 Peak Landcare organisations, including group attitudes to the value of support provided by these organisations
- 7 How your group operates, response to a selection of statements about how groups operate and how they would allocate government funding support over the next three years

- 8 Constraints facing your group, including the importance of various constraints to the achievement of group goals
- 9 Your views about the outcomes of group activity, assessments of the level of achievement across a range of potential Landcare group outcomes
- 10 The extent your group receives sufficient support from government
- 11 Coordinator employed by your group, and if so, how employed.

Surveys were completed by an informed group member, such as the Secretary, Chairperson, the group executive or a number of members at a meeting. Each group received a mail package that contained a survey, a stamped self-addressed envelope and a covering letter explaining the purpose of the survey. The survey itself was a B5 booklet of 12 pages.

Surveys were mailed to 242 SA Landcare groups in August 2005. One hundred and forty-seven surveys were returned, with a response rate of 61% achieved after sending three reminder notices over an eight week period [Table 1]. There were 83 usable surveys returned and 64 additional returns where the group was no longer operational or didn't see the survey as applicable.

Most of the questions covered group activities in the period June 2004 to June 2005, with some asking about the activity in the preceding two years. Data analysis was undertaken using S-PLUS® 6.2 for Windows Academic Site Edition statistical calculation software and involved descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Response rate

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Number sent	Number usable	Number returned unusable (eg no longer operating, survey not relevant)	Total return rate
242	83	64	61%

3. Results

Section A: the groups, their membership characteristics and their activities

3.1 Membership information

The median number of members is 12 (previously a median of 22 members in 1993). Of the total number of members of 1,600 more than half are not farmers by occupation [Table 2] and this is a similar finding to the 1993 survey where 51% indicated they would not consider themselves farmers by occupation.

Table 2
Membership profile of respondent groups

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Median members	Members not farmers	Median not farmers	New members	Median new members	Not attend meetings
12	59%	5	16%	1	21%

As might be expected there are fewer new groups being established – only one new group was established in 2003, and one in 2004. The previous survey in 1993 found that one-third of the groups had been operating for less than one year (n=68). The median age of the groups is now 10 years (n=75).

3.1.1 New members

Groups are still recruiting new members with 57% of groups reporting new members. This compares with the 1993 survey where 72% reported new members. New members accounted for 16% of the total number of members in the survey year 2004/2005. The total number of members who did not attend any meetings in the survey period was 332. The number of new members recruited was 263 resulting in a net loss of 69 members between 2004 and 2005.

3.1.2 Participation in group activities

Groups that had been operating longer than 12 months were asked to compare the average number of members participating in group activities in 2005 and 2004. Only 12% (n=74) of respondents thought that participation was less than for the previous year. Sixty-two percent (n=74) of the respondents said that in comparison to 2004, the average number of group members participating in group activity was 'about the same' in 2005. A further 18% said that the participation rate was 'higher' in 2005.

3.1.3 Leadership

Effective leadership is clearly a critical factor in group success (Curtis et al 2000). Where people occupy leadership positions for long periods groups may become excessively reliant upon a few people; potential members may be deterred by group identification with those individuals; the leadership aspirations of others may be stifled; and groups may adopt a narrow range of activities which inhibit participation or recruitment. Having a number of members with leadership experience should enhance group skills and strengthen commitment to group success. An alternate view is that if leaders turn over too quickly, say within one or two years, leaders may not have sufficient time to develop leadership skills and there could be less commitment from them for the achievement of group goals.

At the time of the 1993 survey it was difficult to identify any trends in leadership tenure because more than 50% of the groups sampled had been operating for less than two years. Leadership positions and length of tenure in 2005 are summarised in Table 3. The average number of years for all leadership positions (chairperson, secretary and treasurer) is 5.1 years.

There continues to be a gender imbalance in the leadership positions with women less likely to undertake the role of chairperson (21%) but they are more likely to take the role of secretary (61%). Nonetheless, 41% of the leadership positions are held by women as compared to 28% in the 1993 survey.

Table 3**Leadership positions and length of tenure**

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Position	Median years	Male	Female
Chairperson	5	79%	21%
Secretary	4	39%	61%
Treasurer	5	58%	42%

3.2 On-ground work and activities

Landcare groups make important contributions to on-ground work to address land and water degradation issues and protect key assets. The primary focus of the Landcare movement has been on work carried out on privately owned land. However groups also carry out work on reserves, roadsides and other public land (Curtis and De Lacey 1995). Information on Table 4 shows that most on farm activity was addressing habitat protection, soil erosion and salinity control. Groups also undertook substantial on-ground work on public land to control weeds, rabbits and foxes [Table 4].

Information in Table 5 provides a summary of the extent of on-ground work undertaken by respondent groups.

Table 4
On-ground work on public and farm land
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	Farm land activities		Public land activities	
		Number activities	% groups yes	Number activities	% groups yes
Control weeds	68	282	37%	156	40%
Re-vegetation	68	279	59%	85	51%
Protect habitat (eg remnant vegetation patches)	68	221	47%	66	29%
Improve water quality & river health	66	140	44%	40	33%
Control/ ameliorate salinity	66	114	27%	9	6%
Control rabbits & foxes	67	71	28%	39	16%
Control soil erosion	65	65	31%	9	11%
Establish wetlands	66	30	15%	8	11%

Table 5
On-ground work outcomes
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Activity	n	Median	Total
Fencing erected in group projects	83	5 Km	318 Km
Area fenced (to improve vegetation management)	82	12 Ha	592 Ha
Area planted trees/shrubs	82	4.5 Ha	310 Ha
Area direct seeded trees/shrubs	82	5 Ha	264 Ha
Area of weed control projects	82	5 Ha	3,043 Ha

3.3 Community education and capacity building

3.3.1 Field days and demonstration sites

Field days, farm walks, demonstrations and trial plots are strategies used widely by Landcare groups to engage the wider community and to enhance the knowledge, skills and confidence of land managers (Curtis and Van Nuohuys 1999), and in so doing also contribute to the development of sustainable and relevant management practices. Survey questions asked if groups had established demonstration sites or trial plots,

conducted field days or farm walks in the past twelve months. Forty-nine percent of the respondents (n=77) said that their group conducted field days or farm walks in the preceding twelve months. The mean number of participants was 93 (median 30). The most common topics were native vegetation / re-vegetation with a of total 28 events organised and total estimated attendance of over 500 people [Table 6]. The most popular topics were educational / promotional field days (16 held with attendance of 1,250 including three Hart Field Days with a total attendance estimated at 850 people). The most common demonstration and/or trial plots established were those involving native vegetation / re-vegetation (30 sites n=60) and erosion control (12 sites n=60).

Table 6
Topics of field days and demonstration sites

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	Number of field days	Attendance at field days	Number of demonstration sites
Native vegetation / revegetation	28	509	30
Education / promotion	16	1,251	1
Farm practices	12	157	3
Riverine / wetlands	10	246	4
Monitoring & survey	7	142	0
Pest plants & animals	4	50	9
Native animals & birds	3	65	0
Salinity / drainage	2	61	0
Erosion control	1	22	12
Total	83	2,503	59

3.3.2 Property management plans

To further understand the levels of group activity and their involvement in setting priorities and ways to achieve them, the respondents were asked about participation in activities to prepare or update property management plans; the development of group area plans to link individual property management plans to protect important regional NRM assets or address key NRM issues; and whether the group area plan links with the Regional INRM Plan objectives for funding [Table 7].

- 34% (n=71) of respondents said that most members were active in preparing or updating property plans.
- 52% (n=73) of respondents had an action plan and most of these had been disseminated to the members (82%).
- 41% (n=71) of respondents have been active in linking property plans with regional or key NRM issues.
- 44% (n=64) of respondents who have or are preparing group area plans have linked them to NRM Board plan objectives for funding.
- Most respondents are satisfied with their contribution to NRM Board planning (71%, n=38).

Table 7**Participation in group activities to prepare / update property management plans**

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	Yes
Number of members who helped prepare property management plans (last 2 years) [combined 'some', 'most', 'all' responses]	71	34%
Does group have or is developing a documented group area plan to link individual property mgmt plans to protect regional NRM assets, or address key NRM issues?	71	41%
Does group area plan link with the regional NRM plan objectives for funding?	64	44%
Are you satisfied the Regional NRM Board took account of the group's contribution? [combined 'somewhat', 'very satisfied' responses]	38	71%
Did the group meet in previous 2 years to establish an annual action plan setting out priorities and ways to achieve them?	73	52%
If yes, was action plan documented?	43	72%
Was the action plan made available to most members?	38	82%
Has the group/ executive met to review progress with the plan?	41	61%

3.3.3 Monitoring and other promotional activities

Groups who are more active in on-ground work and capacity building are often involved in monitoring (Curtis and Cooke 2005). As part of the assessment of capacity building the survey asked about activities to monitor changes in the physical environment. Seventy-three percent of the respondents (n=71) said that in the last two years they had been involved in monitoring, with the most frequent projects involving water quality (46%), remnant vegetation health and the survival of planted trees and shrubs (37% each) [Table 8].

Apart from field days and demonstrations, the other major promotional activities undertaken by groups in the previous two years were school education activities (26 groups), and participation in the regional NRM Board promotion 'Our Patch' (6 groups) (n=55).

Table 8**Groups involvement in monitoring projects over previous two years (n=71)**

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	Yes
Water quality	33	46%
Remnant vegetation	26	37%
Survival of planted trees / shrubs	26	37%
Area cleared of weeds	23	32%
Bird sightings	23	32%
Riparian health after fencing	18	25%
Fauna survey – ground animals	18	25%
Groundwater depth / quality	16	23%
Pest animals numbers	11	15%
Soil condition / health	8	11%
Other	8	11%
Air quality	0	0%

3.4 Assistance from outside the group**3.4.1 Assistance from government and non-government sources**

Respondents were asked for information about the sources of external assistance and the dollar value of that assistance. Table 9 shows the responses expressed as a percentage of groups who obtained support from each external source. Local government was the most frequently listed source of outside assistance (61%) [52% in 1993]. The second most frequently listed source was the local CWMB (52%) as distinct from other state government agencies. The federal government assisted 34% [47%] of groups in 2004/05. Greening Australia and similar conservation organisations were listed by 41% [25%] of groups; and other Landcare groups by 23% [27%] of groups [Table 9]. In 1993, 58% of Landcare groups were assisted by the state government but there was no separate category for state government assistance in the 2005 survey.

Table 9**Assistance from outside group (% groups who received assistance from each source)**

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Source of assistance	n	% groups
Local government	39	61%
Catchment Water Management Board	33	52%
Greening Australia / other conservation groups	26	41%
Regional NRM Board	24	38%
Federal government	22	34%
State government	21	33%
Other Landcare groups	15	23%
Other	12	19%
Landcare Australia Ltd	9	14%
Education groups	8	13%
Industry groups eg. TopCrop	6	9%
Local service clubs	6	9%
SA Landcare Association	4	6%
Recreation groups	3	5%
SA Farmers Federation	2	3%
SA Landcare Committee	2	3%
Indigenous groups	2	3%
National Landcare Facilitator	1	1%

The total value of cash and materials received from all sources was \$1.4 million. Table 10 presents data on the dollar value of assistance to groups from the different sources. The two largest funding entities in total dollars were the CWMB (\$327,300) and the Federal Government's Envirofund (\$252,800) – they were also the most frequent funding entities (15 groups each) identified by respondents [Table 10]. Local government was frequently cited (14 groups) but at substantially smaller values (total \$57,650; median \$2,400). A few large budget projects such as NAP, NLP and NHT reached between about 5% and 10% of groups respectively [Table 10]. The most equitable distribution was from Envirofund. NLP community grants were received by only 3 groups (4%). Very few groups reported assistance from the peak South Australian Landcare bodies or farm industry organisations such as SAFF or Grains Research Development Corporation (GRDC). Total non-government funds in the 12 months to July 2005 amounted to \$89,272 or 6.6% of total government cash assistance for groups. Comparison of 1993 and 2005 survey data shows that the proportion of cash assistance for Landcare groups from non-government sources has declined substantially. In 1993 non-government sources of cash amounted to \$125,630 or 33% of total government funds.

Respondents were also asked to provide the amounts of funding received from private sources. No funding was reported from industry groups such as GRDC; and low levels of funding from 'other' sources, private business or Greening Australia [Table 11].

Table 10
Dollar value of outside assistance to groups, sorted by median value
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Source of assistance	n	No Funding	Number recipients	Median	Total
NAP – Salinity	79	75	4	\$53,000	\$186,000
NLP - Community	79	76	3	\$27,000	\$80,500
NHT	80	72	8	\$16,500	\$208,000
Envirofund	81	66	15	\$13,000	\$252,800
Corporate sponsors	78	74	4	\$7,000	\$29,400
Catchment Water Management Board	80	65	15	\$6,000	\$327,300
Regional INRM Board	81	74	7	\$5,500	\$221,000
State Government	79	75	4	\$3,500	\$17,500
Other	59	54	5	\$3,000	\$49,322
Greening Australia or other conservation group	79	75	4	\$2,750	\$10,550
Local Government	82	68	14	\$2,400	\$57,650
GRDC or other industry fund	79	79	0	\$0	\$0

Table 11
Assistance from non-government sources
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Source of non-government assistance	n	Mean	Median	Total
Corporate sponsors	4	\$7,350	\$7,000	\$29,400
Other	5	\$9,864	\$3,000	\$49,322
Greening Australia or other conservation group	4	\$2,638	\$2,750	\$10,550

3.4.2 Visitors helping and studying

To further evaluate the groups' interactions and engagement with the wider community respondents were asked to estimate the number of visitors, and the purpose of the visit, to the group's area during the preceding twelve months.

The median number of visitors helping with Landcare work was 10 (n=31, 37% of groups with a range from 2 – 1,200). The median number of visitors studying was 10 (n=23, 28% of groups with a range from 1 – 350 visitors) [Table 12]. The 1993 data reported the median of visitors helping as 9 (n=49), and the median of visitors studying work as 10 (n=48). The total combined number of visitors in 2004/2005 was 3,100 (n=83).

Table 12**Visitors who helped and studied group work (n=38)**

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Visitor purpose	Median number	Total number
Helping with Landcare work	10	2236
Studying the group's work	10	892

3.5 Topics discussed by the group

The survey asked respondents to indicate whether any of the listed topics were discussed during the preceding twelve months. Table 13 shows that 'group developing its action plan' was discussed in-depth by 38% of groups. Other key topics were 'recruitment of new members' (28% discussed in-depth) and 'involving local government in group work' (26% discussed in-depth).

Table 13**Topics discussed by groups (n=75)**

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	Not discussed	Discussed briefly	Discussed in-depth
Group developing its own action plan	66	41%	21%	38%
Recruiting new members	68	37%	35%	28%
Involving local govt in group work	66	42%	32%	26%
Subdivision of rural land in region	65	75%	12%	12%
Impact of new NRM legislation	65	48%	42%	11%
Working with Regional INRM Board	68	46%	44%	10%
Contributing to regional NRM plan	63	57%	33%	10%
Group leadership training or succession planning	65	75%	17%	8%
Funding by corporate sponsor	66	74%	18%	8%
Extent & impact of climate change	66	64%	32%	5%
Working with industry R&D funds (GRDC etc)	65	89%	9%	2%
State NRM plan	65	62%	37%	2%
Other topics	18	62%	0%	38%

* may not equal 100% due to rounding

Section B: views about the operations of the groups and Landcare

3.6 Peak Landcare organisations

The three peak Landcare organisations operating in South Australia are SA Landcare Committee (SALC), SA Landcare Association (SALA), and Landcare Australia Ltd (LAL). Respondents were asked to give their view of the value of the three bodies, rating them as high, medium or low value, or not applicable/ unable to tell. As well, they could rate the provision of services to the group based on topics [Table 14]. 'High value' and 'medium value' responses by each respondent were combined for data analysis.

The peak bodies were considered most useful in their role as providers of information for groups. The next highest rating was for the professional management offered to groups [Table 14]. Of the entities, SALA was rated more useful by groups across all services compared to the SALC and LAL. Survey data suggest that respondents thought the peak bodies are making a low value level of contribution to groups for the topics surveyed. Indeed, for seven of the eight topics, less than 20% of respondents gave a high/ medium rating to the value of the peak organisations.

Table 14
Value to groups of peak Landcare organisations

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Services provided by peak bodies	% High / medium value		
	SALC	SALA	LAL
Provided access to information	22%	25%	20%
Resulted in more professional management of projects	13%	16%	11%
Helped local groups work together on common issues	5%	13%	6%
Helped us gain access to government funds	6%	11%	9%
Provided a forum to discuss Landcare issues	8%	11%	8%
Increased our ability to shape regional decision making	6%	10%	6%
Helped us understand regional issues	3%	6%	3%
Increased our ability to lobby government and influence legislation	8%	6%	8%

3.7 Group operations

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements in Table 15 about how their group operated. The highest positive rating was for 'people are willing to compromise: decisions are acceptable to most members' (89% agree/strongly agree, mean 4.1). Seventy-four per cent of respondents (mean 3.8) agreed/strongly agreed that 'resources are shared fairly amongst members in their group', and 72% (mean 3.9) said 'there is a strong social connection or bond in their group'. Most also said that the group 'took time to review achievements' (mean 3.8). Two-thirds of all groups were reported as providing 'new members with background information about the group' (mean 3.7). A majority of respondents also said their group 'publicly acknowledges the contributions of members to projects' (61% agree/strongly agree, mean 3.6). These findings suggest that most SA Landcare groups have adopted norms and processes that are associated with successful volunteer groups (Curtis et al 2000).

Most respondents said that 'the scale of environmental problems in their region is beyond their capacity as a Landcare group alone to address' (73% agree/strongly agree); and that 'Government expects Landcare members to do too much of the work of fixing land and water degradation' (69% agree/strongly agree). In the first topic, the survey data suggest most respondents have a realistic appreciation of the capacity of Landcare to address land and water degradation. There is some cause for concern with the latter topic in that the data suggest a level of disillusionment with government that may require further investigation. Only 25% of respondents said that 'our group has had problems completing some projects'; and 21% said that 'some issues I consider important are not addressed in my group'.

Notwithstanding the generally positive findings identified above, the data identify areas for renewed effort or investment of resources for Landcare group support. For example, a majority of respondents said that 'there are only a few highly active members in our group' (64% agree/strongly agree); and a substantial minority (34%) agreed/strongly agreed that 'our participation rate has fallen sharply in the last two to three years'.

Only 9% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that 'our group has a policy to change leaders frequently, every one to two years', and only 28% agreed/strongly agreed that 'at times people have been in leadership positions too long', suggesting that groups had adopted an approach to leadership succession that is likely to avoid the problems associated with changing leader too frequently or retaining leaders for too long. At the same time, 52% agreed/strongly agreed that 'leaders in our group are overworked' and it seems that many groups struggle to find willing leaders with only 53% of respondents who agree/strongly agree that 'there is usually someone willing to take on leadership roles in our group' [Table 15].

Table 15
Views on how the groups operate
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	Mean
People are willing to compromise: decisions are acceptable to most members	75	0%	3%	8%	64%	25%	4.1
There is a strong social connection or bond in our Landcare group	75	1%	8%	19%	43%	29%	3.9
The scale of environmental problems in our region is beyond the capacity of Landcare groups alone to address	76	3%	14%	11%	32%	41%	3.9
Resources are shared fairly amongst members in our group	76	1%	7%	25%	43%	24%	3.8
In recent years we have taken time to look back over our achievements	75	4%	9%	17%	45%	24%	3.8
The Government expects Landcare members to do too much of the work of fixing land and water degradation	76	4%	11%	26%	34%	25%	3.7
Our group has more influence on what we do as a group than the Regional NRM Board or CWMB, or government agencies	74	5%	14%	15%	35%	31%	3.7
We provide new members with background information about the group	72	1%	10%	24%	53%	13%	3.7
I feel appreciated and receive acknowledgment for the work I do	74	5%	5%	32%	41%	16%	3.6
There are only a few highly active members in our group	76	7%	20%	9%	39%	25%	3.6
Our group publicly acknowledges the contribution of members to projects	75	5%	9%	25%	39%	21%	3.6
Separating the NLP from NHT increased the red-tape our group faces	70	6%	9%	40%	16%	30%	3.6
Our group has a clear idea of where it is headed	76	14%	4%	20%	37%	25%	3.5
Leaders in our group are over worked	73	8%	22%	18%	29%	23%	3.4
There is usually someone willing to take on leadership roles in our group	77	13%	21%	13%	40%	13%	3.2
Our group had no input into the preparation of the regional NRM Plan	75	9%	24%	21%	31%	15%	3.2
We don't usually follow up with members after continued absence from group activities	74	7%	22%	32%	32%	7%	3.1

(continued)

Table 15 (continued)
Views on how the groups operate
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	Mean
Our group has identified a clear way of evaluating the success of projects we undertake	75	7%	21%	36%	24%	12%	3.1
Our group feels dislocated from access to government funding	73	12%	23%	30%	22%	12%	3.0
In the last 2 to 3 years the Regional NRM Board or CWMB did less with groups to implement on-ground work & this reduced member participation	72	13%	25%	38%	11%	14%	2.9
Our group has had problems completing some projects	72	13%	25%	38%	11%	14%	2.9
Our group priorities for funding assistance do not match those of the regional NRM Plan	67	7%	22%	45%	19%	6%	2.9
At times people have been in leadership positions for too long	77	16%	27%	29%	19%	9%	2.8
A few people dominate decision making in our group	74	14%	36%	19%	23%	8%	2.8
Our participation rate has fallen sharply in the last two to three years	76	26%	20%	20%	20%	14%	2.8
Establishing the Regional NRM Boards increased the support our group receives from government	76	17%	16%	46%	12%	9%	2.8
We usually organise for someone to visit new members and explain how the group operates	74	18%	26%	30%	19%	8%	2.7
In the last 2 to 3 years our group has had great difficulty in obtaining Government funding	75	12%	40%	29%	8%	11%	2.7
It is or has been difficult to get local government involved in our work	75	16%	31%	27%	16%	11%	2.7
Some issues that I think are important are not addressed in our group	74	22%	36%	22%	14%	7%	2.5
Our group has involved Indigenous groups in planning or other group work	71	20%	35%	27%	17%	1%	2.5
Our group has a policy to change leaders frequently (every 1 or 2 years)	76	25%	30%	36%	8%	1%	2.3

3.8 Resource allocation

Respondents were also asked to prioritise preferences for allocations of government resources to support Landcare groups over the next three years [Table 16]. Respondents did not have to allocate resources across all options, just ensure that their total was 100%.

The highest preferences were for receiving funds to support cost-sharing to manage land and water degradation, with the average 'allocation' of one third of all government resources. Respondents allocated an average of 20% of resources to employ labour to assist groups with on-ground works. Very few respondents (7%) allocated all the available resources into a single category.

Table 16

Allocation of future (next three years) Government support

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Type of support	Mean % of Govt. money*
Money or materials as part of cost sharing to manage land & water degradation	33%
Labour to perform on-ground work such as fencing, tree planting	20%
Regional NRM Liaison Officer or coordinator to support group activity	16%
Technical information and advice about land & water management	9%
Promotion and education of results	7%

*Total does not add to 100% because the figures are means.

3.9 Constraints facing the groups in 2005

The highest ranking constraint identified is the 'need for simpler processes for groups to obtain access to government programs' with 77% rating it 'important' or 'very important'. Other important constraints related to the need for landholders to participate in the group, that farms need to make a profit, and for funds to be available for on-ground work [Table 17].

Table 17
Constraints faced by groups
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Constraints	n	Not important	Minor Importance	Some importance	Important	Very important	Mean score (1-5)
Need for simpler processes for groups to obtain access to government programs	70	7%	4%	11%	21%	56%	4.1
Landholders participate in the group	68	9%	6%	15%	26%	44%	3.9
Farms are making a profit	66	15%	6%	12%	20%	47%	3.8
Funds are available for on-ground work	69	4%	9%	22%	29%	36%	3.8
Labour is available to support on-ground work	69	6%	12%	26%	25%	32%	3.7
Regional NRM Boards view Landcare groups as minor partners in achieving regional NRM outcomes	65	8%	6%	25%	34%	28%	3.7
Government funding schemes support sustainable agriculture	64	17%	8%	22%	22%	31%	3.4
A Regional NRM Liaison Officer works with your group	69	13%	17%	14%	33%	22%	3.3
One-to-one extension advice is available	67	7%	19%	27%	30%	16%	3.3
Groups have lost access to government funds as a result of changes to NLP, NHT program delivery	66	14%	6%	33%	30%	17%	3.3
Knowledge about how to proceed with on-ground work	68	12%	21%	26%	25%	16%	3.1
Groups coordinate actions with other Landcare groups	68	16%	7%	38%	25%	13%	3.1

3.10 Views about the outcomes of group activities

The respondent groups were asked to give their opinions on how successful the group has been in achieving a range of possible outcomes from the longer-term viewpoint. The survey explored group successes in terms of attracting participation; improving communications between landholders; building trust amongst landholders; increasing awareness of land degradation; increasing sense of community; and improving the condition of land and water resources in the area.

After combining 'some' / 'much' / 'high level of success' there were high ratings for the topics:

- 'group members have completed important on-ground work' (95%, n=75)
- 'increased understanding of biodiversity conservation' (86%)
- 'improved the condition of land and water resources' (79%)

Other successful outcomes were for topics:

- 'built trust among landholders' (75%)
- 'increased awareness of land and water degradation' (74%) [Table 18].

Much lower ratings were given for two outcomes related to Landcare contribution to NRM. In the first instance, 'activities increased awareness of regional NRM Plan' was rated as having 'little' or 'no success' by 52% (n=73). Secondly, 'the group contributed substantially to the development of regional NRM Plan' was rated as having 'little' / 'no success' by 57% of respondents.

Table 18
Views about the outcomes of group activities
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Outcome from group activity	n	No success	Little success	Some success	Much success	High level success	Does not apply
Attracted widespread participation	74	7 %	11 %	28 %	20 %	26 %	8 %
Retained active membership of participants over last 3 yrs	74	7 %	15 %	30 %	18 %	31 %	0%
Improved communication between landholders	75	1 %	23 %	29 %	24 %	15 %	8 %
Built trust among landholders	74	3 %	8 %	35 %	22 %	18 %	15 %
Enhanced sense of community (social connectedness)	75	3 %	15 %	32 %	20 %	23 %	8 %
Increased awareness of land/water degradation	74	3 %	9 %	28 %	30 %	26 %	4 %
Increased understanding of what sustainable farming involves	75	5 %	19 %	29 %	15 %	15 %	17 %
Increased understanding of what biodiversity conservation involves	75	1 %	9 %	32 %	27 %	27 %	4 %
Increased appreciation of how on-farm activities affect the catchment	73	5 %	16 %	26 %	16 %	15 %	21 %
Contributed to greater cooperation among landholders to address NRM issues	73	5 %	22 %	32 %	14 %	8 %	19 %
Contributed to change land management practices	74	3 %	23 %	36 %	15 %	9 %	14 %
Activities increased awareness of Regional INRM Plan	73	25 %	27 %	23 %	4 %	3 %	18 %
Brought more resources into area to address land/water degradation	74	4 %	22 %	22 %	22 %	20 %	11 %
Group members have completed important on-ground work	75	1 %	4 %	16 %	36 %	43 %	0%
Group contributed substantially to development of Regional INRM Plan	71	23 %	34 %	21 %	6 %	1 %	15 %
Improved the condition of land / water resources	74	1 %	14 %	36 %	19 %	24 %	5 %
There is higher agricultural productivity than there would have been otherwise	73	8 %	16 %	18 %	10 %	10 %	38 %

* may not equal 100% due to rounding

3.11 Support from government

Respondents were asked to evaluate the adequacy of support that the group received across a range of services from government agencies. The respondents selected the most appropriate response for each service listed in Table 19.

Combining the responses for 'adequate' and 'excellent', the large majority of respondents said government provided adequate support for 'obtaining information and advice on land management' (81%), 'assistance with grant applications' (72%), 'money or materials to manage water and land degradation' (64%), 'coordinating on-ground group activities' (64%), and 'strategic action planning' (52%). There were small negative evaluations for support provided for 'leadership and management training for group leaders' (49% positive) and 'assistance with group administration' (46% positive) [Table 19].

Table 19
Adequacy of government support for groups
 SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	Inadequate	Adequate	Excellent	Mean score (1-3)
Information and advice on land management	72	19%	64%	17%	2.0
Assistance with grant applications	74	28%	53%	19%	1.9
Money or materials to manage land & water degradation	73	36%	52%	12%	1.8
Coordination of on-ground group activities [field days, tree planting, fencing etc]	70	36%	54%	10%	1.7
Strategic action planning	69	48%	48%	4%	1.6
Leadership and management training for group leaders	67	51%	49%	0%	1.5
Assistance with group administration [newsletters, project management]	72	54%	38%	8%	1.5

3.12 Coordinator employed by the group

The final set of questions asked the respondents if in the last two years they had employed a full or part time group coordinator, and if so, was the coordinator employed by other groups [Table 20]. Only 14% of groups returning a survey employed a coordinator.

Table 20

Use of paid coordinators

SA Landcare Groups Survey 2005 (N= 83)

Topic	n	Yes
Did you employ full-time or part-time group coordinator?	78	14%
Was the coordinator full-time or part-time?	11	27% full-time
Did the coordinator work with other groups?	12	50%

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