

# Health of the Landcare Movement Survey Results

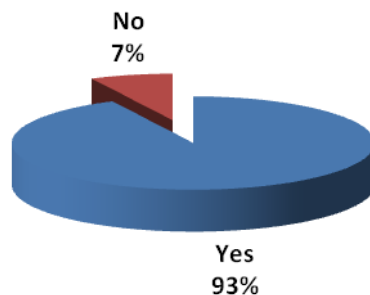
*By Brett de Hayr, National Landcare Facilitator*

## Summary

Three surveys including 550 Landcare and related groups, and nearly 1000 primary producers were conducted in April/May 2012 by the National Landcare Facilitator. The surveys were aimed at gauging the health of the Landcare movement, in particular Landcare and related groups, and the attitude of farmers towards Landcare.

The surveys found overwhelmingly that the individual farmers and groups surveyed (over 95%), felt that Landcare was still relevant to the future, but also sent a strong message about the need to continue innovation and evolution.

The survey also showed that the Landcare movement is firmly embedded in the culture of Australian farming, with 93% of farmers saying they practised Landcare on their farms and 73% feeling they are part of the movement.



*Percentage of primary producers who said they practiced Landcare on their property.*

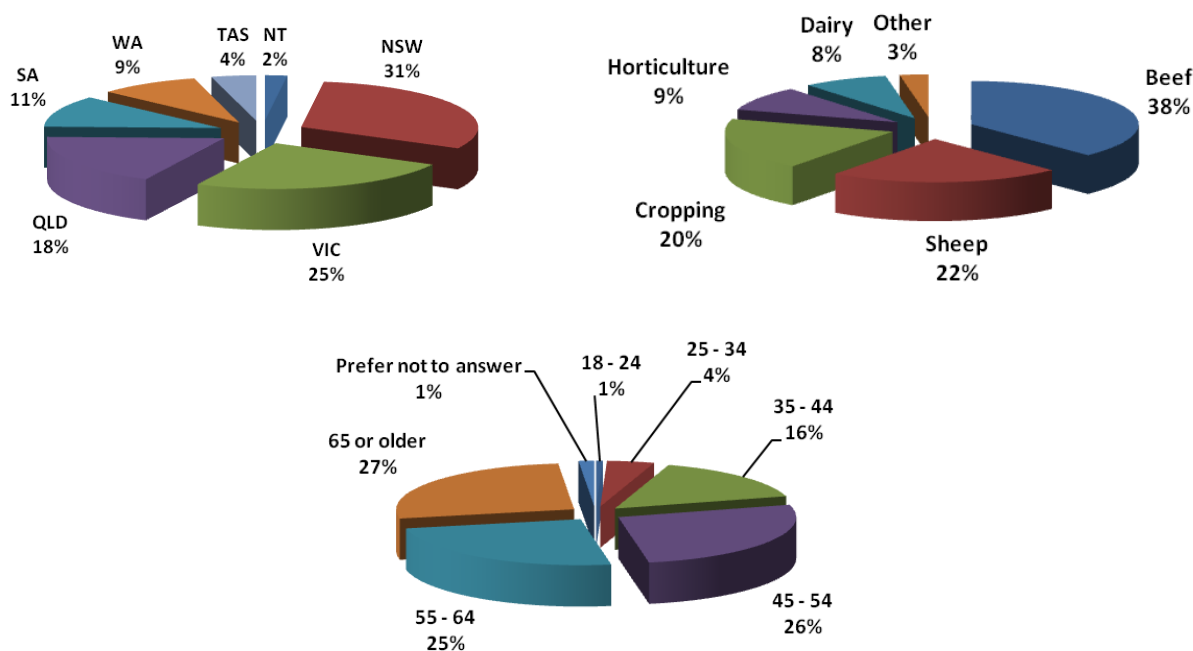
The surveys also found that 85% of Landcare groups expected to be active in the next few years.

There was consistency across the three surveys with regards to the relevance and future of Landcare. On average, very few respondents (approx. 4%) said Landcare had had its day, (approx. 20%) said it was fine the way it is and the overwhelming majority (approx.76%) said it needed to evolve in new ways.

The most powerful message from the surveys was the strong support for Landcare and a clear affinity from farmers and groups which could be enhanced with further innovation and evolution. Landcare was also seen as playing an important role in building social capacity, responding to challenges such as food security and climate adaptation and building stronger links between the city and the bush.

# Analysis of primary producer survey

Two surveys targeted individual primary producers, with the internet-based Survey Monkey platform having 440 responses and a phone survey of 500 producers across all states, industries and ages. Questions were mostly identical in both surveys with a few additional questions in the phone survey.

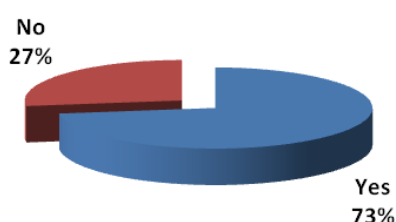


*Phone survey coverage of individual primary producers - states, industries and age*

## Attitude of primary producers to Landcare

The phone survey asked an additional question: Did the farmers surveyed consider that they undertook Landcare activities on their farm? 93% said yes.

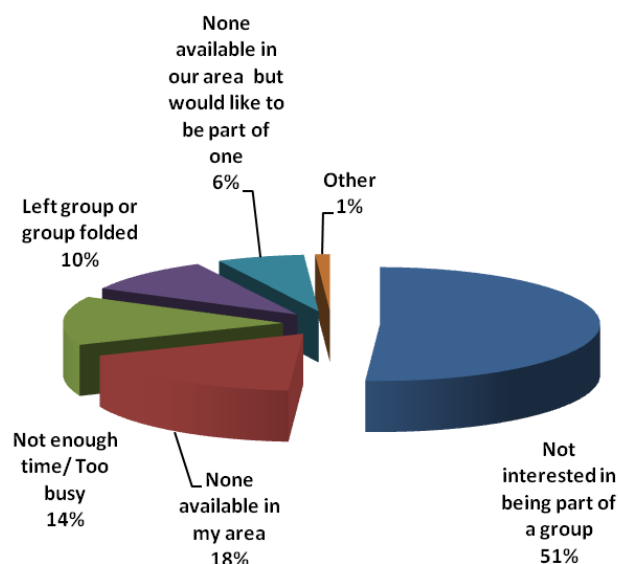
73% of the phone survey and 84% of the internet survey farmers said that they considered themselves to be part of Landcare – though the majority were not part of any formal group (Landcare, primary producer or related group). This response was generally evenly spread over the states (but up to 90% in Northern Territory and Tasmania), age groups, but higher amongst livestock and mixed farmers than cropping and horticulture.



*Percentage of primary producers that said they considered themselves to be part of Landcare*

## Participation in groups

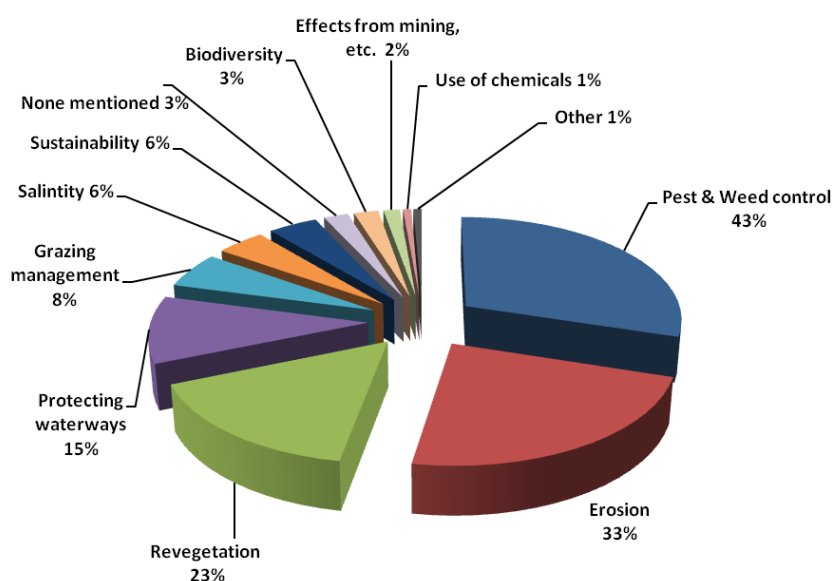
In the internet survey, 76.4% indicated that they were part of groups (Landcare, primary producer or related group) and the figure in the phone survey was only 30%, with the figures generally highest in New South Wales and Victoria and amongst graziers and mixed croppers. Of those who said that they were not part of a group, in both surveys the major reason cited was that they did not want to be part of a group (55% in phone survey and 45.6% in internet survey).



*Phone survey responses as to why individual primary producers were not part of groups*

## Issues

The priority issues in both surveys were pest and weed control, erosion/soil health, revegetation and grazing management. In the phone survey when asked to rank priority issues, topics such as climate adaptation, revegetation and salinity also rated above average interest.



*Top Landcare issues on their property cited in the primary producer phone survey (note that erosion also included soil health issues).*

## Social Capacity – Landcare’s community role

62% of respondents to the phone survey said that Landcare had an important role in building social capacity in their local area/community. This result was mirrored in the internet survey with 60.5% saying yes.

## Role in responding to challenges

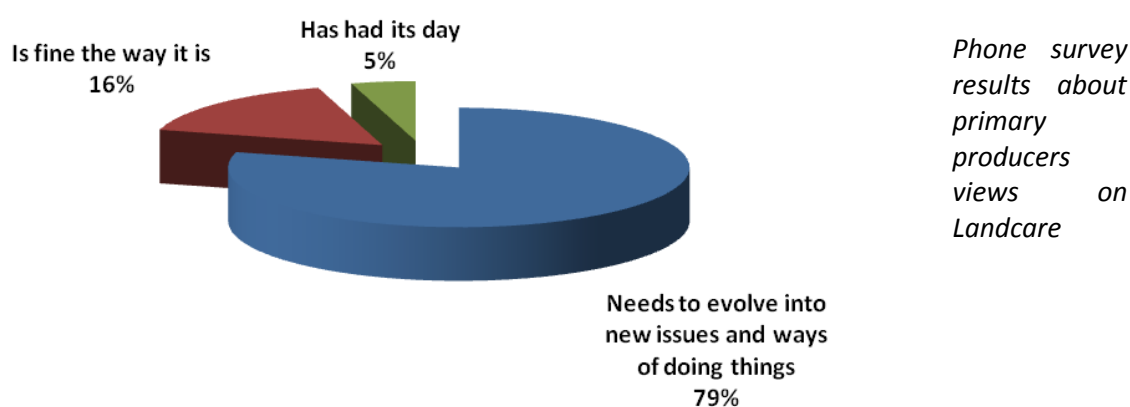
Both surveys showed that farmers considered Landcare had a major role in responding to challenges such as food security, environment and climate adaptation with 74% (generally uniform responses across states, ages and industries) from the phone survey and 80.3% from the internet survey.

## Social media

Nearly half of all farmers saw an opportunity for social media and internet-based tools for Landcare issues, with 41% of farmers on the phone poll and 57% of the internet survey saying they were interested in making greater use of social media. The average interest in the 25-65 year age group was around 46%, with 67% in the under 24s and 30% in those over 65 years. Interest in livestock, horticulture and mixed farming was highest and lowest in the cropping sector at 16%.

## Overall health of Landcare

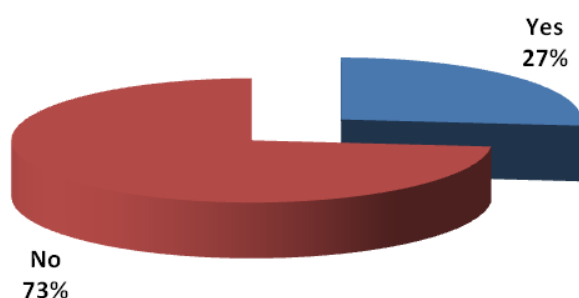
Most phone survey respondents (48%) rated the Landcare movement’s health as average (3 out of 5). They were asked to indicate if Landcare had had its day, was fine the way it is, or needed to evolve. The result was overwhelmingly uniform across the phone and internet survey (also across states, age groups and industries) with on average 6% saying that Landcare had had its day, and 76% saying it needed to evolve. About 18% on average said Landcare was fine the way it is.



This was a strong affirmation that farmers see Landcare as relevant for the future, but an equally strong message that it needed to evolve.

## Catchment Management Authorities and Natural Resource Management groups

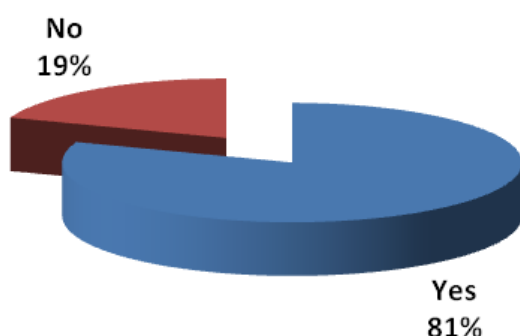
About 74% of farmers in both surveys were aware of their CMA/NRM group. When asked if farmers had received funding or technical support from their regional group in the last five years, 26% of the phone survey said yes (generally uniform across all states, ages and industries – but lower in horticulture) while the internet survey showed 54.4% had received support.



*Phone survey results – Individual producers who said that they had received funding or technical support from their CMA/NRM Group in the last five years*

## Broader community role

More than 80% of respondents to both surveys said they thought Landcare can help build greater understanding between the city and the bush. Farmers want to see rural specific Landcare activities and also understand Landcare is a broad movement with significant urban and peri-urban followings that can help build greater understanding and awareness of common issues such as food, sustainability and the environment. This was one of the strongest responses of any question in the surveys across all states, ages and industries.



*Phone survey response of individual primary producers and the role of Landcare in building greater understanding between the city and the bush*

# Analysis of group survey results

This survey was conducted using the 'Survey Monkey' internet platform, to which 550 groups responded. While the overwhelming majority of Landcare groups that responded had less than 50 members, 20% had grown into larger networks and had more than 50 members. A number of groups had in excess of 500 members and one in excess of 3000.

0-20 members:	49%
21-50 members:	29%
51-100 members:	8.4%
101-200 members:	7.3%
201-500 members:	3.92%
500 plus members:	1.12%

The results show the diversity of Landcare, with about half identifying with a rural or farming focus and the other half being urban/peri urban or coastal. Most groups (55%) had a turnover of under \$10,000 while 8.5% groups had a turnover in excess of \$200,000.

## Biggest challenges facing groups

Maintaining volunteer numbers and community participation, and funding related issues (on-ground works plus paid co-ordinators) were the major challenges facing groups. Further interrogation showed that most groups saw these as linked issues because changing community participation (ie people less willing/able to take on administrative/organising roles) can often require greater internal support from paid staff in order to maintain community interest and participation.

## Group health questions

A series of questions were asked in order to gain insight as to how groups saw their health and the health of the broader Landcare movement. Positive and negative responses about the health of their groups were split 50/50.

- 34% said that they were more active than five years ago, 3.8% new and 11.3% growing while 31.3% said they were less active than five years ago, 13% on-hold, 1.3% recently folded or 5.3% likely to fold in the near future.
- 84.7% of groups felt they would still be active within the next 2-3 years. When asked why, it was overwhelmingly due to the commitment of individuals at the core of the group. 15.3% felt their group would probably not exist in the next 2-3 years mostly due to lack of succession, lack of people taking on organisational roles or lack of paid staff to do so.
- 63% of groups indicated that they did not rely on paid staff for their organisation to function – but this should be seen in the light of the majority of groups being small (i.e. under 50) and most likely to access this function indirectly/outside of their group.

## Funding

Groups indicated their major source of funding (27%) was internal fund raising. Federal funding was the major external source of group funding (23%) closely followed by CMAs NRM groups, State governments (13.5%) and local governments (13%).

Most groups indicated a preference (41.9%) for small/medium grants of \$5000-20 000, reflecting the fact that most groups were less than 50 people. Interest in other grant sizes was evenly spread along the demographics of group size.

43.4% of groups indicated they required funding for a mixture of staff and on ground works, followed by 40.6% for on-ground works. 6.5% rated funding solely for staff as their highest priority. The responses under “other” at 9.5% these were mainly for small capital items.

57% of groups said that they were able to access sufficient funds to undertake the minimum on-ground works that they planned to do annually. This result is likely to be highly influenced by the large number of small groups participating in the survey.

## CMA/NRM support

Survey results indicated that 63% of groups received support from their CMA/NRM regional body which was mainly in the form of on-ground project support and support from regional Landcare facilitators in CMA/NRM groups. Nearly 30% of survey participants skipped this question.

## Key issues

When asked to rank a series of issues from 1-9 (1 being highest priority), groups rated pest and weed control (1.96) followed by revegetation (2.49), unspecified other (3.05), sustainable food production (3.29), capacity building (3.41). Under ‘other’, there was significant interest in community education and engagement and well as soil health.

## Health of Landcare Movement

When asked to rate the overall health of the Landcare movement, 54% indicated overall health was good, 8% very good and 37% poor. It is important to note that this refers to the movement, as opposed to structures within the movement or individual groups.

When asked about if Landcare had had its day, was fine the way it is, or needed to evolve, the overwhelming result (75.4%) said it needed to evolve, 20% fine and only 3.5% said it had run its course. This is an overwhelmingly positive result, but it sends a clear message about the desire for further innovation.

## Regional Landcare facilitators

74.9% of groups indicated they were aware of, or had been contacted by their Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF). It is not possible to infer that their recognition was solely referring to the federally funded RLFs.

## Other issues

These responses were insightful, with groups highlighting the issues of succession and attracting new volunteers, difficulty in getting people to fulfil administrative/organisational roles and a greater reliance on paid staff to fulfil these functions.

For further details go to [www.landcarefacilitator.com.au](http://www.landcarefacilitator.com.au)



***The National Landcare Facilitator Program is an initiative of the Australian Government under the Caring for our Country Program through the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.***



Australian Government