

BUILDING RESILIENCE:
**THE FUTURE OF THE NSW
LANDCARE PROGRAM**



THE ECONOMIC RETURNS OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM

The 2022 Economic Evaluation study by Nation Partners identified a total of \$86 million of benefits attributable to the Program and work of the coordinators, compared to a total Program investment of \$22.5 million.

This equates to a net benefit of \$63.5 million over the four-year delivery period, and an estimated economic return of \$3.83 per dollar of investment.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Modelling suggests an investment of \$58.8 million has the potential to deliver benefit valued at over \$217 million.

WHAT IT WILL TAKE:

TOTAL COST*
(incl. escalation)

Existing
Program

\$23.1M



Augmented
Program

\$34.8M



Program
Plus

\$58.8M



WHAT IT WILL DELIVER:

**NET
BENEFITS**



\$69.1M



\$129M



\$217.5M



WHAT WOULD IT MEAN IF THE NSW LANDCARE PROGRAM DIDN'T EXIST?

- A net loss of benefits of \$63.5 million;
- A loss of over 80 regional roles within the NRM space, along with loss of several Program roles within Local Land Services and Landcare NSW;
- A likely reduction in volunteering and support for the Landcare movement throughout NSW;
- A reduction in leveraged funds;
- A significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of both coordinators and volunteers state-wide;
- A loss of Program support roles within Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.

It should be noted that without the Program, the in-kind time contributed by volunteers would likely decline significantly, and this labour would then need to be filled by government-sponsored and managed programs and associated recruits, or be provided by the private sector. **This would come at an estimated cost of \$38 million and this would only service the baseline requirements of the Program, with no leveraging.** The volunteer labour and goodwill within Landcare NSW therefore has significant economic value and maximises the leveraged impact of the NSW Government's investment.



OBJECTIVES OF AN ENHANCED PROGRAM

- Increase the professionalism, governance and self-sustenance of the groups (and in turn decrease reliance on government funding);
- Increase the ease of which government can engage with NRM providers, fund on-ground works in regional areas, and increase regional investment;
- Improve succession planning and attract a wider cohort of volunteers, including increased youth and First Nations participation;
- Drive innovation within NRM and set groups up for successful projects / enterprises;
- Establish a digital Landcare solution that improves the quality and ease with which Program data is captured, allows on the spot reporting of issues (e.g. biosecurity, pests and weeds) and makes reporting easier for volunteers and groups.

TO START WITH, WE SHOULD

- Increase coordinator roles from one day per week to three or five days per week;
- Expand the regional Aboriginal coordinator positions, enabling coordinators to fully deliver on their roles and support and drive succession planning, including attracting youth and First Nations volunteers;
- Establish an innovation incubator (including seed funding) to capitalise on emerging technological trends in NRM, develop new offerings and establish beneficial relationships and initiatives with major partners;
- Establish a preferred panel of NRM providers for the highest-performing, best-governed groups, to foster continuous professional development and most importantly streamline the process for government agencies, and provide access to an agile pool of regional resources.

WHY WE RECOMMEND PROGRAM PLUS

We have outlined various program options because we appreciate the reality of budget decisions. We recognise that there is never enough budget for every good idea, but the work of the NSW Landcare Program is so important that it must continue, and so we offer a lower-investment option for consideration.

BUT:



The challenges the NSW Landcare Program helps address are getting bigger, not smaller – **ideally this would be supported by full-time roles to maximise the return on investment and leverage funds;**



Community expectations around building resilience, environmental stewardship, and support for grassroots volunteerism are growing – **and this needs to be supported by an expanded community of practice which will both increase natural capital, and invest in the youth as the future generation of Landcarers;**



The Program which requires the greatest investment is also the one that will deliver the greatest returns – **with a further \$84M in benefits gained from an additional \$25M of investment;**

We invite close scrutiny of the detailed business case and welcome the opportunity to discuss further the role a jointly managed Program co-delivered by Landcare NSW and Local Land Services has to play in the securing the resilience of this state into the future.

CONTACT

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