

Chapter 6

Green Army Programme and 20 Million Trees

Introduction

6.1 The Green Army Programme and 20 Million Trees are complementary to the new National Landcare Programme. Funding of \$535 million for the Green Army Programme and \$50 million for 20 Million Trees will be provided over four years.

6.2 The committee received a range of views relating to both the funding of the programs and environmental outcomes arising from the programs. In particular, there was concern about the shifting of funding from the National Landcare Program to the Green Army and 20 Million Trees. One submitter stated:

The policy rationale espoused for changing the Landcare program is flawed. It uses funds cut from Landcare and other existing environmental programs to disguise the Abbott government's sham statements of commitment to the environment by shuffling the Landcare money to fund politically expedient programs.¹

6.3 There was concern as to whether these programs will deliver long-term benefits to the environment with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association stating:

The recent shift to program delivery through the Green Army and the 20 million trees program is a concern. We are yet to be convinced of the viability of these programs; and of their capacity to deliver real and tangible outcomes on ground. Unlike previous programs where outcomes have not been adequately measured, there is a very real need to assess the deliverables to ensure that they are meeting community expectations.²

6.4 The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) noted that a large portion of the current National Landcare Programme is focused on the Green Army and 20 Million Trees. The NFF supported the programs but called for a review of the first phase of the programs:

...given that they are a significant shift both in priority and delivery methods from Caring for our Country, we believe an active review of the first phase of these programs is required to ensure that their implementation is meeting the objectives of government and the community. This review should include the level of coordination between the different programs.³

1 Ms Kate Watson, *Submission 69*, p. 3.

2 Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, *Submission 64*, p. 4. See also, National Conservation Society, *Submission 56*, p. 3.

3 Mr Gerald Leach, National Farmers' Federation, *Committee Hansard*, 13 October 2014, p. 16. See also, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, *Submission 64*, p. 8.

6.5 Other submitters voiced support for the programs to augment the efforts of community and regional bodies in achieving local and regional outcomes.⁴

6.6 The Department of the Environment (the department) commented on the complementarity of the programs. It stated that, with the increased level of flexibility in the regional funding under the National Landcare Programme, regional bodies will be able to direct some of the regional funding to support, for example, Green Army projects or 20 Million Trees projects. The department stated that it is pursuing this both with the regional groups and with the Landcare community more broadly. The department went on to state:

There is a bit of a journey for the sector to go on—having a look at how it rolls out. We are also working with the National Landcare Networks—and I understand that you have had some of them here to talk to you—around how they can support their Landcare groups to engage in these other programs. It is also an issue that we will be asking the National Landcare Advisory Committee to have a look at and give us some advice on how we can do it better. So, it is something we are very mindful of, but, as you would be aware, in the first year of the program we are just getting the programs up and running and we are working on how we support the sector to engage in all our programs in a complementary way.⁵

Green Army Programme

6.7 The Green Army Programme was a Coalition election commitment and was established through the *Social Security Amendment (Green Army Programme) Act 2014*. The Programme 'will support regional, national and international conservation management objectives through the delivery of local projects'.⁶ The Government is providing funding of \$534.7 million over four years to the department. Other departments, including the Department of Human Services, are also receiving appropriations.⁷

6.8 In his second reading speech on the bill, the Minister for Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt, stated that the Green Army Programme will:

- build to 15,000 participants by 2018;
- be capable of delivering 1,500 on-ground environmental projects;
- be delivered by a national service provider or multiple providers;
- undertake projects assessed on a merit basis against their environmental benefits, contribution to the local community and potential to enhance skills training for participants;

4 See Landcare NSW Inc, *Submission 47*, p. 9.

5 Ms Claire Howlett, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 13 October 2014, p. 66.

6 Australian Government, *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2013–14*, p. 141.

7 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Budget Estimates Hansard*, 27 May 2014, p. 124.

- establish Green Army teams of up to nine eligible participants and at least one team leader; and
- eligible participants will receive a Green Army allowance and not also receive a social security benefit or social security pension simultaneously.⁸

6.9 The Minister concluded that:

Ultimately, the Green Army builds on the Howard Government's successful Green Corps program that was established in 1996 to employ young people on environmental projects to preserve and restore our natural and cultural environment. Our Green Army will deliver real and tangible benefits for the environment, it will deliver skills for thousands of young Australians and it will strengthen local community involvement.⁹

6.10 The Green Army Programme is a voluntary initiative for young people aged 17 to 24 years to participate for up to 30 hours per week in a range of environmental programs. The Green Army projects will run for between 20 and 26 weeks. Projects include activities such as restoration and protection of habitat, weed control, and conservation of cultural heritage. Projects may be undertaken in urban, regional and remote areas on public land, Indigenous-held land or private land where there is a clear community and environment and/or heritage benefit.¹⁰

6.11 The Green Army Programme was scheduled to commence on 1 July 2014 with the roll-out of 250 projects of which 150 were announced by the Coalition during the 2013 election. Project proposals may be submitted by individuals and organisations including Landcare groups. The department stated:

There is the potential for NRM bodies and Landcare groups to participate in the Green Army Program by putting forward projects, so essentially being the project sponsors, working with service providers to deliver a range of activities.¹¹

6.12 Programme funding will be provided for transport, basic materials and training for Green Army participants. The approved project sponsors, such as Landcare groups, would be required to cover any other costs. The department stated:

All other costs for the projects are provided by the project sponsor directly rather than through the Green Army Program.¹²

8 The Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for the Environment, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 869–870.

9 The Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for the Environment, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 871.

10 Department of the Environment, *Green Army fact sheet*,

11 Ms Peta Lane, Department of the Environment, *Budget Estimates Hansard*, 27 May 2014, p. 96.

12 Ms Peta Lane, Department of the Environment, *Budget Estimates Hansard*, 27 May 2014, p. 97.

6.13 The department added that an average of \$10,000 per project could be made available for 'project-specific materials'.¹³

6.14 At the Supplementary Budget Estimates in October 2014, the department indicated that that \$42,875,000 had been contracted for 196 projects with a total remaining commitment of \$41,359,772. There are 40 projects with \$7.7 million of the committed funds that support threatened species outcomes.¹⁴ The projects included a number of election commitments as well as projects with local councils because local councils have a range of materials and practices at their disposal to support Green Army teams.¹⁵

6.15 Round One Project Guidelines were released in April 2014. At October 2014, 29 projects were underway with nine participants each.¹⁶ Round Two Project Guidelines were released in November 2014 and Round Three Guidelines were released in February 2015.

6.16 Subsequent to Round One, the guidelines were amended to included that projects 'must be directed towards meeting Australia's relevant international obligations or, alternatively, directed towards protecting and conserving matters of national environmental significance'.¹⁷ It was reported that the guidelines were updated based on experience from the first round and to clarify how local Green Army activities can help deliver on Australia's national environmental objectives.¹⁸

6.17 It was also reported that the amendments were made as a result of the High Court's ruling in *Williams v The Commonwealth of Australia & Ors*.¹⁹ The High Court made it clear that the Commonwealth can only provide funding for programs for which it has authority under the constitution. Professor George Williams was quoted as commenting that there is no environmental power under the Constitution and that 'it

13 Ms Peta Lane, Department of the Environment, *Budget Estimates Hansard*, 27 May 2014, p. 97.

14 Mr Malcolm Thompson, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 179.

15 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 179.

16 Ms Steph Pidcock, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 181.

17 Department of the Environment, *Green Army Round Two Project Guidelines*, November 2014, p. 8.

18 J Dowling, 'High Court hobbles Green Army for local, community projects', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/high-court-hobbles-green-army-for-local-community-projects-20141123-11r4di.html> (accessed 11 March 2015).

19 (2012) 248 CLR 156

was possible that the first tranche of Green Army projects was unconstitutional but it would require a challenge to prove'.²⁰

Response to the Green Army Programme

6.18 Some submitters suggested that there was potential for the Green Army to assist, or augment, the delivery of NRM outcomes.²¹ For example, Mr Ian Sauer supported the potential for increased capacity for Landcare projects:

...the Green Army concept is a good one, there will be multiple benefits from the concept. Remedial, environmental, and beautification works will be able to be carried out on a range of public land tenures, many small projects will be able to be undertaken with Local Government, some community groups will be able to leverage help, to get some man power onto projects that is beyond the capacity of the group.²²

6.19 The Rangeland NRM Alliance was cautiously optimistic about the prospect of input from Green Army participants in regional and remote Australia, stating:

The Rangeland Alliance is particularly interested in whether there is flexibility in this program to allow for meaningful application in areas of extensive areas and low population.²³

6.20 However, Mr Keith Hyde, Hovells Creek Landcare Group, commented that in some areas, for example western NSW, tree planting seasons are very short and other activities such as weed control and fencing are also time dependent. As a consequence, it would be very difficult to find suitable projects over the entire year.²⁴

6.21 There was also significant concern about the shift of funds from Landcare to the Green Army and that the program is, in reality, a youth training and employment scheme rather than an environmental program.²⁵ The Alliance reaffirmed that it found the Green Army concept 'sound' but questioned the amount of funding being directed to it:

But our advice to the minister and to the agency is that the Green Army is going to work, at best, across only 20 per cent of the Australian land mass—and yet it is attracting over 50 per cent of what used to be our budget.²⁶

20 J Dowling, 'High Court hobbles Green Army for local, community projects', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/high-court-hobbles-green-army-for-local-community-projects-20141123-11r4di.html> (accessed 11 March 2015).

21 See NRM Regions Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 7; South Coast NRM, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Esperance Regional Forum Inc, *Submission 42*, p. 6; Mr Ian Sauer, *Submission 61*, p.6.

22 Mr Ian Sauer, *Submission 61*, p. 6.

23 Rangeland NRM Alliance, *Submission 4*, p. 7.

24 Mr Bill Pigott, *Committee Hansard*, 29 August 2014, p. 39.

25 Upper Ovens Valley Landcare, *Submission 32*, p. 1.

26 Mr Andrew Drysdale, Rangeland NRM Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 29 August, p. 59.

6.22 Mr Matthew Pitt added that it had been assumed that funding for the Green Army would not affect Landcare funding:

The NLN and many other Landcarers were assured that funding for the Green Army would not be coming out of the Landcare pot, so the proposal was given cautious support as most of us who experienced the Green Corp program did not feel it was a good use of scarce funds...The funding for the Green Army should have come out of the employment and training bucket as [were] we led to believe it would.²⁷

6.23 The Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network commented that the Green Army is 'a very inadequate solution to any reduction in Landcare funding'.²⁸ Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups added that 'it is difficult to see how Green Army could provide a viable alternative to the rich, diverse and sustained program undertaken by Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups over the last 30 years'.²⁹

6.24 Other submitters were more pointed in their comments about the Green Army Programme and its ability to produce long-term environmental benefits with some stating that the Programme was 'ill thought out'. One submitter, for example, stated that it will deliver 'no benefits to the Farmer, environment, landcare or back to the Government. It will be another failed Government program'.³⁰

6.25 The Katanning Land Conservation District Committee (LCDC) also commented that it was 'disheartened' by the Government's approach and disappointed that funds that could have been used to support on-going and active community-based Landcare have been redirected to 'a short-term, unskilled/inexperienced work for the dole program'.³¹ National Landcare Network (NLN) added:

Not only did the National Landcare Programme receive a cut of approximately \$400 million but there was an increase of approximately \$200 million into another Government initiative – The Green Army Programme. This was viewed by many in the Landcare community as a blatant redirection of funds away from Landcare and local communities and into a Youth Employment Training Programme.³²

6.26 It was also noted that the Green Army does not include 'in-kind' contributions by experienced landcarers. As program participants are inexperienced, the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network argued that the \$300 million Green Army funding will

27 Mr Matthew Pitt, *Submission 23*, p. 1.

28 Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network, *Submission 25*, p. 4.

29 Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups, *Submission 29*, p. 2.

30 Name Withheld, *Submission 27*, p. 3. See also, Mrs Suzanne Metcalf, *Submission 2*, p. 4.

31 Katanning Land Conservation District Committee, *Submission 6*, p. 2. See also, South West Catchments Council, *Submission 11*, p. 6; Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups, *Submission 29*, p. 1.

32 National Landcare Network, *Submission 46*, pp 3–4.

fund the service providers, team leaders, participants, minimal project specific materials and other items such as insurance and training.³³

6.27 Hovells Creek Landcare Group emphasised that Landcare groups currently understand the need to carry out projects in accordance with regional needs because they are part of the local community. It questioned how the Green Army Programme would take into account local concerns. It also questioned the return on Green Army projects:

We cannot see a Green Army program of conscripted 17- to 25-year-olds delivering the same return per dollar invested of federal investment that the existing dedicated army of volunteers is currently delivering, and has delivered, for the nation over the past 25 years.³⁴

6.28 Submitters, while arguing that a successful outcome for the Green Army required the use of local Landcare connections and local participants in projects, pointed to a number of constraints including the costs of running the program, particularly in rural and remote areas, and attracting young people to these areas.³⁵ As an example, the NLN provided the following calculation:

A Green Army project is for 26 weeks and there are 10 people involved. Just say, for argument's sake, they are planting trees. A decent young fellow will plant 100 trees a day. If there are 10 of them, over four days that is 4,000 trees a week and over 26 weeks that is 100,000 trees. To buy the seed stock—the seedlings—is \$200,000. Where are we going to get the money—the \$200,000—to buy the trees that these people are going to be planting for 26 weeks?³⁶

6.29 The Rangeland NRM Alliance suggested tailoring Green Army projects to ensure their success in regional and remote areas and ensuring that participants develop skills, such as remote first aid, 4WD driver training and workplace safety in remote areas, which will provide preparation for work in remote areas in other industries.³⁷ The Alliance also argued that the added cost of carrying out projects in remote areas needed to be factored into funding. It commented that, while it had raised these points with the department and ministerial advisers, it 'did not feel like they were taken on board'.³⁸

33 Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network, *Submission 25*, p. 3.

34 Mr Keith Hyde, Past Chairman, Hovells Creek Landcare Group, *Committee Hansard*, 29 August, p. 35. See also, Landcare NSW Inc, *Submission 47*, p. 9.

35 See Rangeland NRM Alliance, *Submission 4*, p. 7; NRM Regions Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 7.

36 Mr David Walker, National Landcare Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 August 2014, p. 14.

37 Rangeland NRM Alliance, *Submission 4*, p. 8.

38 Ms Kate Forrest, Rangeland NRM Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 29 August 2014, p. 57.

Environmental outcomes

6.30 There was concern that the Green Army Programme will not achieve any discernible environmental outcomes. Submitters pointed to the capacity of inexperienced teams to carry out the required work. In addition, it was argued that it appeared that no provision had been made to provide the longer term follow-up required of tree planting, weed management, fencing etc.³⁹

6.31 Hovells Creek Landcare Group, for example, commented that tree planting is the easy, short-term part of the activity. Fencing, site preparation and after care for tree planting can take many months and even years. The Group went on to state that its past experience with similar programs 'is that the "recruits" are rarely committed and diligent about the way they go about their allotted tasks'. In addition, given stringent occupational health and workplace issues, landholders cannot afford the risk of unskilled/insufficiently trained persons either erecting fences, working in erosion gullies, or operating equipment/machinery on their land.⁴⁰

6.32 Submitters also drew parallels to the Green Corp programme, a Howard Government initiative implemented in 1996, which some submitters described as a 'failed' public policy with few environmental successes.⁴¹ Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups stated that similar programs had operated in its area in the past. Results had been mixed, but were mainly poor as a result of lack of motivation of participants, the questionable quality of work and completion of projects which could be put into the 'painting white rocks' category.⁴²

6.33 The department responded to concerns about long-term maintenance of plantings:

...project sponsors for those investments are there to help guide Green Army priorities. But, once a team has delivered the work, whether it be rehabilitation, remediation or weed removal, the presence of a project sponsor for those sites is intended to also then give a sense of stewardship of the investment that has been made through the Green Army team so that those environmental outcomes are more enduring than just a Green Army team doing a particular piece of work and then moving on.⁴³

Impact on established Landcare groups

6.34 A number of Landcare groups voiced concern about the impact of Green Army on the Landcare sector, particularly on access to the program and volunteers.⁴⁴

39 See NRM Regions Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 7;

40 Hovells Creek Landcare Group, *Submission 45*, p. 5.

41 See Mrs Suzanne Metcalf, *Submission 2*, p. 4; Big Lap Landcare Inc, *Submission 48*, p. 2;

42 Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups, *Submission 29*, pp 1–2.

43 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 175.

44 Mr Matthew Pitt, *Submission 23*, p. 1; South Coast NRM, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Wild Matters Pty Ltd, *Submission 26*, p. 1; Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups, *Submission 29*, p. 2; Esperance Regional Forum Inc, *Submission 42*, p. 7.

The Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) pointed to the level of funding and nature of the projects required under the Green Army Programme. For Landcare groups to become a Project Sponsor, they need to have an existing, already funded, project which would enable participants to undertake 20 weeks training. Such a project would generally be estimated at \$80,000 – \$100,000 in project costs. Without a significant accompanying grant program the Landcare community will not be able to effectively utilise Green Army participants.⁴⁵

6.35 The department observed that there had been some hesitancy from Landcare groups in looking at brokering projects that comprised a number of groups. In response, the department was consulting with NRM organisations and Landcare groups about projects that could be split between groups: three weeks with one Landcare group and four weeks with a Bushcare group.⁴⁶

6.36 The committee also received comments on the impact of the Green Army initiative on the volunteer Landcare force.⁴⁷ It has been noted that volunteers play a vital role in Landcare not only in carrying out projects but also ongoing monitoring and maintenance. Condamine Alliance reported:

Feedback from community groups has been negative about this program—they believe it: disenfranchises local voluntary environmental groups (i.e. Landcare); is unlikely to have any positive environmental impacts; and is not a good use of resources.⁴⁸

6.37 It was also noted that experienced Landcare volunteers will be more effective hour for hour, dollar for dollar, than a trainee, however well-intentioned the trainee. Therefore, the Green Army should be used as adjunct to the volunteer Landcare effort, and should not crowd out funding for existing Landcare efforts.⁴⁹

6.38 Bass Coast Landcare Network commented on the social capital aspects of Landcare:

The grassroots Landcare community's ability and capacity to deliver, build social capital and achieve landscape scale change. The Green Army will move in and deliver activities that would normally be carried out by the Landcare community. How can we ensure that these sites are maintained beyond the life of the Green Army, if there is no capacity to engage local Landcare groups.⁵⁰

45 Farm Tree and Landcare Association, *Submission 41*, p. 6.

46 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 178.

47 See Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups, *Submission 29*, p. 2.

48 Condamine Alliance, *Submission 3*, p. 11.

49 Farm Tree and Landcare Association, *Submission 41*, p. 6.

50 Bass Coast Landcare Network, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

20 Million Trees

6.39 The 20 Million Trees initiative was announced in the 2014–15 Budget with funding of \$50 million over four years. 20 Million Trees is part of the national stream of the National Landcare Programme and has four strategic objectives:

- 20 million trees – 20 million trees and associated understory planted by 2020;
- environmental conservation – support local environmental outcomes by improving the extent, connectivity and condition of native vegetation that supports native species;
- community engagement – work cooperatively with the community; and
- carbon reduction – contribute to Australia reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.⁵¹

6.40 20 Million Trees will be operated through competitive grants with applications for grant funding between \$20,000 and \$100,000 accepted from eligible groups, individuals and organisations that intend to plant native trees and associated understory in a range of urban, peri-urban and regional environments across Australia. Tree plantings may occur on public or private land.

6.41 At the October 2014 Supplementary Estimates, the department indicated that guidelines and application forms for the small grant component were released in October 2014 for an initial \$3.4 million over three years. The department commented that this 'will be part of a broader notional allocation within the \$50 million that is allocated against 20 Million Trees of around \$8 million that will be in total for small grants over the four-year period'. In relation to large-scale plantings, a request for tender for a national service provider or national service providers was being finalised for release in November 2014 with a first tranche of funding of \$27 million.⁵²

6.42 The department went on to indicate that the allocation in the first year is smaller with the national component building over time to a more significant investment. The department noted that it would not mean that trees would be planted in every region in the first year as it will be based on seasonal planting. It commented:

In Western Australia or other jurisdictions where there is an autumn-planting window for seed collection and seedling stock—which is another limiting factor in getting trees on the ground—we will be working to make sure that we are planting in the best possible places at the right time. It does not mean that every jurisdiction wins a prize in the first element. It will be about planting at the most appropriate time, where there is seed availability.⁵³

51 Department of the Environment, *20 Million Trees*, <http://www.nrm.gov.au/national/20-million-trees> (accessed 16 October 2014).

52 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Estimates Hansard*, 20 October 2014, pp 172, 181.

53 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Estimates Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 172.

6.43 Monitoring and reporting will be through an online tool, MERIT.⁵⁴

Response to 20 Million Trees

6.44 The committee received a range of views concerning 20 Million Trees. For example, Mr Francis Smit, Landcare SJ Inc, commented that it was 'a great project'.⁵⁵ However, it was also noted that it only considers revegetation rather than taking a more holistic approach to natural resource management, that is inclusion of faunal protection, riparian protection, biosecurity, community training etc.⁵⁶

6.45 The Katanning LCDC stated that it had been watching the development of 20 Million Trees 'with interest', and while it hoped that it would be able to engage with the program, it was concerned that its 'simplistic structure may limit the achievement of maximum environmental "bang for buck"'.⁵⁷

6.46 Funding concerns were also raised by another submitter who commented that the \$50 million allocated by the Government would mean just over \$2 per tree. It was noted that trees needed to be purchased or propagated and transported as well as planted, fenced and maintained. In remote areas, transport of workers will also require funding.⁵⁸ In addition, it was argued that 20 million trees will not cover the usual extent of revegetation across Australia for the five-year period.⁵⁹ Mrs Ella Maesepp, Katanning LCDC, stated:

We are concerned that the size of 20 Million Trees is not going to go very far across Australia. Very little of our revegetation can be done without additional fencing, because it is a livestock area and there are sheep everywhere and those sorts of things. We are a little bit concerned about how we can get landscape-scale projects when you have only got one component of the pieces you need to complete a project site under 20 Million Trees.⁶⁰

6.47 In response to the inclusion of costs of fencing, the department stated:

That also does not preclude a consultation process on views coming from stakeholders, both community and practitioners, for the future small-grants round. There was a decision taken that it does not preclude fencing, but fencing could be a co-investment component of the initial small-grants program. We will look at that after we have run the first small-grants

54 Department of the Environment, Budget Estimates 2014–15, *Answer to question on notice No. 8*.

55 Mr Francis Smit, Landcare SJ Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 7 October 2014, p. 63.

56 Landcare SJ Inc, *Submission 28*, p. 3. See also, Dr Jill Wilson, Northern Agricultural Catchment Council, *Committee Hansard*, 7 October 2014, p. 41.

57 Katanning Land Conservation District Committee, *Submission 6*, p. 2.

58 Ms Kate Watson, *Submission 69*, p. 2.

59 Katanning Land Conservation District Committee, *Submission 6*, p. 2.

60 Ms Ella Maesepp, Katanning Land Conservation District Committee, *Committee Hansard*, 7 October 2014, p. 50.

program and then make any necessary adjustments, based on feedback as well as the endeavours around co-investment with respect to issues such as fencing.⁶¹

6.48 The department also added:

Within the 20 Million Trees program itself there is a very strong focus on long-term maintenance of plantings. That is something that is emphasised through the round one program guidelines...and will be considered through the assessment process. We do ask proponents to maintain those plantings in the long term, and it is beholden on the proponents to do that. The long term, in this case, we are considering is around 10 years, but of course the lifespan of many of those plantings will be considerably longer.⁶²

6.49 The possible overemphasis on trees was raised by the Hovells Creek Landcare Group which stated that the focus on tree planting 'as an emblem of environmental revegetation programs to address key environmental issues overlooks the need for shrubs and groundcover species. It is the shrubs and groundcover plants that complete the complex diversities of our ecosystems'. The Group submitted that the need to include threatened and endangered species in revegetation planning is 'absolutely essential and NOT to be overlooked'.⁶³

6.50 The FTLA commented that funding for revegetation work has always been part of Australian Government funding for Landcare. The FTLA welcomed funding for revegetation but stated that 'the rationale of having it as a separate programme is unclear'. As with other submitters, the Association noted that many Landcare groups plant very significant numbers of trees each year as part of normal operations. They were thus well placed, with both resources and expertise, to facilitate delivery. In addition, community-based Landcare groups, which have been established for long periods of time, are more likely to result in ongoing maintenance of plantings than planting undertaken by private contractors.⁶⁴

6.51 The Bass Coast Landcare Network was also of the view that the use of existing networks such as Landcare would be 'vital' for local participation in the program. It added that Landcare already had links to landholders, relationships with shires and other agencies and undertake work with a very similar aim as the program.⁶⁵

61 Mr Sean Sullivan, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Estimates Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 173.

62 Ms Fiona Fraser, Department of the Environment, *Supplementary Budget Estimates Hansard*, 20 October 2014, p. 176.

63 Hovells Creek Landcare Group, *Submission 45*, p. 5. See also, Katanning Land Conservation District Committee, *Submission 6*, p. 2.

64 Farm Tree and Landcare Association, *Submission 41*, p. 6. See also, Mr Justin Bellanger, South Coast Natural Resource Management, *Committee Hansard*, 7 October 2014, p. 35.

65 Bass Coast Landcare Network, *Submission 20*, p. 4.

6.52 Mr Robert Dulhunty, Landcare NSW, went further and argued that there was a need to link 20 Million Trees (and the Green Army Programme) to volunteer groups. He commented that:

This infrastructure of coordinated networks will help build an enabled community. The enabled community will be equipped to work in partnership with government to tackle the natural resource management challenges we face now and into the future. In my view, there is a need for review of arrangements.⁶⁶

Committee comment

6.53 The overwhelming view received by the committee was that the Green Army Programme and 20 Million Trees will have limited environmental impact.

6.54 The Green Army Programme was seen by many submitters as more of an employment program than one directed at achieving positive environmental outcomes. It was thus argued that it could hardly be called a natural resource management program and there was considerable criticism that funding was taken out of NRM to support the Green Army Programme.

6.55 The committee also received much evidence suggesting that there will be very limited contribution to environmental outcomes from the Green Army Programme. The difficulties of groups to meet the program requirements were noted. The committee acknowledges the work of the Department of the Environment to broker arrangements between groups to enable them to access the Green Army.

6.56 However, the committee remains unconvinced that the investment in the Green Army Programme is a direct substitute for Landcare and therefore cannot support the transfer of Landcare funding to the Green Army Programme.

6.57 In relation to 20 Million Trees, it was noted that tree planting has always been a feature, but not the only feature, of Landcare. The committee notes the concerns expressed about lack of adequate funding to support planting activities: fencing, propagation, transport and monitoring.

6.58 The committee considers that, while a worthwhile addition to the suite of NRM activities, the Government would have received a greater return on its investment if the 20 Million Trees funding had been rolled into Landcare funding.

66 Mr Robert Dulhunty, Landcare NSW Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 29 August 2014, p. 43.

