

## **Government Senators' Additional Comments**

1.1 The Coalition members of the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee consider the report fails to acknowledge the efforts of the Government to put Landcare back at the heart of natural resource management.

### **National Landcare Programme**

1.2 The Australian Government is investing more than \$2 billion to manage our natural resources, enabling communities to take practical action to improve the environment. This includes investment in the National Landcare Programme, together with complimentary initiatives such as the Green Army, Working on Country and the Reef Trust.

1.3 The Government's redesign of the National Landcare Programme is focussed on:

- a. returning decision-making back to local communities, rather than a top-down approach from Canberra;
- b. a simpler and more effective reporting and application process; and
- c. a commitment to long-term projects and programme design.

1.4 The report acknowledges the Government's 25th Anniversary of Landcare Grants but does not address the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Agriculture's decision to mandate that Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations funded under the regional stream of the National Landcare Programme must invest at a minimum 20% of their funding for small on-ground projects delivered by Landcare and other community groups.

1.5 This change to the programme design ensures that Landcare and community groups have access to small project funding through their local regions on an ongoing basis.

### **Ongoing consultation with Landcare and local communities**

1.6 The National Landcare Programme Advisory Committee will play an important role in advising the Government about the implementation of the National Landcare Programme and opportunities for further improvements as the programme rolls-out.<sup>1</sup> The report fails to acknowledge the Government's commitment to consult with the sector through the Advisory Committee to ensure this programme delivers on its principles of simple, local and long-term.

1.7 Engagement with local communities through the regional delivery stream of the Programme will play a critical role in ensuring the Government's investment in natural resource management is targeted at priority local projects that meet local community needs such as funding to Landcare groups.

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1 Mr Malcolm Thompson, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 13 October 2014, p. 59.

1.8 The Government is also supporting with \$1 million in annual funding the important work of the National Landcare Network and state Landcare networks. This funding is focused on supporting the networks' role in building relationships with NRMs, advising Government on the roll-out and design of the Green Army, 20 Million Trees and National Landcare Programmes and continuing to build capacity within the movement.

### **Green Army Programme**

1.9 The Australian Government's Green Army Programme is complimentary to but not replacing Landcare funding.

1.10 The Green Army is primarily an environment programme focused on supporting local communities to take practical action, but it also provides young people with practical skills and training.

1.11 The report does not acknowledge the important role the Green Army can play in supporting, and assisting, the vital work of Australia's volunteer conservation organisations. The Programme does not aim to displace the volunteer movement, but to energise and add much-needed support to the efforts on the ground.<sup>2</sup>

1.12 Young Australians care deeply about, and are interested in, working in the environment. For many young people, the Green Army could be their first opportunity to work in the environment and undertake paid work experience. This experience in the Green Army could have a profound impact on their lives, their community and the local environment. These young people are the next generation of Landcarers.

1.13 Most significantly, the report fails to acknowledge young people involved in the programme will not only gain valuable skills and training to prepare them for the workforce in this initiative, but the environment will benefit significantly from this initiative.

- a. Projects submitted under the Green Army are in partnership with local communities and must have a conservation outcome.
- b. Projects are tailored to ensure that they meet local species requirements and that approval is provided from the project sponsor on how best to deliver the project at the outset. This ensures that the Green Army is meeting local environmental needs.

1.14 In contrast to previous similar programmes such as the Green Jobs Corps and Green Corps Programmes, the Green Army provides significant flexibility in the programme design to address some of the concerns raised in the report but not explored. The average investment in a Green Army Project is \$192,500 per project; this includes funding for project specific materials above or below the 'on average \$10,000' allocated project specific material amount.<sup>3</sup> The Green Army also allows for

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2 Mr Malcolm Thompson, Department of the Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 13 October 2014, p. 61.

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

multiple project applications, multiple Participation in projects and Service Providers are able to work with potential sponsors on their project applications assisting them in how to design a project.

1.15 The Green Army Programme is designed to leverage investment from both the 20 Million Trees and National Landcare Programmes to provide additional support where required for more complex project concepts. Organisations can work in partnership to put together a project proposal utilising the funding in environment programmes.

**Senator Anne Ruston**  
**Deputy Chair**  
**Senator for South Australia**

**Senator James McGrath**  
**Senator for Queensland**

