



Friday, 3 October 2008

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs & Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Caring for Our Country - supporting grassroots landcare

The Tasmanian Landcare Association (TLCA) is the peak body that supports and represents the Tasmanian landcare movement. This vibrant, community based volunteer movement is active throughout the state working to reverse land, water and vegetation degradation, and to protect our state's natural values. This work forms a critical component of the move towards truly sustainable management of our natural resources. The TLCA represent more than 300 'care' groups across the state.

It is clear to the TLCA that our membership is extremely worried that while *Caring for our Country* will make continue to make funding provisions for national, regional and catchment-scale projects, there may no longer be the support for smaller scale works as provided for via the recently concluded Envirofund program. The TLCA share their concern in this regard.

The TLCA would like the Senate Committee to ensure that within the new era of *Caring for our Country*, we don't see a loss of momentum or capacity on the ground for landcare groups. The uncertainty over the past six months as to how C4oC will operate has already posed a considerable challenge for planning and implementation for our membership. Changes of government need not disrupt the work schedule and capacity of the landcare movement on the ground.

Looking at Envirofund rounds 9 and 10, it is clear how important relatively small funding amounts are to landcare efforts throughout Tasmania. Some figures for your consideration:

- 60% of Tasmanian projects that secured Round 10 Envirofund funding sought less than \$30,000 for their project. These 15 projects totalled \$267,436.
- Only 16% of Tasmanian Round 10 Envirofund recipients had projects with more than \$40,000 funding. All of these

projects were run by large sub-catchment groups (rather than individual landholders or care groups).

These trends are consistent with Envirofund Round 9:

- 65% of project recipients (i.e. 32 grants) sought less than \$30,000 for their projects. These projects together received \$348,858 in Envirofund monies.
- 35% of groups had budgets of less than \$10,000.
- Only 8% of projects within Round 9 (i.e. 4 groups) had budgets of more than \$40,000.

It is absolutely critical that the federal government continue to support the landcare movement at the grassroots level through continued provision of small to medium funding rounds. There is no way that local landcare groups can ably compete with larger organisations and institutions.

It is important to note that these projects are increasingly devised with direct reference to regional strategies to address agreed NRM priorities. These projects, completed by volunteers, provide excellent 'value for money' through considerable in-kind value of labour and equipment involved. There are also significant values attached to the outcomes of the projects that extend beyond the boundaries of the project site – e.g. tackling invasive weed species; erosion mitigation through vegetation restoration; water quality improvement via better riparian zone management.

These are just some of the benefits for which local landcare groups need your continued support in order to be able to maintain their efforts on the ground. While the funding support requirements of landcare groups are modest, the outcomes can be truly impressive.

The TLCA would welcome any opportunity to discuss these matters further with the Committee. We can also readily arrange briefings from groups and relevant Tasmanian stakeholders, or else organise site visits so that you can see landcare in action on the ground. Alternatively, we could come to Canberra if that is more convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Belfield
Executive Officer, Tasmanian Landcare Association