

# NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAM PHASE 2: SUMMARY OF REGIONAL LAND PARTNERSHIPS SURVEY



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

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# Acknowledgments

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## Executive Summary

The Australian Government is investing more than \$1 billion in the National Landcare Program Phase 2, which will be delivered by the Department of the Environment and Energy and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. A public consultation process during 2017 concluded with the gathering of views from interested groups and individuals through the Regional Land Partnerships Consultation Survey. One hundred and twenty-four responses were received. Key issues raised by respondents include:

**The Tender, Tender Process and Documentation** There was broad support for the proposed tender requirements and the level of guidance provided. Some concerns were raised about the capacity of local groups to meet the application, administration and reporting requirements proposed.

**Funding** Long-term funding cycles of at least five years for core services and projects were supported as they provide certainty and maintain capacity. The resourcing of local community and industry groups through small grants and funding allocations was also supported. Respondents raised concerns about potential cash flow issues if payments are only made on the delivery of services.

**Co-investment** Suggestions for increasing public-private co-investment included increased funding for local groups; recognising volunteer hours as a form of co-investment; alignment of goals; and using efficient reporting mechanisms that encourage co-investment. Respondents also argued that costs should be shared according to benefits for different parties.

**National Priorities** A repeated suggestion across several issues was to extend investment from private to public land. Respondents also argued to expand the threatened species list and expand the focus of actions to include a range of ecological considerations e.g. biodiversity, biosecurity and natural regeneration, and to provide greater flexibility to meet local priorities.

**Competition vs Collaboration** Concerns were raised about the potential impact of a competitive procurement process on collaboration, claiming it could be a barrier to developing partnerships. Other respondents argued that collaboration could be supported through including evidence of this in bids.

**Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators (RALFs)** Broad support was expressed for the role of RALFs in facilitating connections and networking, providing information, helping to build capacity and improve the governance and management of local groups.

The Australian Government will consider the results of the consultation process in the design and implementation of Regional Land Partnerships.

# 1. Regional Land Partnerships Consultation Paper and Survey

The Australian Government informed stakeholders about proposed arrangements for the National Landcare Program Phase 2 through a Regional Land Partnerships Consultation Paper and community information sessions in selected cities during 2017.

Interested groups and individuals were able to provide their views on the design and implementation of the Regional Land Partnerships through an online consultation survey which closed on 23rd October 2017.

## 1.1 Response demographics

**Table 1. Response demographics**

Stakeholder group	N	Percent
Natural Resource Management (NRM) regional organisations	57	46%
NRM local groups*	24	19%
Environment or agriculture related company	8	6%
Industry groups	8	6%
State or local government	8	6%
Direct National Landcare Program grant recipients	5	4%
Prefer not to answer	2	2%
Other^	12	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100%</b>

Notes: \*NRM local groups include landcare groups and other 'care' groups such as bushcare, coastcare, rivercare etc, 'friends of' groups, other community environment groups, grower groups, and individual land managers working in the landcare/ NRM sector.

^Other includes: Aboriginal person involved in NLP1 delivery, Committee of Management; Conservation sector; Farmer; Landcare peak body; Landcare Victoria Incorporated; Public land manager, voluntary Board or Committee member; Rangeland landholder; Regional development group; community organisation.

Responses were received from two Indigenous organisations and one Aboriginal person involved in NLP1 delivery.

## 2. Summary of Findings

### 2.1 Issue 1

The Review of the National Landcare Program identified elements of the current regional model that are important to the success of the Program:

- National coverage
- Ability to connect to community, including involving Indigenous people
- Regional-scale planning and strategic approaches
- More effective reporting

**Consultation Question 1: Are there any other key elements of the current regional model that should be retained?**

**Table 2. Main themes for Issue 1**

Theme	Number	Percent
Communications/ partnerships between Regional NRM bodies and local groups	29	26%
Long-term planning and funding	21	19%
The engagement of local community members/ groups	11	10%
Restrict administrative burden	11	10%
Indigenous involvement	8	7%

Total respondents = 110

#### 2.1.1 Communications/ partnerships between Regional NRM bodies and local groups

Survey participants commented on the benefits of the devolved regional model for planning, coordination, distribution of funds and oversight of the National Landcare Program Phase 2. Some pointed out that this was important to improved coordination between regional management units and service providers.

#### 2.1.2 Long-term planning and funding

The majority of responses on this theme supported the preservation of long-term funding cycles, lasting a minimum of 5 years. Many responses also supported the preservation of

long-term regional management plans, which have already been created in consultation with community groups.

### **2.1.3 The engagement of local community members/ groups**

Responses commented on the importance of retaining a focus on local community engagement and delivery to ensure that the National Landcare Program Phase 2 caters to a diverse range of environments. Survey participants felt it was important that they had influence in decision making processes. Some responses focused on the need to support the long-term capacity of local groups in the context of increased competition in the proposed tender process.

### **2.1.4 Restrict administrative burden**

Some survey responses expressed concern that the bureaucratic process is holding back the delivery of the National Landcare Program, on the ground – increasing costs and reducing effectiveness. These responses highlight that it is more difficult to build trust and facilitate engagement when imposing bureaucratic restrictions. Other responses expressed support for using the MERIT reporting tool.

### **2.1.5 Indigenous involvement**

Some survey responses praised the commitment to increasing Indigenous participation in NRM. These responses included comments on the importance of fully-funded Indigenous NRM Partnership positions to work with local Indigenous communities. Other survey responses expressed the view that ensuring Indigenous persons are employed in NRM units improves working processes and relationships with local community groups.

## **2.2 Issue 2**

Stakeholder feedback received through the review as well as other less formal avenues has indicated that some organisations and sectors of the Natural Resource Management community have not been effectively connected through the current Program (for example, agriculture industry groups).

**Question 2a: How can the Government ensure there are opportunities for communities and industry to engage in Regional Land Partnerships?**



**Table 3. Main themes for Issue 2, Question 2a**

Theme	Number	Percent
Changes to/ suggestions for funding	30	25%
Small grants and 20% community engagement requirement	20	17%
Ensure relationships are well-facilitated by staff	18	15%
Need for more documentation requirements and accountability on partnerships	17	14%
The existing engagement is effective	15	13%

Total respondents = 119

### 2.2.1 Changes to/ suggestions for funding

Most of the suggestions for changes to funding arrangements referred to the need for specific percentages of funding to be allocated to the engagement of community and industry groups. Other responses suggested that there need to be changes to funding, such as continuing to fund community groups that operate outside the remit of the six proposed outcomes, making administrative requirements commensurate with the scale of funding and investing in works carried out on public land.

### 2.2.2 Small grants and 20% community engagement requirement

The majority of the responses in the theme were supportive of the small grants processes and the proposed allocation of at least 20% of the combined value of NRM Projects in each Management Unit to small projects from the local Landcare community. A minority of responses in this theme raised concerns over the lack of flexibility in the specific priority areas outlined in the Consultation Paper.

### 2.2.3 Ensure relationships are well-facilitated by staff

The responses on this theme concentrated on the importance of funding and retaining skilled staff to facilitate long-term partnerships with community and industry groups. A minority of responses drew attention to the time it takes to build trust and confidence in partnerships with Indigenous community groups.

### 2.2.4 Need for more documentation requirements and accountability on partnerships and engagement

The majority of the responses on this theme identified the need for more guidelines in the tender documents about the indicators and targets that can help define what constitutes a partnership. They also suggested that there need to be requirements for more documentation from groups submitting tenders, such as expressions of interest from

partners. These responses also emphasised a need to ensure ongoing monitoring of partnership arrangements.

### 2.2.5 The existing engagement is effective

The majority of responses on this theme were supportive of the existing level of engagement between regional NRM bodies and local community and industry groups. While referring to NRM groups in specific regions, these responses nominated the shared vision between groups and the balance between strategic plans and local priorities as key factors in successful engagement.

#### Question 2b: What are the challenges in supporting communities and industry to achieve this?

**Table 4. Main themes for Issue 2, Question 2b**

Theme	Number	Percent
The inadequate amount of funding and the reliability and accessibility of funding	27	23%
Volunteers and projects have inadequate time	21	18%
The competitive nature of the tender process	18	15%
The need for skilled staff at the regional level	18	15%

Total respondents = 118

### 2.2.6 The inadequate amount of funding and the reliability and accessibility of funding

The most prominent theme in the responses concerned the limited amount of funding available for local groups and the difficulty in securing long-term funding. Some responses noted that the longer-term funding cycles of the previous National Landcare Program need to be maintained to provide stability for local projects. The responses also suggested that the current funding does not adequately cover the transaction costs and the resources for coordination and capacity building, which are necessary for engagement to occur.

### 2.2.7 Volunteers and projects have inadequate time

The responses on this theme referred to the time constraints on local groups, which are often staffed by volunteers who do not have the time to engage in consultation on project design or delivery with regional bodies. Some responses expressed support for more funding for long-term staff. A minority of responses also referred to the necessity of investing time in building relationships with Indigenous organisations.

## 2.2.8 The competitive nature of the tender process

Many responses in this theme criticised the competitive nature of the procurement process while emphasising the value of collaboration. They expressed the view that the limited amount of available funding creates an overly competitive environment. Some responses stressed that it was important to assess how tenderers engage with community and industry organisations across the Management Unit.

## 2.2.9 The need for skilled staff at the regional level

The majority of responses on this theme focused on the important role that regional staff have in facilitating partnerships with local community and industry groups. Their role is particularly important for ensuring stability and providing training in the context of the constantly changing volunteer membership of local groups.

## 2.3 Issue 3

Partnerships and collaboration across the Natural Resource Management sector will be vital to the future success of Regional Land Partnerships.

Partnerships present potential benefits beyond attracting additional resources—they provide the opportunity to use the expertise, creative thinking, resources and flexibility of business, community, government and non-government sectors to achieve important National Landcare Program outcomes.

The departments welcome feedback about how to encourage partnerships in the context of the consideration of adopting a competitive and open tender to deliver Regional Land Partnerships.

**Question 3: How can the departments support collaboration under Regional Land Partnerships?**

**Table 5. Main themes for Issue 3**

Theme	Number	Percent
Resourcing/ support for regional groups	20	18%
Include details of collaboration in the requirements of the tender	17	15%
Restrict administrative burden	15	13%
Need to balance competition with collaboration	15	13%
Allow time for assessment/consultation with partners	12	11%

Total respondents = 114

### **2.3.1 Resourcing/ support for regional groups**

The responses on this theme expressed the need for more funding and support for regional and local groups to offset the costs incurred through engaging in collaboration. Some responses suggested that support could be provided for capacity building and ensuring that there are facilitators and technical experts at the local level.

### **2.3.2 Include details of collaboration in the requirements of the tender**

The majority of survey responses on this theme argued that tenderers should be required to provide details of their collaboration. The suggestions for required documents include letters from partners detailing their involvement in the bid, evidence of how tenderers will support collaboration in their projects and a legally binding agreement that controls the relationship between collaborating parties.

### **2.3.3 Restrict administrative burden**

Many survey responses on this theme expressed the view that local groups do not have the capacity to meet the application, administration and reporting requirements in the proposed tender process. Other responses stated that greater flexibility on National Landcare Program Phase 2 outcomes would create more opportunities for partnerships.

### **2.3.4 Need to balance competition with collaboration**

There were differing concerns about competition in the tender processes among these responses. Some responses stated that competition is already a barrier to developing partnerships. Other responses argued that there need to be agreed trajectories, checks on the capacity of partners to deliver and clearly defined roles for collaborative partnerships to prevent poor returns.

### **2.3.5 Allow time for assessment/consultation with partners**

Many responses argued that there needs to be an adequate amount of time in the tender process to develop partnerships and allow for consultation between partners. Some responses explained how delays caused by changes in staff and requirements for planning to undergo several stages could extend the time necessary for the development of partnerships.

## **2.4 Issue 4**

Shared or co-investment is a way for government, businesses, agriculture industries, non-government organisations, the community and philanthropic sectors to work together to improve environmental and sustainable agriculture outcomes. Co-investment provides

opportunities to better align public and private investment, promote new ways of working, reinforce shared responsibility of natural resource management problems and solutions, and enable greater effectiveness of joint efforts.

**Question 4a: How can co-investment be increased through Regional Land Partnerships?**

There was substantial variety in the responses to this question.

**Table 6. Main themes for Issue 4, Question 4a**

Theme	Number	Percent
Support for public and private co-investment	18	17%
Increasing funding for local groups	14	13%
Co-investment of volunteer hours	13	12%
Unification of goals	11	10%
More efficient reporting mechanism	8	7%

Total respondents = 107

### 2.4.1 Support for public and private co-investment

The majority of responses on this theme supported private and public co-investment through the NRM boards. These responses emphasised that it was important that co-investment arrangements do not prioritise public benefits over benefits to the private sector and that costs should be shared according to the benefits for different parties.

### 2.4.2 Increasing funding for local groups

The responses on this theme made a strong argument that the National Landcare Program Phase 2 can best facilitate co-investment through increasing funding in the form of grants and start-up funds to local Landcare groups. They suggested that funding should be targeted directly to these local groups.

### 2.4.3 Co-investment of volunteer hours

Survey responses argued that volunteer hours should be recognised as a form of co-investment from landholders, citizen scientists and others in local groups.

### 2.4.4 Unification of goals

The responses on this theme discussed the importance of aligning priorities between stakeholders at the local level and between State and Federal Governments. They supported a sense of shared ownership on projects and of working for the same goal rather than competing with each other.

### 2.4.5 More efficient reporting mechanism

These survey responses argued that a more efficient reporting mechanism, which encourages co-investment, would cut down on the time and effort that groups have to put into compiling the bid and into subsequent reporting.

**Question 4b: Please identify constraints (if any) within the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements that may result in constraints to co-investment opportunities.**

**Table 7. Main themes for Issue 4, Question 4b**

Theme	Number	Percent
Collaboration versus competition	17	16%
Limiting RLP funding to private land	16	15%
Need for greater flexibility in tender requirements	14	13%
Time constraints	12	11%

Total respondents = 105

### 2.4.6 Collaboration versus competition

These responses raised concerns that a competitive procurement approach would lead to the failure of attempts at collaboration, to potential partners seeing each other as competitors and to problems for the effective delivery of projects.

### 2.4.7 Limiting RLP funding to private land

The majority of responses on this theme criticised the way in which the proposed investment is limited to private land. Some responses recommended opening up investment for work on threatened ecological communities to include public land could help make the existing work more effective.

### 2.4.8 Need for greater flexibility in tender requirements

Survey responses on this theme drew attention to a need for greater flexibility in the tender process to prevent the disengagement of local groups, to address local priorities and to account for differences in priorities between groups. Some responses also raised concerns over the difficulties of funding only being available mid-year or after services are delivered because some non-government organisations might not have the cash flow to support staff without immediate funding.

### 2.4.9 Time constraints

Some responses on this theme suggested that a public comment period could increase engagement with the tender process, but that the long delays that could result from this a public comment period should be avoided. Other responses also expressed concerns over the way in which the short time frames of the application process could inhibit collaboration with the community.

## 2.5 Issue 5

Under the new Regional Land Partnerships sub-program the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators (previously known as Regional Landcare Facilitators) services will continue to support rural communities in sustainable agriculture on private land.

Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators will deliver sustainable agriculture core services in each Management Unit. Services include creating partnerships between agriculture groups and other parties, community engagement on sustainable agriculture issues, supporting communities to seek new funding opportunities and support sustainable agriculture projects.

**Question 5: What types of sustainable agriculture core services do you see the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators delivering in your region?**

**Table 8. Main themes for Issue 5**

Theme	Number	Percent
Facilitate connections with other groups	35	32%
Information provider	33	31%
Support capacity building and the development of local groups	17	16%
Support governance and management of projects	13	12%
Respondents support the role	13	12%

Total respondents = 108

### **2.5.1 Facilitate connections with other groups**

These responses identified core services, such as connecting people and creating partnerships to increase productivity. The responses expressed the view that assistance with networking between community and industry groups would ensure a more integrated approach to sustainable landscape management.

### **2.5.2 Information provider**

These responses focused on the important role Facilitators have in providing information on new opportunities for local groups, giving good advice on management options, updating groups on the activities of other bodies and providing community education in NRM. Some responses also focused on the role that Facilitators have in providing training through skills workshops and ensuring access to technical advice and research.

### **2.5.3 Support capacity building and the development of local groups**

These responses suggested that Facilitators should help build capacity in local groups and help new groups to develop. Some responses also gave importance to supporting the skills and practices in Indigenous organisations.

### **2.5.4 Support governance and management of projects**

The majority of survey responses on this theme supported the role of Facilitators in improving the governance and management of local groups and, in some cases, helping to manage some funded projects.

### **2.5.5 Respondents support the role**

These survey responses supported the work that Facilitators do and argued that it should continue.

## **2.6 Issue 6**

The Australian Government aims to maintain the good governance that exists under the current regional delivery model. In addition to delivering on Regional Land Partnerships outcomes, tenderers will need to be able to demonstrate how they will deliver a range of outcomes including outreach, building partnerships and shared investment opportunities, supporting community engagement and Indigenous participation, as well as also demonstrating a capacity to deliver on broader natural resource management priorities for the Government.



The Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements provides an outline of the key requirements that would potentially apply to an open procurement process, should that approach be adopted.

The Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements provides an overview and high-level indication of the proposed contracting arrangements, the depth of experience tenderers need to demonstrate, the services the Government wishes to purchase, and the geographical scale at which the Government proposes to engage providers.

The following five questions relate to the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements which is attached to the Consultation Paper.

**Question 6a: In relation to 'Services to be performed' in Item 4 of the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements: Does the list of services provide sufficient guidance on what the Departments are seeking, whilst allowing room for innovation? Are there any other services that should be added to this list, to deliver on the Regional Land Partnerships' outcomes?**

**Table 9. Main themes for Issue 6, Question 6a**

Theme	Number	Percent
List of services needs expansion	48	48%
Sufficient guidance provided	28	28%
Support for core services	11	11%
Suggested changes to core services	10	10%
Potential for innovation	8	8%

Total respondents = 101

### 2.6.1 List of services needs expansion

The responses on this theme made a variety of suggestions for the ways in which the current list of services should be expanded, which included:

- A holistic approach beyond the focus on the specified list of threatened species
- The investment in Indigenous partnerships and the role of Indigenous organisations
- The reporting of outcomes
- Community development and community engagement
- A range of ecological considerations e.g. biodiversity, biosecurity, natural regeneration

Responses on this theme also recommended that services such as community education, community development, skills development for Indigenous organisations, research, conservation and vegetation management should be added to the list in the Overview.

## 2.6.2 Sufficient guidance provided

These responses stated that the list provides sufficient guidance on what the Departments are seeking.

## 2.6.3 Suggested changes to core services

Suggestions for changes to the specified core services included adding a specification that services should meet national priorities, expanding funding to include coastal and urban areas, identifying core services as a percentage of funding, allowing for local priorities, providing more details on participation and including community engagement.

## 2.6.4 Potential for innovation

A small proportion of respondents explicitly agreed that the list of services still allow room for innovative responses, provided that they are examples only and not a limited set of allowable activities.

**Question 6b: In relation to 'Proposed method for engaging Service Providers' in Item 1.3 of the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements: What, if any, are the positive or negative implications for providers that may result from structuring the contracting arrangements in this way? What is the best way to balance certainty for service providers with flexibility and adaptive management?**

The positive implications for providers are:

- The certainty provided by the long-term contracting of services
- The potential for collaboration and innovation
- It provides an integrated approach

The negative implications for providers are:

- There are too many requirements and it is a waste of money
- The requirement for services to be completed before payment and the 1 year funding model creates an inconsistent and risky funding environment.
- It may disrupt existing state approaches and make it difficult to address cross-regional and sub-regional concerns.
- The competitive process might discourage multi-partner, collaborative projects

The main themes regarding the best way to balance certainty with flexibility and adaptive management were:

**Table 10. Main themes for Issue 6, Question 6b Part 2**

Theme	Number	Percent
Clarity needed	20	23%
Consideration of proven track record	18	21%
Long term funding commitments	16	18%
Greater flexibility needed	13	15%
Absence of upfront payments	11	12%

Total respondents = 88

### 2.6.5 Clarity needed

These responses requested greater clarity on the information tenderers have to provide and the delivery requirements, on how the binding outputs of projects will be identified, on whether targets can be amended, on how to measure the value of relationships with landholders as part of the tender application and on the possibility of work orders being agreed from July 2018.

### 2.6.6 Consideration of proven track record

The majority of responses on this theme were in favour of ensuring that tenderers have the capacity and a track record to deliver projects. Many responses also emphasised the importance of giving consideration to tenderers that have already demonstrated their capacity through NLP 1 and not asking them to compete or submit documents on their capacity for this second round of funding.

### 2.6.7 Long term funding commitments

Many responses on this theme supported the 5 year funding model because it provides certainty and maintains capacity, but they suggested that it would be helpful if these 5 year contracts could be confirmed as early in the process as possible. Other responses criticised the single year of initial funding, emphasised the potential impact of the model on the continuity of staff from National Landcare Program Phase 1 to 2 and drew attention to the need to have annual funding rounds to incorporate new priorities.

### 2.6.8 Greater flexibility needed

These responses identified a need for greater flexibility to address local conditions, to allow projects to adapt and to incorporate more innovative approaches. Some responses stated that it was important to ensure a balance between flexibility and accountability.

## 2.6.9 Absence of upfront payments

These responses raised strong concerns over the specification that service providers would be paid on the completion of services. The responses expressed the view that this will be difficult for non-governmental organisations that might find it difficult to sustain staff and capacity without an upfront payment.

**Question 6c: In relation to 'Demonstrated expertise' in Item 2 of the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements: Are these areas of expertise sufficient and appropriate? If not, please outline any recommended changes.**

**Table 11. Main themes for Issue 6, Question 6c**

Theme	Number	Percent
The areas of expertise are sufficient and appropriate	42	47%
Suggested changes	25	28%

Total respondents = 90

## 2.6.10 The areas of expertise are sufficient and appropriate

The majority of responses supported the areas of expertise outlined in the Overview and emphasised the importance of adequately assessing this expertise with checks on referees and checks with other groups in the region.

## 2.6.11 Suggested changes

The recommended changes to Item 2 included:

- Adding requirements for tenderers to demonstrate expertise in attracting larger-scale co-investment and funding opportunities outside federal government funding
- Giving consideration to tenderers who cannot demonstrate experience in all the listed areas
- Recognising technical and scientific expertise
- Giving more importance to tenderers' experience and knowledge of their Management Unit
- Focusing on community development

The responses also raised concerns over the inability of any groups other than the regional NRMs to demonstrate this level of expertise and the time it takes to fill in forms.

**Question 6d: In relation to 'Management Units' in Item 3 of the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements is there a better way of facilitating improved efficiencies—**

**whereby providers may deliver services across two or more geographic regions (Management Units)—other than the process outlined? If so, please provide details.**

**Table 12. Main themes for Issue 6, Question 6d**

Theme	Number	Percent
The process should facilitate partnerships	16	22%
Combining Management Units provides multiple challenges	12	16%
Total respondents = 73		

### 2.6.12 The process should facilitate partnerships

Some responses on this theme expressed the view that the proposed Requirements will enable regions to develop partnerships and service providers to put in complementary bids across regions. Other responses suggested that the National Landcare Program Phase 2 needs to provide better resources for building capacity in Indigenous organisations and those in remote and regional areas and that there should be a requirement for collaborative bids across Management Units where work can be done together.

### 2.6.13 Combining Management Units provides multiple challenges

These responses highlighted the potential challenges of combining work across Management Unit, which include a lack of experience and local knowledge across regional boundaries, the existing alignment of costs to each Management Unit, the difficulties of working across large, heterogeneous geographic regions and Aboriginal nations and the need to inform groups about changes in boundaries.

**Question 6e: Are the services and proposed requirements in the Overview of Proposed Tender Requirements clearly set out? If not, please outline suggested improvements.**

**Table 13. Main themes for Issue 6, Question 6e**

Theme	Number	Percent
Tender requirements clearly set out	47	66%
Suggested improvements	21	30%
Total respondents = 71		

### 2.6.14 Tender requirements clearly set out

The majority of survey responses to this question expressed the view that the tender requirements were clearly set out.

## 2.6.15 Suggestions

Most of the suggestions for improvements requested clearer information on the details tenderers will be required to submit, the level of detail required for the MERI plan, the categories of key services and priorities and how the government proposes to structure its payment schedule for tenderers. Some responses also requested a simplification of the administrative process and templates for the application from the Department.

## 2.7 Additional comments

**Are there any other issues or comments with regard to Regional Land Partnerships that you would like to draw to the departments' attention?**

**Table 14. Main themes from Additional Comments**

Theme	Number	Percent
Concerns with the tender process	21	24%
Broader land tenure eligibility	12	13%
Expand the list of threatened species	10	11%
Flaws in the proposed program	9	10%

Total respondents = 89

### 2.7.1 Concerns with the tender process

These responses raised concerns about the inefficiency of the competitive tender process and the way in which it favours existing regional bodies, it will not necessarily lead to better governance, it does not ensure that areas that are most in need get the most funding and it imposes a time consuming application process on tenderers.

### 2.7.2 Broader land tenure eligibility

Many responses on this theme drew attention to a need to extend investment from private land to public land and to also include work in remnant bushland and in urban areas to most efficiently achieve environmental outcomes.

### **2.7.3 Expand the list of threatened species**

Respondents argued for the expansion of the threatened species list for both flora and fauna. Concerns were raised about mapping being rudimentary or inaccurate and management plans being out of date or not present. Closer cooperation between jurisdictions was requested in order to share information and provide a more coordinated response.

### **2.7.4 Flaws in the proposed program**

These responses identified a range of perceived flaws in the proposed approach, which include that proposed biodiversity outcomes are not compatible with a regional model, that there is a lack of clarity on the allocation of the sustainable agricultural elements, that changes to a working National Landcare Program are unjustified and that its complex requirements are incompatible with the goals of the original Landcare program.



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