

**PROJECT  
PLATYPUS**

UPPER WIMMERA LANDCARE



# Strategic Plan 2012-2014



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# 1. Introduction

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Project Platypus is a network of Landcare groups and other organisations primarily concerned with Landcare and environmental works in the Upper Wimmera Catchment of western Victoria.

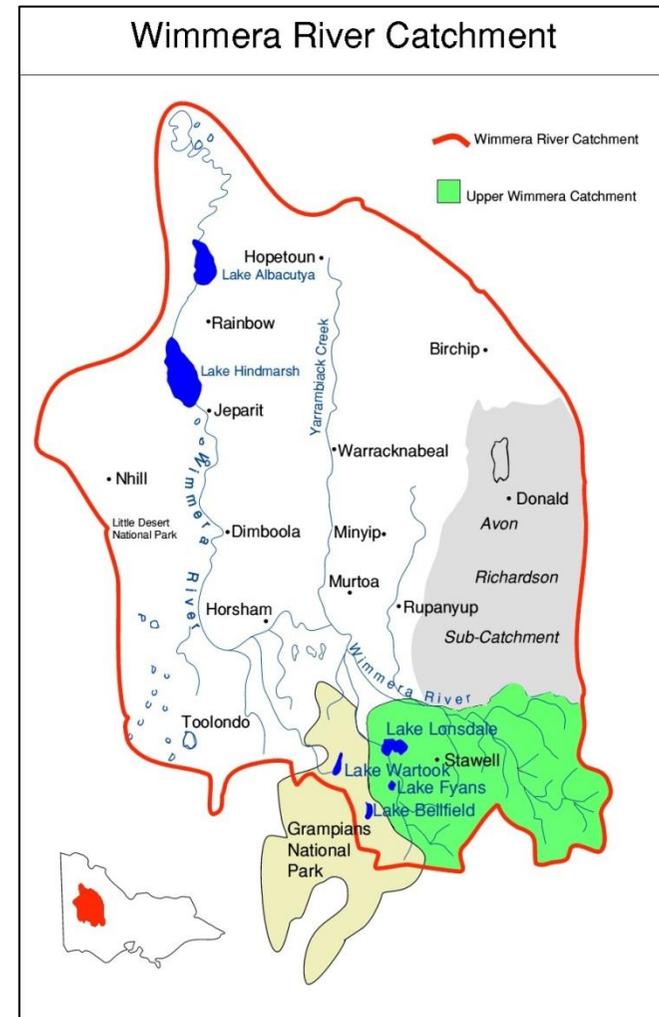
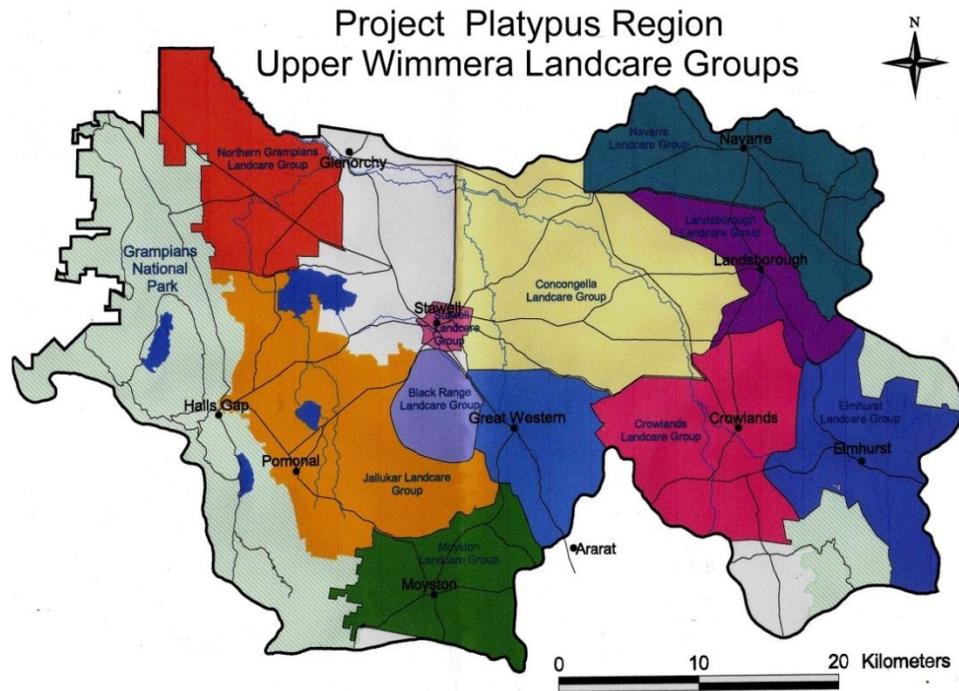
Widely supported by the local community, Project Platypus was established in 1994 when it became obvious that the huge land and water degradation problems in the area were too extensive to be managed by individual landholders and Landcare groups.

Membership of Project Platypus comprises of twelve Landcare and sustainable production groups:

- Black Range,
- Concongella,
- Crowlands,
- Elmhurst,
- Great Western,
- Jallukar
- Landsborough,
- Moyston,
- Navarre
- Northern Grampians
- Stawell
- Perennial Pasture Systems Group

Project Platypus is governed by a committee comprising representatives of the Landcare groups and is managed by a small team of staff based in Stawell.





## 2. Planning context

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### **The Upper Wimmera Catchment**

The Wimmera River in Western Victoria forms part of the Murray Darling Basin. It is Victoria's largest land locked system and terminates at Lake Hindmarsh and Lake Albacutya south of the Wyperfeld National Park. The Upper Wimmera Catchment refers to the catchment area upstream of where Mt William Creek adjoins the Wimmera River encompassing an area of 3,027km<sup>2</sup>.

The main land use in the region is made up mixed farming practises, largely consisting of sheep and dryland cropping, but also includes enterprises such as grapes, olives, forestry, vegetable production, cut flowers and other livestock such as goats, cattle, pigs and poultry. The region is also home to mining industries and boasts a large tourism industry, especially within the Grampians and Pyrenees Ranges. The population of the Upper Wimmera is estimated to be around 15,000 people and is predicted to remain relatively stable into the near future.

The Upper Wimmera has a strong indigenous cultural history and contains many significant sites. Traditional owner groups from the region include the Jarwadjali, Djab Warrung, Djadja Wurrung and the Wotjobaluk People.

The region is home to an extensive array of flora and fauna including a large number of threatened and endangered species. Since European settlement, the region has been subject to significant clearing of native vegetation, which has resulted in numerous environmental issues. These include loss of biodiversity and a degradation of water quality through over-extraction, saline discharge and soil erosion.

### **Project Platypus**

Project Platypus was founded by Upper Wimmera Catchment Landcare group members who saw the need for a network to deliver larger scale projects across the region. The chosen icon was the platypus as it was identified that much of the network's activity would focus around improving water quality, which in turn would benefit the platypus.

Since 1994, Project Platypus has achieved massive results attracting over \$4.5 million to undertake activities such as erosion control work, revegetation, protection of remnant vegetation, establishment of perennial pastures, control of pest plants and animals and raised community awareness of environmental and land management issues.

The success of Project Platypus can be attributed to its community support, its grass-roots approach to problem solving and its ability to relate to land managers and investors. Project Platypus has been adaptable and flexible which has enabled it to maintain its strength and vitality over the years. In



2011, Project Platypus's capacity to support Landcare groups and the community to achieve on ground results is better than ever. The organisation has great relationships with its stakeholders including Landholders, Landcare Groups, agencies, investors and Government at all levels. It has a committed team of Management Committee made up of representatives of most of its members groups who have an excellent understanding of natural resource management and governance roles. Project Platypus have an excellent track record with highly skilled and experienced staff who have helped continue the high reputation that Project Platypus has within the region and beyond.

### **Looking Ahead**

Challenges and opportunities facing farmers and communities of the Upper Wimmera catchment include:

- Climate change impacts will need to be factored in to the design of on-ground projects. It is also expected that carbon farming and carbon capture in soils will become an opportunity for landholders.
- Decreasing involvement of landholders
- Decreasing funds available for specifically for Landcare
- Increasing awareness of Natural Resource Management Issues
- A shift from rural living to regional centre living
- Increased funding available for Climate Change
- Changing funding model, i.e. tenders, competitive tenders
- The changing financial and political environment (including changing policy) may bring impacts locally in the near future. The impacts may result in reducing the availability of government and corporate support to Landcare.
- Unclear roles of agencies involved in Natural Resource Management
- The series of poor seasons and the impact on the profitability of farm businesses and capacity of landholders to invest in environmental works.
- The aging and changing demographics of the catchment community and the evolving nature of Landcare groups, (e.g. declining memberships, more members that are new to land management) presents a challenge to Project Platypus but also highlights the opportunity of working more with schools, urban dwellers, absentee landholders and the landholders of the future.
- The effects of drought and other climate induced events such as floods and fires can manifest as a worsening of pre-existing problems, highlighting the large number of long-term pressures rural communities are facing. The recognition of the increasingly important role that Landcare plays in contributing to the social well-being of rural communities
- The emergence of market-based incentives as cost-effective mechanisms used by government and catchment management authorities for achieving catchment health outcomes could potentially diminish the value of Landcare groups and networks to landholders.

While improving the condition of the catchment's natural resources continues to be the primary purpose of Project Platypus, it is evident that the benefits from those activities are not restricted to the environmental health of the catchment but extend to the social well-being of people involved.



### 3. Vision

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Over the next three years, Project Platypus will continue to be:

- A strong and innovative community-driven organisation providing leadership on improving the environmental health of the Upper Wimmera Catchment and contributing to the prosperity and social well-being of the community.

### 4. Purpose

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Our mission:

- To support and empower the community to improve the environmental health of the Upper Wimmera Catchment while maintaining and improving productivity.

This mission will be underpinned by understanding and responding to the pressures on the rural community and the potential implications of climate change. This will, in turn, support rural communities to be more cohesive, capable and economically productive.

### 5. Guiding Principles

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Project Platypus will, in all of its activities, endeavour to apply the principles of:

- Meeting the needs of landholders and investors;
- Applying best practice to on-ground works whilst encouraging creativity and innovation;
- Working in partnership with Landcare groups and catchment management stakeholders;
- Integrating conservation practices with productive land management; and
- Honesty, fairness, integrity and environmental sustainability in all business operations.



## 6. Objectives & Measurables

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These objectives will be used to guide the activities of Project Platypus over the next three years:

### 1. Community Participation

Objective	Measureable
To support the Upper Wimmera Landcare communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ All Landcare Groups surviving and active</li> <li>~ Increased membership in groups</li> <li>~ Community attendance at Landcare Group meetings, forums and field days</li> <li>~ Project Platypus staff member in attendance at every Landcare Group meeting</li> <li>~ Number of newsletter recipients</li> </ul>
Involve the wider community in the activities of Project Platypus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Increase number and demographic range of participants involved in activities</li> </ul>

### 2. Projects

Objective	Measureable
To identify, plan and implement projects efficiently and effectively to optimise Landcare outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Area of land rehabilitated or protected from threats</li> <li>~ Quantity of funds expended on works</li> <li>~ Efficiency of on-ground achievements per \$ spent</li> </ul>



### 3. Partnerships

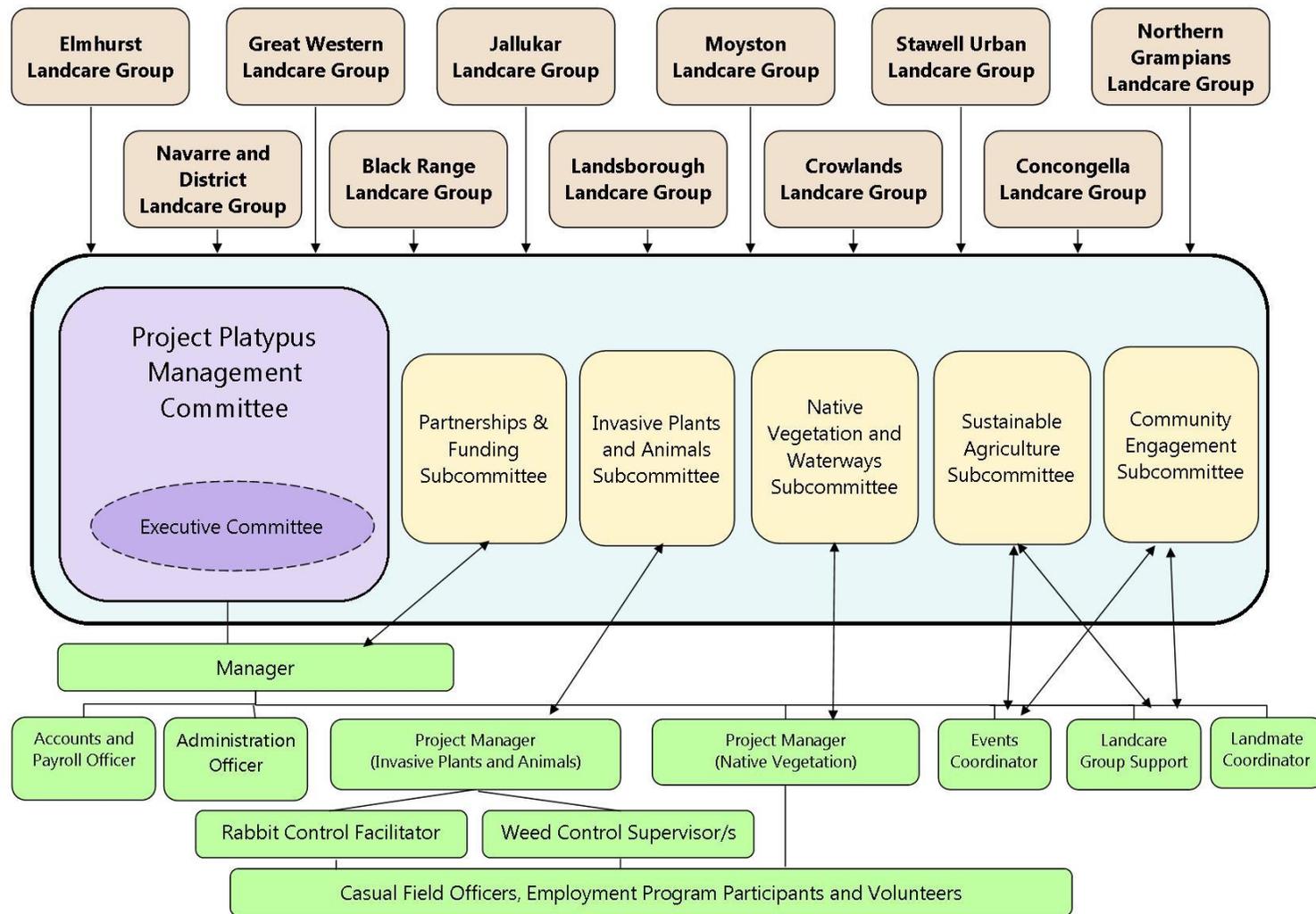
Objective	Measureable
To maintain productive and complementary partnerships with stakeholder organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Feedback from sponsors</li> <li>~ Amount of funding or in-kind support received from partners / sponsors</li> </ul>
To demonstrate the enduring value of investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Documented visible improvement of sites</li> </ul>

### 4. Organisational Performance

Objective	Measureable
To maintain an effectively functioning management committee, sub-committees and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Attendance at management committee meetings</li> <li>~ Exit interviews for outgoing members</li> <li>~ Total training days</li> <li>~ Job satisfaction</li> </ul>
To maintain financial security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Improve financial position</li> <li>~ Maintain sufficient cashflow</li> <li>~ Diversity of income</li> </ul>
To capture organisational learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ All current sites mapped</li> <li>~ Record of works undertaken</li> <li>~ Corporate knowledge is maintained</li> </ul>



## 7. Organisational Structure



As at December 2011.

