

Thursday 20 May 2010

RESTORING FUNDS FOR LANDCARE SUPPORT

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition will restore funding to support Landcare co-ordinators across Victoria and help local community volunteers protect and restore Victoria's environment.

Kevin Rudd's recent Budget cut funds for Landcare by \$10.9 million, but a Liberal and Nationals Government will increase Landcare funding by \$12 million to help fund 60 Landcare co-ordinators across Victoria.

John Brumby has done nothing while Labor has slashed the number of Landcare support staff in Victoria from more than 140 in 2007-2008 to just 35 at the end of last year.

Our volunteers deserve better support to protect and restore our environment, so we will provide \$12 million over the next four years to fund up to 75 per cent of the salaries of 60 Landcare Coordinators across Victoria's 10 Catchment Management Authority areas.

These areas include Corangamite, Wimmera, West Gippsland, Port Phillip and Westernport, North-East, Mallee, North-Central, Goulburn Broken, Glenelg Hopkins and East Gippsland.

Labor has undermined small volunteer-based Landcare networks that do such great work on vital local environmental programs.

The co-ordinators who lost their jobs because of Labor's funding cuts provided expertise in project funding applications, advice on project development and support for groups in management, communication and administration.

Without Landcare co-ordinators, volunteers are battling under the burden of developing, preparing and submitting project applications and then managing the projects once they are underway.

Landcare groups that relied heavily on these co-ordinators have struggled to survive and are finding it hard to secure funding for projects that help these groups protect and restore our environment.

In the past Victoria has led the way in tackling land protection and management projects through a strong partnership between community groups and government.

Policy

John Brumby has abandoned volunteers and local councils are desperately searching their own budgets to employ Landcare co-ordinators, but the biggest loser from these cuts is the environment.

Under a Victorian Liberal Nationals Government, local communities will benefit from getting Landcare co-ordinators back on the ground to support volunteers and secure projects to protect and restore our environment.