

Hinweis

Der Artikel „German and Australian Landcare Compared“ ist in der Zeitschrift **Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management** (herausgegeben vom Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment, Australia) in der Winterausgabe 2007 (Heft 40) erschienen.

Die Zeitschrift ist im Internet abrufbar unter www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine.

Die Autorin, Katrin Prager, untersuchte während ihres Forschungsaufenthaltes am Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research an der Universität Tasmanien australische Landcare Gruppen und verglich diese mit den deutschen Landschaftspflegeverbänden. Ein ausführlicherer Artikel zu diesem Thema wird 2008 in der Zeitschrift **Society and Natural Resources** erscheinen.

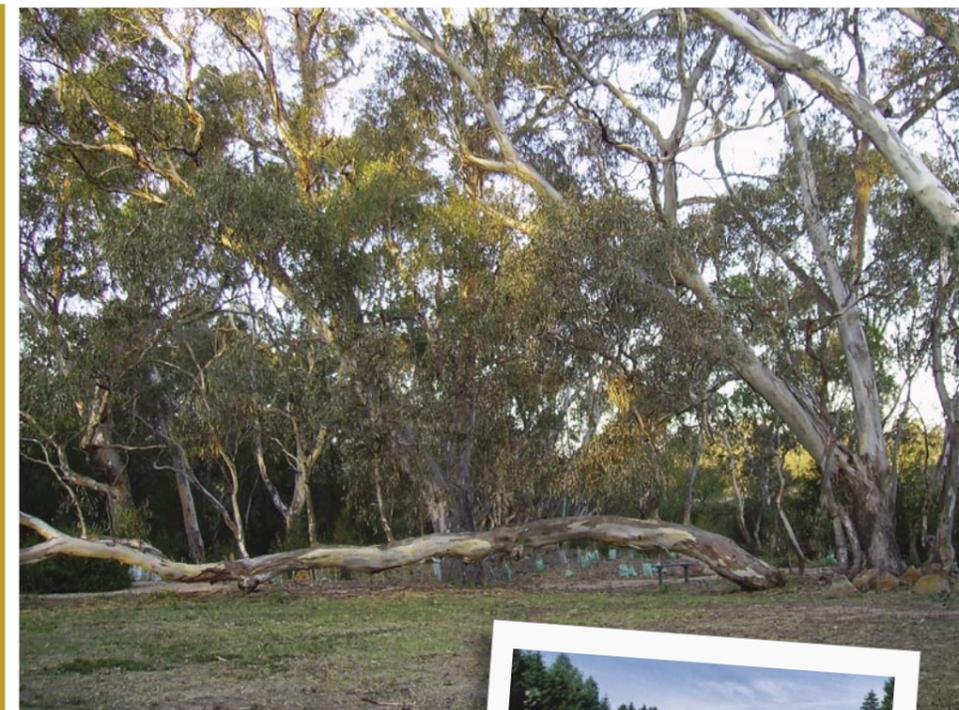


Feeding sheep morning and night on a farm near the Warby Ranges: In the drought many farmers face financial and time constraints which may hinder their commitment to Landcare.

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The underlying concept of Landcare in Germany is the equal representation of farmers, conservationists and local politicians in each group as well as a co-operative rather than a confrontational approach to problem-solving.

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The Tallarook Arboretum: a gem in a small town. Planned and established by the Dabyminga Catchment Cooperative since 2003 this was once inaccessible public land covered by blackberries and other weeds.

German and Australian Landcare compared

By Katrin Prager

I am a German researcher visiting the University of Tasmania for six months to compare German Landcare with Australian Landcare. After talking to and interviewing people involved in Landcare and natural resource management in Tasmania, I travelled around Victoria to gain an impression of Landcare in another State.

Although Australians think Landcare is an Australian invention, the German *Landschaftspflegeverbände* (landscape maintenance groups) are the equivalent of Australian Landcare groups. These groups began in 1986, the same time as Landcare in Victoria. While there are over 4000 Landcare groups

in Australia, there are only 140 Landcare groups in Germany, partly because of its smaller size (in area if not in terms of population).

There is much greater diversity of Landcare groups in Australia than in Germany. Australian Landcare started out on farms, encouraging farmers to adopt more sustainable ways of farming. It was supported by a single government program, the National Landcare Program (NLP). This has broadened considerably over the last decade, partly due to government programs subsequently introduced in 1997 under NHT such as Rivercare or Bushcare.

In Germany, there is no federal Landcare funding program such as the National Landcare Program. German groups generally have budgets with mixed sources ranging from European programs to state and local government funding.

The overall aim of Landcare in the two countries is similar. In Germany, the primary purpose is landscape preservation with sustainable regional development. In Australia, the aim is phrased as sustainable land use and management. These aims result in various actions on the ground. In Australia, groups focus on issues such as weed and pest control, revegetation, linking remnant bush for biodiversity outcomes, erosion control or improvement of waterways.

In Germany, groups are involved in management of special habitats such as mountain meadows, establishment of wetlands,

swamps and hedgerows, preservation of traditional fruit and nut orchards, establishing and marketing regional products, soil conservation, or management of areas protected under European Union legislation. Landcare groups in both countries contribute to education and awareness raising regarding conservation issues.

Short-term funding frustration

Despite the provision of government grants for Landcare activities, there are concerns regarding the accessibility of funds and the lack of continuity in funding arrangements. The limited duration of programs and funding rounds severely restricts mid to long-term planning. This remains an issue both in Germany and Australia although Australian groups can potentially tap into corporate sector funding attracted by Landcare Australia Limited.

While most interviewees in Victoria and Tasmania agreed that there are various funding opportunities out there, the challenge is to write applications in a way that they are likely to be successful. Groups of volunteers find it hard to keep up with the changing buzz words and the paperwork. A co-ordinator is – with few exceptions – essential for group action planning and for attracting funding for specific projects.

The same is true for groups in Germany. On average, a German Landcare group has a co-ordinator who is responsible for project management and a part-time secretary. Some groups are able to employ additional technical

support staff; for example if they deliver a project of national significance. Regarding facilitators, Germany would sit between Tasmania where few Landcare co-ordinators work with individual groups and Victoria where both State and Federal Governments support facilitation and co-ordination.

Victorian networks lead the way

The Victorian groups are well looked after with the state funding a set of Regional Landcare Co-ordinators as well as the regions making the most of the NLP funding for support staff at regional and local level. What at first sight appears as an advantage, however, does involve repeated discussions about respective roles and competencies to avoid facilitators tripping over each other.

Another observation is that the idea of networks is most advanced in Victoria. There are no strong Landcare networks in Tasmania. However, the Tasmanian Landcare Association as the peak body for all care and friends of groups partially fulfils the role of a network.

In Germany, the regional co-ordinators network between the groups and stakeholders within a state, but there are no regional Landcare networks as such. However, Landcare groups are often active within networks such as the Local Action Groups that are formed to deliver EU funding schemes for sustainable rural development. At national level, the German Landcare Association ensures that Landcare issues are represented in decisions about

federal funding programs as well as in European legislation regarding rural development and agricultural policy.

The introduction of the regional approach to natural resource management, in particular the NRM bodies or CMAs, has undoubtedly had a major impact on Landcare in Australia. Reactions range from groups ignoring these bodies or keeping them at arm's length, to forming networks to maintain community group influence or partnering with the regional body.

German states already had a three-tiered system in place when the first Landcare groups formed. The challenge for these groups was to be accepted as an influential partner. The underlying concept of Landcare in Germany is the equal representation of farmers, conservationists and local politicians in each group as well as a co-operative rather than a confrontational approach to problem-solving. While government agencies initially did not believe in the value of this approach, it is increasingly recognised as the only way to implement regional landscape plans and conservation schemes.

The German Landcare Association has always promoted the German movement as a powerful device for delivering regional and local plans. Although there is a top down element in that the agencies' plans guide the actions of the local groups, the groups choose ways of implementation which suit them best and explore alternative ways to achieve the desired outcomes.



A typical mountain meadow, in Sachsen-Anhalt in Germany. Without regular slashing it would turn into forest, resulting in decreased biodiversity as the habitat changes.



A field walk in a traditional apricot orchard near Lake Suesser See in the Harz mountains in Germany with sheep grazing to keep the grass down under the trees.



The regional Landcare group makes an effort to protect this threatened hamster that lives in the Hakei area in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

Although the specific context is different for Landcare in Germany and Australia, it becomes apparent that the movement has the potential to ensure that community engagement becomes an accepted and integral part of regional policymaking in both countries.

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