

WORKING FOR NATURE

2021 COMMUNITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT



natural resource
management program



Figure 1: Aggregate contribution of the 216 volunteers participating in assessment



216 volunteers
contribute per annum
a total of...



... **71,424** hours of
on-ground work



... **42,468** hours of
support activities



in total **113,892 hours**
which represents an
estimated value of...



\$5,467,954.92
(calculated at \$48.01/hr)

Acknowledgement of Country

Perth NRM acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation as the traditional custodians of this country and its waters and that Perth NRM and its partners work on Noongar country. Perth NRM pays respects to Noongar elders past and present, and acknowledges their wisdom and advice in Perth NRM practice and cultural knowledge activities.

Aboriginal and Torrest Strait Island Peoples should be aware that this report might contain images or names of people who have passed away.

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to write this foreword and pay tribute to the hundreds of people who responded to this survey and who reflect the thousands of environmental volunteers who care for our precious spaces.

Through this report we hear the voices of environmental volunteers and the stories of their Groups. There are many familiar themes from past surveys and our lived experiences as environmental volunteers.

Once again, attachment to a local natural area was the main factor for people to engage in environmental work, along with their desire to protect nature. And protect and care for nature they do. Spending time on ground also provides a connection to land not only leading to ecological outcomes but also to emotional and mental wellbeing.

Respondents referred to their shared passion for the environment that keeps the group going. Volunteers value the social interaction and the connection to community that the group provides as well as their success in making a difference to their patch.

At a time of unprecedented change, it is important to recognise that it can be those contributions and moments of collective action that can make all the difference.

But volunteers are worried about succession planning and the difficulties they find in attracting new and younger volunteers. This has emerged as a key area where groups are looking for assistance.

The Assessment highlighted the importance of collaboration and so the Environmental Umbrella Group Collective, which continues to meet regularly, was formed. We congratulate Perth NRM, SERCUL, WALN, WALGA, EBICG, Urban Nature - DBCA, AGLG and CMCN who along with the Urban Bushland Council have agreed to work together on matters of common interest.

And finally, from the report:

“The study has shown that the future of community-driven Environmental Conservation and Restoration in the Perth region continues to be determined, firstly by how community groups and volunteers are supported by the land manager - LGAs and State Government and by Umbrella Groups. Secondly, the quality and ambition of stakeholders to partner and cooperate to enhance collective impact, and lastly but most importantly, it continues to thrive through the goodwill, the determination and the passion of Perth’s environmental volunteers.”

I commend this report to you.

Christine Richardson

Chairperson, Urban Bushland Council WA Inc.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Perth NRM Community Capacity in Natural Resource Management (NRM) survey was conducted in August 2021.

In the survey for Individual Volunteers 200 full responses were received from a total of 65 distinct groups or organisations. A total of 52 groups participated fully in the survey designed for Group Representatives, in which 47 additional groups were identified. The data of this report is therefore informed by contributions of a total of 112 groups or organisations. Interest in the survey has increased, with 44 more groups represented than in the survey undertaken in 2017 (68 groups).

Community Capacity Assessment 2021 is compared with data from previous surveys. Aging volunteers and effective succession planning remains two of the main concerns of volunteering groups, supporting organisations and Local Government Authorities (LGAs).

Environmental groups again reported a high level of self-reliance. These included the provision of assets such as tools for on-ground work, storage space for tools and equipment, internet, and office equipment.

Once again, the number of volunteered hours is significant. In this survey, 216 volunteers reported having worked 71,424 hours on-ground and 42,468 hours in support activities. When monetising those hours, it reflects \$5,467,954 per year (Ref.: Volunteer benefits calculator - Volunteering WA). The most on-ground work was done in revegetation activities and weed control, followed by the rehabilitation of injured wildlife and rubbish removal.

This total in-kind donation from environmental volunteers however does not include and reflect the overall and monetary value of the restored, improved and protected environmental areas and their services. These services include but are not limited to:

- the improvement of urban and semi-urban air quality;
- the filtering of water and the provision of clean water;
- the supply of shelter and shade for humans, animals, and crops;
- the increase of trees and vegetation to reduce heat islands;
- the pollination of crops by insects and birds, and;
- the provision of habitat that helps protect pastures and crop from pest attacks.

Further mental health benefits of urban nature are also not reflected in the figure of \$5,467,954 contributed by the 216 environmental volunteers that participated in this survey.

Review of data from consecutive years show the number of groups with incorporated status is decreasing. A number of reasons have been supplied for this, but the primary considerations appear to be closely related.

1. Applying for and maintaining a group's incorporated status requires a considerable amount of time and effort.
2. Groups have reported better access to umbrella groups or supporting organisations able to sponsor their activities.

This combination of factors allows groups to focus on on-ground work rather than administrative tasks.

Continuing interactions between LGAs and groups vary in scope and intensity, but the three primary forms of support reported by groups were regular meetings (65.4%), undertaking on-ground work together (61.5%) and providing funds for the groups to undertake their environmental activities. However, when reviewing the data of joined on-ground work, where LGAs work alongside community groups, it shows that this has decreased significantly, by 25.6% since 2017 (87.1%).

Furthermore, as in previous years, many groups stated that they do not receive any guidance with Aboriginal culture and no support to learn about Aboriginal culture.

Background

This project is a continuation of previously undertaken Community Capacity Assessments in Natural Resource Management (NRM) by Perth NRM. Those assessments aimed to identify skill and resource gaps and areas where support was most needed and outline the contribution of community groups to environmental outcomes.

Assessments undertaken by online surveys in 2014, 2015, 2016 and in 2017 provided great insights into the conditions and limits that NRM groups and volunteers are facing, while demonstrating the huge impact and value of environmental community groups.

The findings of previous assessments provided the basis for the funding, design, and delivery of Perth NRM capacity building workshops in previous years. Through this Perth NRM was able to ensure that support was provided where most needed.

The Community Capacity Assessment 2021 (CCA2021) expanded on the survey model of previous assessments, involving direct community consultation elements such as participatory workshops and stakeholder interviews.

Two co-design workshops took place prior to the development of the 2021 online survey to ensure the concerns and thoughts of NRM volunteers, representatives and stakeholders were included from the beginning to enable a thorough picture of the current circumstances and challenges of community-led NRM.

Project Aims

The project aims to provide a holistic understanding of community groups engaging in NRM by supplementing the traditional quantitative data by gathering data with qualitative information.

The CCA2021 seeks to make the voices of environmental volunteers heard and tell their groups' stories.

Such an assessment is capable of demonstrating the value and contribution of environmental community volunteers and generate findings that will be of direct benefit to them and their partners such as NGOs, land managers and LGAs.

Through a broad consultation of various NRM stakeholders, issues of governance, communication and partnerships can be outlined and defined. Areas of strength illustrated through individual case studies seek to highlight alternatives and efficient solutions.

Furthermore, the participatory approach of the CCA2021 aims to provide an opportunity to collectively establish solutions, mechanisms, or strategies that could guide best practice and resilience for the future of NRM in the Perth Region.

Survey Methodologies

The first Community Capacity Assessment in NRM was conducted in 2013. Based on published research about the engagement of the community in the management of natural resources, the capitals' framework was established.

Key components of human, social, financial, and organisational capitals within environmental volunteering groups were identified.

Based on the framework and key components, a survey was developed with the aim to enable environmental volunteers to self-assess their capacity and contribution to natural resource management.

In 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, the surveys were conducted by Perth NRM using Survey Monkey to report trends and changes in how environmental volunteers are performing across the capitals' framework.

Evaluations of previous surveys helped to improve the layout of CCA2021. To make the study more user friendly and further enhance the accuracy of details, it was divided into two parts.

The first survey was directed to individual environmental volunteers to gather understanding about their motivations, the work and areas where they contribute most of their time.

The second survey was designed for nominated group volunteers to collect precise information about group governance, partnerships, support needs, areas of strength and achievements and administrative data such as insurance, grants and finance, and if and why groups chose to be incorporated or not.

Questions 1-5 were identical in each survey, and are presented with the results in Part A.

The surveys were undertaken with the use of Survey Monkey.

Individual environmental volunteers were invited to participate in the survey from 30 July until 21 September 2021.

The Survey for Group Representatives was open from 13 August until 27 September 2021.

Survey for Individual Volunteers

- Section 1 – Background Information
- Section 2 – About You
- Section 3 – Your Group's NRM Activities

Survey for Group Representatives

- Section 1 – Background Information
- Section 2 - Group Capacity and Resources
- Section 3 – Partnerships

PART A - SURVEY FOR INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS 2021

Q1 Participating Groups

Over 200 individuals from 65 groups provided information about their age, motivation, groups and volunteering hours. (Table 1)

Some of the Groups have adopted the traditional Nyoongar name of the land they are working on. Those include for instance, Friends of Gabbiljee and the Friends of Jirdarup Bushland.

Q2 Position in Group

Nearly 42% of survey respondents reported fulfilling a formal role in their group, e.g., committee member, president, coordinator, treasurer, secretary, or paid staff. This reflects the high proportion of people responding in the 'Group Representative' survey, where 93.7% of participants identified as having a formal role or paid employment.



Marketing material for stakeholder engagement in Community Capacity Assessment co-design (Perth NRM)

- Armadale Settlers Common Working Group
- Baigup Wetland Interest Group
- Baldivis Children's Forest
- Blackadder Woodbridge Catchment Group
- Bullsbrook Community Garden
- Bungendore Park Environmental Group
- Chittering Wildlife Carers Inc.
- City of South Perth
- Cockburn Wetlands Centre
- Cottesloe Coastcare Association
- Friends of Allen Park Bushland Group
- Friends of Bold Park Bushland
- Friends of Booragoon & Blue Gum Lakes
- Friends of Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary
- Friends of Eveline Reserve
- Friends of Forrestdale Inc
- Friends of Hepburn & Pinnaroo Bushland Group
- Friends of Hollis Park
- Friends of Inglewood Triangle
- Friends of Ken Hurst Park
- Friends of Kings Park
- Friends of Lake Gwelup
- Friends of Lloyd Hughes Park
- Friends of Mary Carroll Wetland
- Friends of North Lake
- Iluka Coastcare (Friends of North Ocean Reef / Iluka Foreshore)
- Friends of Point Peron
- Friends of Queens Park Bushland
- Friends of Richard Lewis Park
- Friends of Sorrento Beach & Marmion Foreshore
- Friends of Star Swamp Bushland (Inc)
- Friends of Susannah Lakes
- Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise
- Friends of the Woodlupine Brook, Magnolia Way Reserve and Juniper Way Reserve
- Friends of Toornaart Creek (Gooseberry Hill)
- Friends of Wireless Hill
- Friends of Woodbridge Bushlands
- Friends of Yellagonga Regional Park
- Harvest Lakes Residents Assoc. Environmental Sub-Committee
- Helena River Catchment Group
- Herdsman Bird Banding
- Keep Australia Beautiful
- Kings Park Nursery - Grower Friends
- Lower Helena Association
- Mandurah Wildlife Rescue
- Murdoch Roots and Shoots
- Native Animal Rescue
- Parks and Wildlife - Environmental Volunteering (DBCA)
- Peel Marsupial Care
- Perth NRM
- Quinns Rocks Environmental Group Inc
- Reg Seal Regeneration Group
- River Guardians (DBCA)
- Sorrento Foreshore Forum
- South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare
- Susannah Brook Catchment Group Inc
- Urban Bushland Council WA
- Verge Gardens Group
- WA Herbarium
- Wildcare Helpline
- Wildflower Society WA
- Wildflower Society York Branch
- Woodman Point Dog Walkers
- Woodvale Waters Friends of Beenyup Channel
- Yanchep Coastcare

Table 1: List of groups represented in the Survey for Individual Volunteers CCA2021

Q3 Additionally Identified Groups

Several survey participants reported volunteering for more than one group in 2021. In this question an additional 70 groups or organisations were identified. This elevates the number of groups or organisations supported by the individual volunteers that responding to this survey to a total of 135.



Volunteers weeding in Kings Park Bushland

Q4 Local Government Area

Participants reported being active across 30 LGAs in the Perth Region. Environmental engagement was also reported from at least one group in the regional localities Shire of Beverley, Shire of Northam, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Shire of Toodyay, Shire of Victoria Plains, Shire of Wandering and the Shire of York.

City of Melville	35	City of Fremantle	10
City of Swan	26	City of Mandurah	10
City of Cockburn	25	Shire of Gingin	8
Shire of Kalamunda	25	City of Subiaco	8
Town of Claremont	21	Town of Cambridge	7
City of Joondalup	19	City of Nedlands	7
City of Perth	19	Town of Victoria Park	7
City of Armadale	17	City of Rockingham	6
City of Gosnells	17	City of Belmont	5
City of Canning	15	Town of Mosman Park	5
Shire of Mundaring	14	Town of Bassendean	4
City of Stirling	14	Shire of Chittering	4
City of South Perth	11	Town of East Fremantle	4
City of Bayswater	10	City of Kwinana	4
Town of Cottesloe	10	Shire of Peppermint Grove	4

Table 2: Local Government Authorities (LGA) where participating volunteers reported the main group they are associated with is located. (n=232).

- 12 Mile Spring Friends group
- Adopt a Spot
- Animal Aid Abroad
- Armadale Environment Centre
- Australian Local Government Reform Alliance (WALGRA)
- Australian Native Plants Society Australia
- Bibbulmun Track Foundation
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Chittering Landcare
- City of Gosnells
- City of Stirling
- Coastal Cleanup Crew
- Cottesloe Surf Life Saving Club Inc,
- Dolphin Watch (DBCA)
- Electric Vehicle Association
- Ellen Brockman Integrated Catchment Group (EBICG)
- Fellowship of Australian Writers WA
- Fire and Biodiversity Western Australia (FaBWA)
- Fremantle Environmental Collective
- Friends of Bull Creek
- Friends of Bullsbrook Bridle Trail
- Friends of Bullsbrook Recycling Centre
- Friends of Clontarf Hill
- Friends of Craigie Bushland Inc.
- Friends of Duncraig Library Bushland
- Friends of Ellis Brook Valley
- Friends of Flooded Gum
- Friends of Jorgensen Park
- Friends of Ken Hurst Park
- Friends of Landsdale Conservation Park
- Friends of Ledger Rd Reserve
- Friends of Malgomongup (Bardon Park)
- Friends of Marionvale Creek
- Friends of Porteous Park
- Friends of Samson Park
- Friends of Southbank
- Friends of the Akwesasne Freedom School (FOAFS)
- Friends of Voyager Park Wanneroo
- Growing Friends of Kings Park
- Guilderton Community Association
- Jane Brook Catchment Group
- Joondalup Community Coast Care Forum
- Kids Nature Club Perth
- Legacy WA
- Lockridge Community Garden
- Mad Tatters Morris, Guildford (Traditional English Dance Group)
- Melville Men's Shed
- Monkey Mia Dolphin Feeding
- Peel Preservation Group
- River Conservation Society
- Rottnest Nursery
- SAFE Perth Rescue
- Save Beeliar Wetlands
- Sea Shepherd Australia
- Sustainable Energy Now
- Tangaroa Blue
- Tending the Tracks Alliance
- Trillion Trees
- Turtle Oblonga Rescue & Rehabilitation Network
- WA Birds of Prey Centre
- WA Gould League
- WA Native Orchid Study and Conservation Group
- WA Naturalists' Club
- Walyalup Reconciliation Group
- Waterbird Conservation Group
- Western Australian Seabird Rescue
- Wetlands Conservation Society
- Woodlupine Brook Friends Group Forrestfield
- York River Conservation Society
- Zig Zag Inc. Kalamunda (Community Arts)

Table 3: List of additional groups supported by volunteers participating in CCA2021

Q5 Work undertaken in National and Regional Parks

“If your group/s works with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), please identify which park or reserve you work in? (You can select more than one answer).”

A total of 107 people responded to this question, declaring that they are undertaking work in parks and reserves that are managed by the Department of Biodiversity and Attractions (DBCA).

Many respondents indicated ‘Other’ (57.9%). Those responses included DBCA managed parks and reserves, natural areas managed by LGAs or natural areas that are geographically located outside the Perth region.

The DBCA parks and reserves mentioned outside of the Perth region were Bald Island Nature Reserve (Albany), Waychinicup Nature Reserve (Albany), Jurien Bay Marine Park (Shire of Dandaragan) and D’Entrecasteaux National Park (Albany).

The Western Australia Herbarium, Community Verge Gardens, and the Wildcare Helpline Volunteer, which DBCA also manages, were named.

Natural areas that are managed by both the LGA and DBCA comprised Canning River Foreshore, Swan River and Swan Regional Riverside Park, Bannister Creek Catchment and Roe 8 Zone.

However, several participants (18) named natural areas managed by their City and LGA, not by DBCA, and have already been identified in table one and two.

Canning River Regional Park	12
Beeliar Regional Park	10
Swan Estuary Marine Park	10
Kalamunda National Park	9
Yellagonga Regional Park	8
Darling Range Regional Park	7
John Forrest National Park	5
Yanchep National Park	6
Jandakot Regional Park	4
Herdsman Lake Regional Park	3
Rockingham Lakes Regional Park	3
Woodman Point Regional Park	3
Marmion Marine Park	2
Shoalwater Islands Marine Park	1

Table 4a: List of DBCA managed parks and reserves where participating volunteers undertook activities. (n=107)

Ellen Brook and Twin Swamps Nature Reserves	3
Kings Park	3
Banyowla Regional Park	2
Bold Park	2
Lake McLarty	1
Beelu National Park Mundaring	1
Cape Peron	1
Korung National Park	1
Mundaring State Forest	1
Neerabup National Park	1
North Lake	1
Perth Zoo	1
Samphire Cove Nature Reserve	1

Table 4b: Other DBCA parks mentioned by survey participants

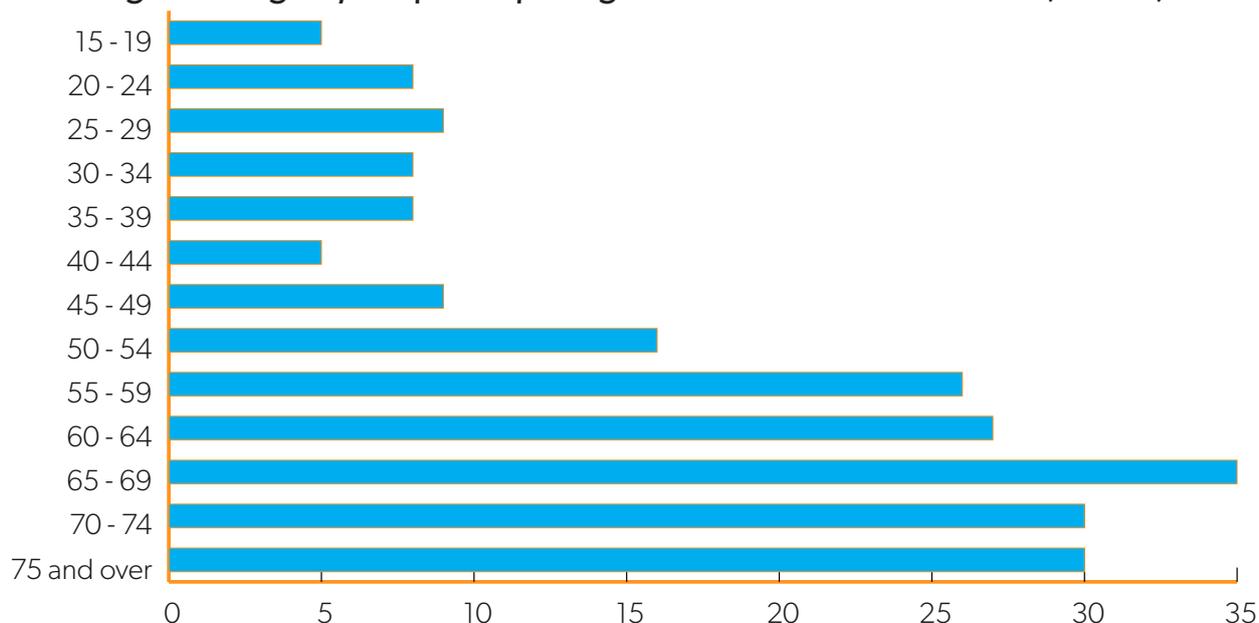


*Weeding with Friends of Paganoni Swamp
photo: G Paczkowska*

Q6 Age

This is the first year in which volunteers aged from 15-19 years participated in the Community Capacity Survey. Of the five respondents in this age group, three are volunteering for WA Wildlife and two for the Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. However, most volunteers are over 55 years old (68.5%) and more respondents (13.9% in 2021 compared to 6.8% in 2017) reported to be over 75 years old.

Figure 2: Age of the participating environmental volunteers. (n=216)



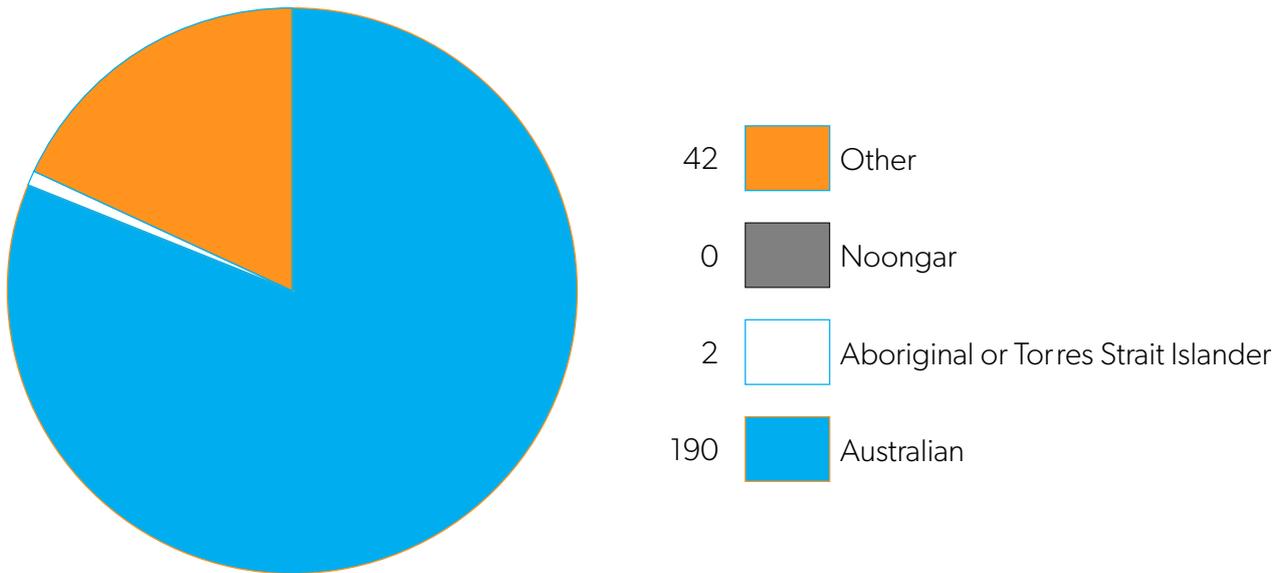
Q7 Cultural Background

During the survey co-design workshop, there was a collective agreement about the need to reach the broader community and for more inclusiveness, not only intergenerational but also to reach more people from varying cultural backgrounds as well as from different interest groups. A review of previous reports and literature identified a lack of information about the cultural background of volunteers engaging in environmental conservation. To cover this gap and to create a baseline for future review, a question about cultural background was first adopted in CCA2021.

Participants were asked to select their cultural background and were informed that multiple selections were possible. The survey offered a tick box for Australian, Noongar, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or Other, with an option to provide information and list their cultural background as desired.

While no participant identified as Noongar, two volunteers identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Almost 88.0% of the respondents stated to be Australian and 19.4% selected 'other' as their cultural background.

Figure 3: Cultural background of the participating environmental volunteers. (n=216)



Within the 19.4% of respondents that selected another cultural background, most identified as English. A few people stated to have a cultural background from Germany, New Zealand and America, followed by many other individual responses that included Dutch, Chinese, Kenyan, Slovak and Italian (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Word cloud for environmental volunteers identifying 'Other' Cultural Background



Q8 Environmental Volunteering and Attachment to a Local Natural Area

In four consecutive surveys, attachment to a local natural area was the main factor for people to engage in environmental work. Only around 10% of the respondents in each year reported that attachment to place had not been a reason for their interest in the environment at all.

Motivation by attachment to place	Survey Results				
	2021	2017	2016	2015	2014
To a great extent	73.2% (158)	77.7% (80)	61.8% (47)	50.0% (27)	69.9% (86)
Slightly	17.6% (38)	12.6% (13)	26.3% (20)	38.9% (21)	22.0% (27)
Very little	5.1% (11)	5.8% (6)	1.0% (1)	3.7% (2)	3.3% (4)
Not at all	4.2% (9)	3.9% (4)	10.5% (8)	7.4% (4)	4.9% (6)

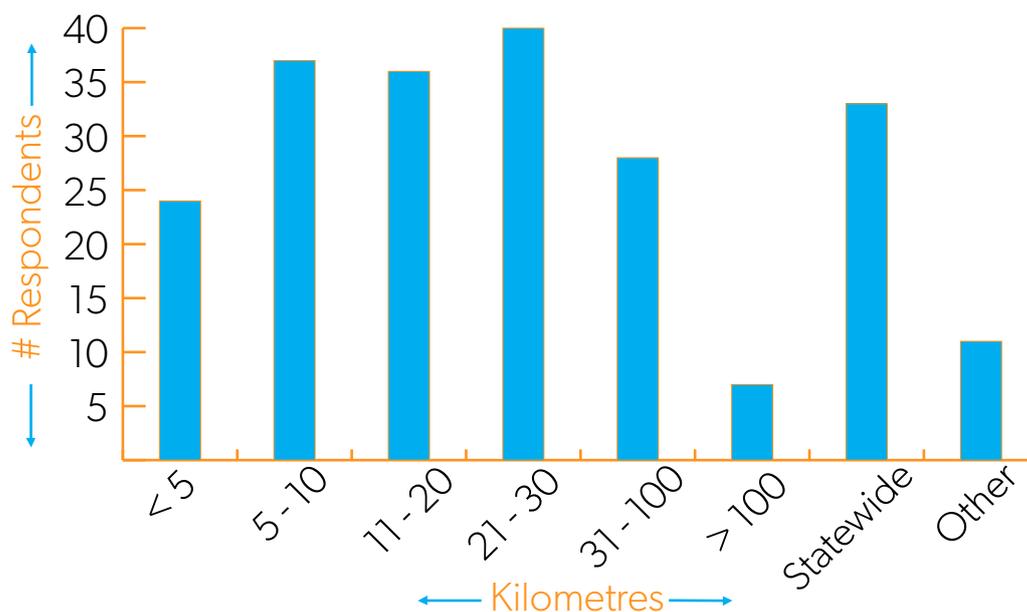
Table 5: Motivation by attachment to place, by percentage and number of respondents, comparison of 2021, 2017, 2015 and 2014

Q9 Distance Willing to Travel to Conserve Nature

While in 2017, over 43.0% of respondents indicated that they were willing to travel up to 10km from their home to participate in nature conservation, in 2021, only 28.2% limited their environmental activities to a 10 km radius from their home. A higher percentage of people (48.2%) were willing to travel between 10-100 km to undertake environmental volunteering. Three respondents reported in the section 'other' that they are willing to travel globally for conservation purposes.

Comparing the 2017 survey outcomes with 2021, we can see a significant increase in people's willingness to travel long distances to conserve nature.

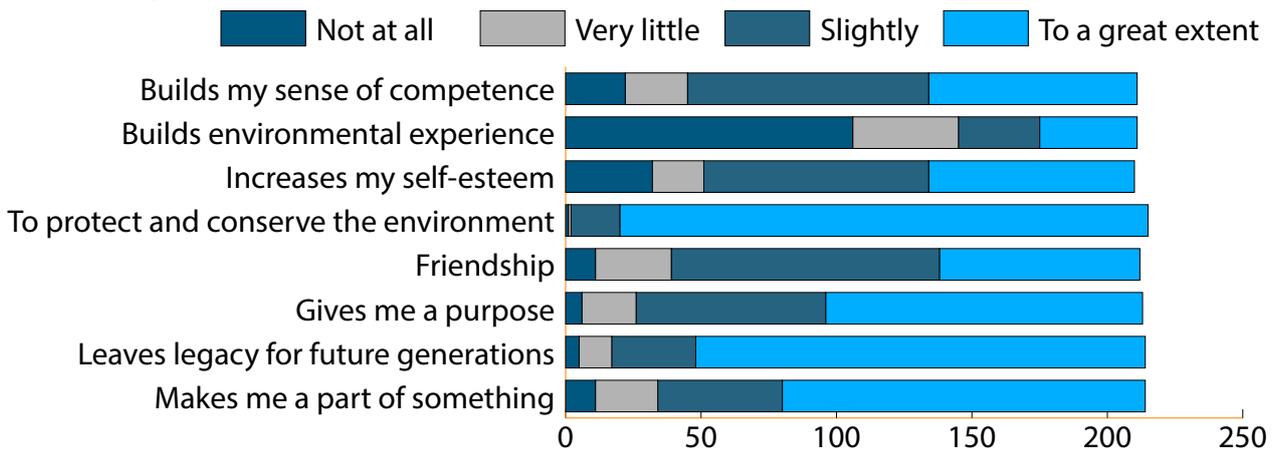
Figure 5: Distance volunteers are willing to travel to conserve nature (n=216)



Q10 Motivations to Volunteer

The desire to protect nature continues to be the highest motivation for environmental volunteers, in this fifth consecutive survey. Friendships as a reason to volunteer decreased in 2021 compared to 2017 and building environmental experience for future career opportunities was the least significant in both surveys, and possibly correlates with the age of respondents. In addition to the motivations identified in this survey, *The wellbeing benefits of participating in Landcare Report* (Landcare Australia, 2021) highlights advantages to mental and emotional health and improved physical health, which can also act as motivational factors for environmental volunteers.

Figure 6: Motivations that drive environmental volunteers. (n=216)



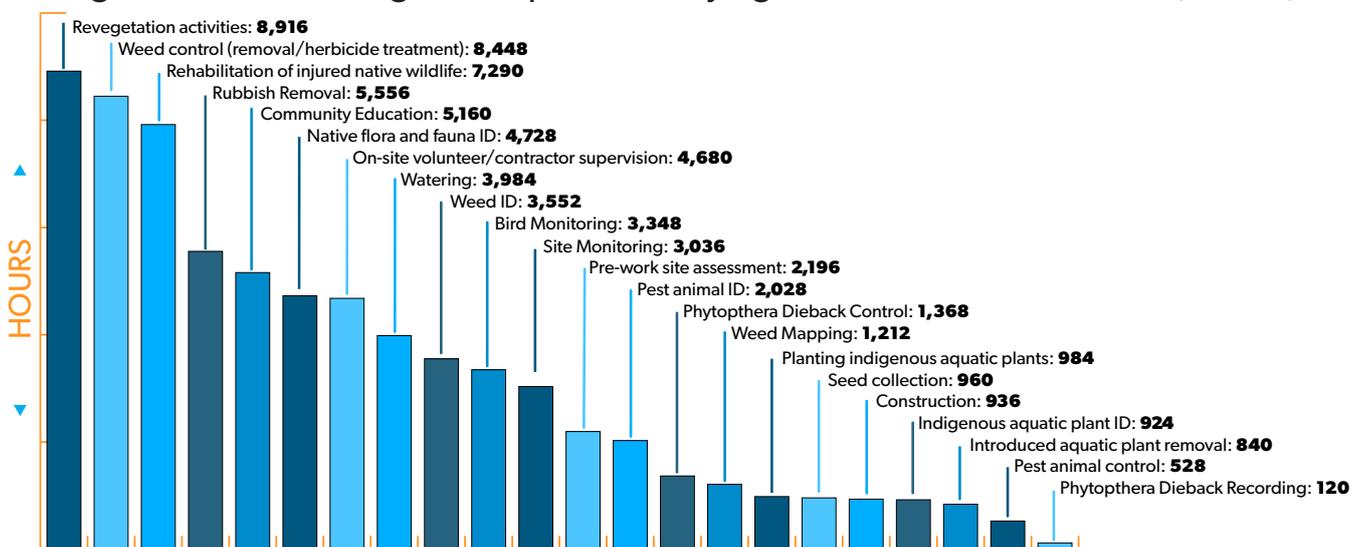
Q11 Time Spent on Environmental Activities

A total of 71,424 hours of on-ground volunteer work was reported by 216 participants.

This equals an estimated value of \$3,429,066 (calculated at \$48.01/hr Ref.: Volunteer benefits calculator - Volunteering WA).

On average, 331 hours of on-ground volunteering work have been contributed by volunteers per annum towards environmental conservation and protection.

Figure 7: Volunteering hours spent on varying environmental activities. (n=216)

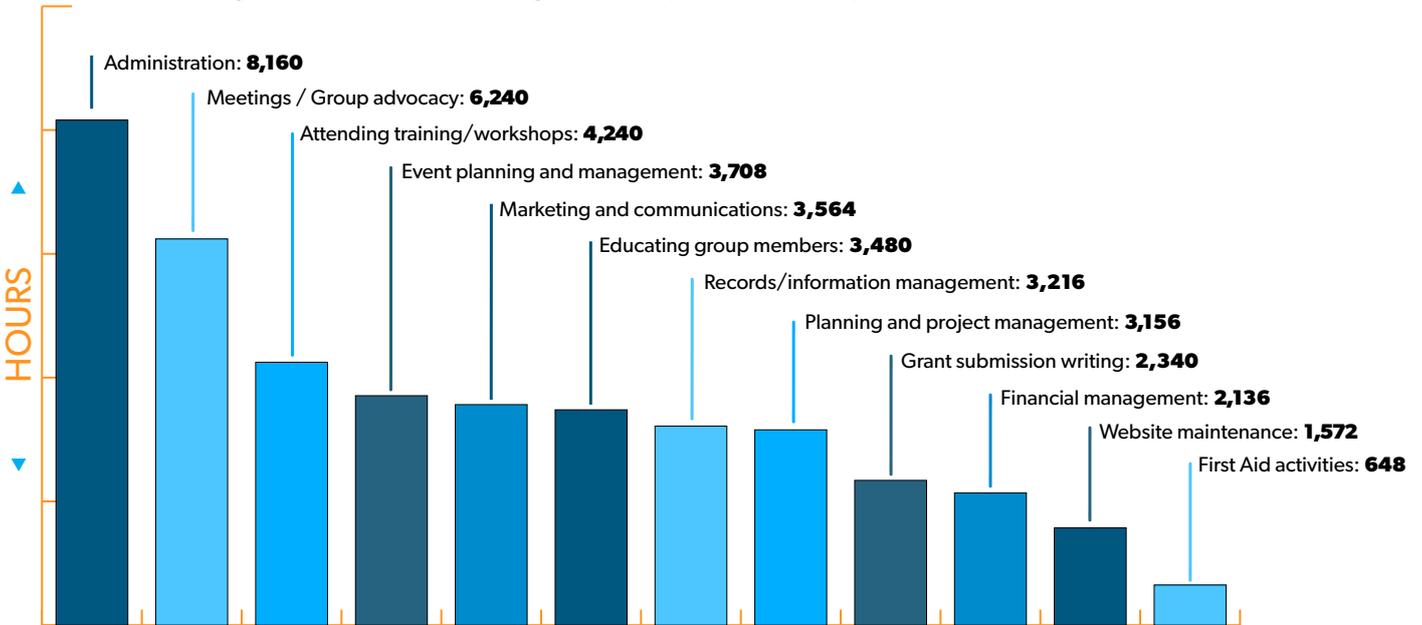


*Note: While this survey was designed and directed to volunteers a small number of respondents (4) identified their role description as Research Assistant, Team Leader, Short Term Contract, Employee. It is not clear if those participants answered question 11 and 12 as volunteers or paid worked hours.

Q12 Support Hours Volunteered

Results of the survey demonstrate that a total of 42,468 hours of support activities were undertaken by 216 volunteers. This represents an estimated monetary value of \$2,038,888 (calculated at \$48.01/hr Ref.: Volunteer benefits calculator - Volunteering WA).

Figure 8: Volunteering hours spent on support activities. (n=216)



Q13 Preferred amount of volunteering hours weekly

A total of 134,468 volunteering hours for combined on-ground work and support activities were donated by community members to improve environmental conditions on-ground and through support activities. This is an average of 623 hours that each Volunteer contributes per annum, representing an average of 12 hours per week.

The increasing workload that environmental groups and volunteers are facing has also been identified in other reports and literature such as the *Building and Managing Resilience in Community Based NRM Groups an Australian Case Study* (Gooch and Warburton 2009) and *The State of Landcare in WA 2017 Interim Report* (WA Landcare Network 2017).

Discussions around workload and group capacity limits, including volunteering burn-out or 'champion burn out', took place during the two survey co-design workshops and individual interviews. Those findings led to the inclusion of a question about the preferred working hours of volunteers, to help understand the ideal volunteering structure and capacity of environmental groups and volunteers.

While the reported volunteering hours represent an average of 12 hours per week, the desire of most volunteers (71.3%) is to volunteer less than 5 hours per week. Only 13.4% (29 volunteers) wanted to volunteer more than 10 hours per week.

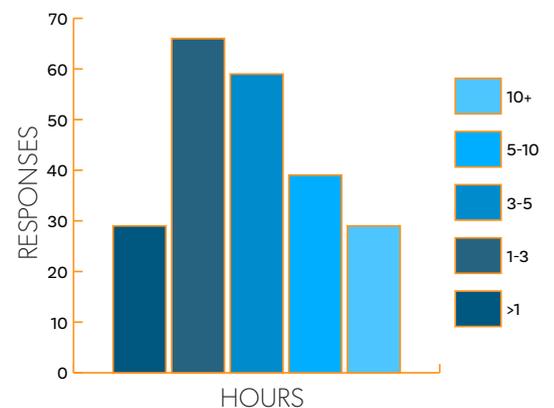


Figure 9: Preferred amount of volunteering hours weekly. (n=216)

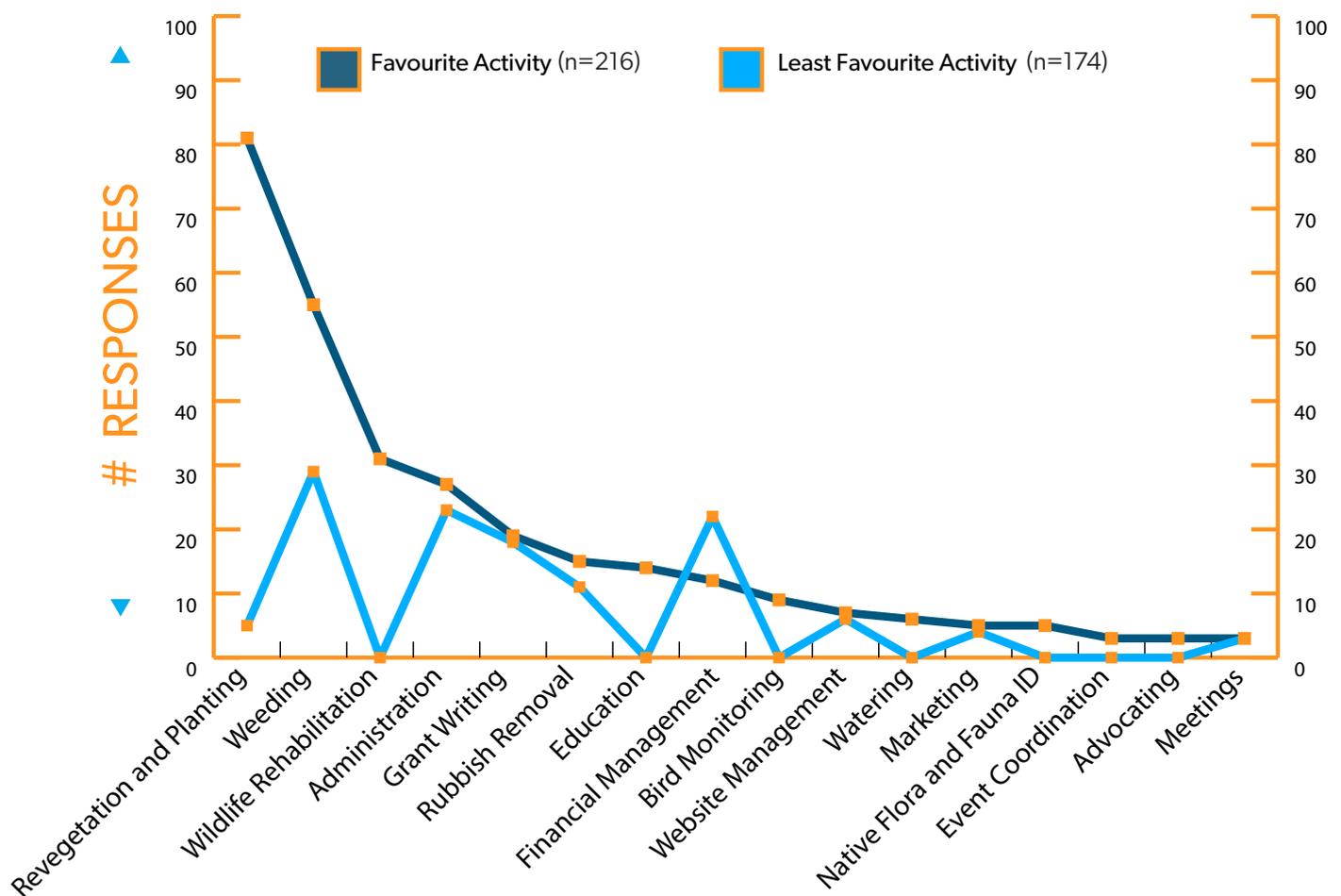
Q14 Which is your preferred and which is your least favourite volunteer activity?

When looking at favourite activities by age, we can see that the group under 20 years preferred to volunteer their time for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation (4 out of 5 respondents in this age group).

Overall, the favourite activity of environmental volunteers is revegetation and planting, followed by weeding and wildlife rehabilitation. A few of the 216 volunteers that responded to this question named two or three actions as their favourite activity.

While 23 people responded that there is nothing they'd prefer not to do, others expressed that weeding, administration and grant writing is the activity that they find the least pleasure in.

Figure 10: Preferences for volunteering activities*



* Participants were allowed to select multiple responses

Q15 From where do you get your information about environmental activities and events?

Newsletters, emails, and Facebook are reported to be the most used information sources concerning environmental activities and events. The least mentioned methods were Instagram, friends, word of mouth, and the local newspaper. Some other sources were mentioned only once, e.g., scientists, other volunteers, lectures, and neighbours.

Information Source	Number of Respondents
Newsletters	41
Emails	39
Facebook	39
From Environmental / Friends Group	37
Internet/Online/Web search	21
DBCA	17
NRM	13
Social Media	12
Local Newspaper	10
Word of Mouth	10
Friends	6
Instagram	2

Table 6: Most named source of information about environmental activities. (n=207)

Respondents were able to provide their answers in a textbox, only the most named sources are listed.

Information obtained from Local Governments

Only six Local Governments were mentioned as a source of information about environmental activities and events. The City of Melville and the City of Joondalup are the local governments that are reaching their communities well by promoting environmental events and activities.

Information Source	Number of Respondents
City of Melville	9
City of Joondalup	4
City of Swan	3
City of Armadale	2
City of Kalamunda	2
City of Canning	2

Table 7: Information about environmental activities obtained by LGAs. (n=207)

Results have been identified through the responses of questions 15

Q16 How did you find out and connect with your environmental group?

The highest number of responses about how volunteers found out about their environmental group stated that a friend or neighbour first introduced them to their group. The second most named way of connecting with a group was through the internet. Furthermore, 17 participants stated that they were the initiators and creators of the groups themselves.

Even though signs or signage was only named by five people in this survey, this method to attract more volunteers has appeared in individual interviews and the co-design workshops and has been demonstrated to be a valuable tool to invite new members.

Initial introduction to volunteering	Respondents
Friend/Neighbour/Word of Mouth	32
Google/Online/Internet/Website	22
I/we started/created it	17
email	12
City	12
DBCA	10
Newsletter	6
Sign / Signage	5
Facebook	3



Signage for Friends of Clontarf Hill

Table 8: How participants found out about their group. (n=207)

Q17 Group Attitudes towards Environment

The mean response (4.5) reflects, as in previous years, that respondents agree their fellow volunteers believe in the significance of natural resource management. The mean scores related to priority setting and on-ground management have remained the same as in the previous survey.

Statement of Group Attitudes to NRM	Mean Score*				
	2021	2017	2016	2015	2014
All the members of my group believe in the cause of natural resource management	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.2	3.8
All members of my group agree on NRM priorities for the area	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.2
All the members of my group agree on how NRM activities should be carried out	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.6	3.0

Table 9: Comparison of the 2021, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014 mean scores of group attitudes to NRM.

* Respondents used a 5-point Likert Scale to answer this question, where Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree= 5. The mean (or average) of all responses was then determined from this scale.

Q18 Human Capital: On-Ground Skills and Knowledge

When comparing with the findings of 2017, on-ground skills have overall decreased by a total of 16 points. While 13 areas of skills have declined, five stayed the same, and only three have improved, namely: Terrestrial pest animal control – trapping/baiting (2.7, +0.2), Methods for releasing native fauna back into the wild (3.1, +0.2), rehabilitation of injured native wildlife (3.0, +0.3). All the latter have continuously increased in the last seven years.

Human Capacity On-Ground Skills and Knowledge	Mean Scores*				
	2021	2017	2016	2015	2014
Identification of factors likely to impact negatively on a body of water or a system	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.6	2.9
Identification of indigenous aquatic flora and fauna	3.0	3.0	2.8	2.6	3.4
Identification of indigenous terrestrial flora and fauna	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.9	3.2
Identification of introduced species of aquatic flora and fauna	3.1	3.2	2.8	2.6	3.4
Identification of Phytophthora Dieback	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.8	3.1
Identification of terrestrial pest animals	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.6	3.2
Methods for preventing or limiting spread of dieback	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.1	2.9
Methods for releasing native fauna back in to the wild	3.1	2.9	2.4	2.3	NA
Methods for removing introduced species of aquatic flora and fauna	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.3	2.9
Monitoring ecological change	3.3	3.3	3.0	NA	NA
On-site supervision of volunteers/contractors	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.1
Pre-work site assessment	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.0
Rehabilitation of injured native wildlife	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.3	NA
Revegetation activities – e.g., plant selection/planting	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.4
Scientific water quality monitoring	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.5
Seed Collection	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.5	2.8
Selection of indigenous plants and where to plant them	2.7	2.9	2.7	2.5	3.5
Site monitoring	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.2
Soil monitoring	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.4	NA
Terrestrial pest animal control – trapping/baiting	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.2
Use of information and mapping technologies	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.4	2.8
Weed identification and suitable methods for their removal	3.7	4.0	3.9	4.1	3.4

Table 10: Human on-ground capital mean scores against on-ground skills and knowledge comparison of 2021, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014 scores. (2021: n = 195)

*Respondents used a 5-point Likert Scale to answer this question, where Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree= 5. The mean (or average) of all responses was then determined from this scale.

Q19 Skills considered to be the most important

Participants believe that the essential skills for environmental volunteering are monitoring, revegetation and weed identification. Other skills such as rehabilitation of injured native wildlife, dieback and pest control were also considered as invaluable.

Priority	On ground skills considered to be the most valuable to support group goals
1	Monitoring (incl. ecological change, site, soil)
2	Revegetation (techniques and activities)
3	Weed identification
4	Rehabilitation of injured native wildlife
5	Dieback (control, measures, id, monitoring)
6	Pest control
7	Identification of Indigenous flora and fauna
8	Methods for releasing native fauna back into the wild
9	Pre-work site assessment
10	Seed collection

174 volunteers responded to this question.

Participants were allowed to provide one to three answers.

Only the ten skills considered as most valuable are listed by priority.

Table 11: Skills considered to be the most important

Q20 Human Capital: Support Skills

The skills to support on-ground work have mostly remained the same. However, the mean scores in several areas have decreased since 2017. Those include event planning and management (-0.1), financial management (-0.1), grant submission (-0.2), planning and project management (-0.2) and records/information management (-0.2). The highest decrease in support skills can be seen in working with Aboriginal people (-0.3).

Human Capital - Support Activities	Mean Scores*				
	2021	2017	2016	2015	2014
Current first aid certificates	3.3	3.3	3.2	2.2	2.6
Event planning and management	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.1	3.1
Financial management	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.1
Grant submission writing	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.2
Marketing and communications	3.3	3.3	3.1	2.5	2.6
Planning and project management	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.2
Records/information management	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.3	3.2
Technical expertise e.g., impact of climate change	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.6	2.5
Working with Aboriginal people	3.0	3.3	3.0	2.1	2.6

Table 12: Human capital support activity 2021, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014 mean scores. (2021: n =195)

*Respondents used a 5-point Likert Scale to answer this question, where Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree= 5. The mean (or average) of all responses was then determined from this scale.

Q21 Social Capital within Environmental Groups

While between 2014 and 2017, there has been a consistent increase in the mean score of skills, the results of 2021 show an overall decline in social capital skills. None of the mean scores of social capital skills has increased or stayed the same. The most significant decrease is in 'effective connections with the Aboriginal community,' which has decreased by 0.8 points, followed by 'good relationships with external stakeholders,' and 'trusted mediators dealing with internal issues affecting the group,' which have both declined by 0.3 points.

Social Capital Skills	Mean Scores*				
	2021	2017	2016	2015	2014
Attracting and retaining volunteers	3.5	3.6	3.1	3.1	NA
Effective connections with the Aboriginal community	2.8	3.6	2.9	2.7	2.3
Good hosts, creating a welcoming environment for others	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.0	3.5
Good relationships with external stakeholders	3.9	4.2	3.9	4.0	3.5
Good relationships with government agencies at all levels	3.8	4.0	3.7	4.0	3.4
Inspirational leadership	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.1
Social media skills e.g. Facebook and Twitter	3.5	3.6	3.1	2.7	NA
Strong networking/contact development skills	3.7	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.2
Trusted mediators deal with internal issues affecting the group	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.0
Website development and administration	3.2	3.4	2.9	2.6	NA

Table 13: Social capital – comparison of skills of 2021, 2017, 2016, 2015 and 2014 mean scores. (n 2021=195)

*Respondents used a 5-point Likert Scale to answer this question, where Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree= 5. The mean (or average) of all responses was then determined from this scale.

Q22 Support and Training Requests

Participants were asked in which area they believe they require additional training. The most frequently named support requests were attracting new volunteers, social media skills and engagement with Aboriginal community.

1. Attracting new volunteers
2. Social media (skills)
3. Engagement with Aboriginal community
4. Effective connections with LGs, government agencies and NRM Network
5. First aid training
6. Website development
7. Contact development skills
8. Inspirational leadership
9. Seed collection training
10. Plant identification
11. Financial support

Note: 158 volunteers responded to this question. Participants were allowed to provide one to three answers. Only most requested areas for support are listed by priority.

Q23 Biggest Strength and Success Stories of Environmental Groups

When participants were asked about their strengths and success stories, most of the 166 people that responded told us about their achievements of revegetating their area from small patches to vast areas of native vegetation along with weed control.

They mentioned conservation of rare and endangered plants and the crucial work of volunteers to ensure the survival of Gilbert's Potoroo, Dibbler and Numbat and other species in specific areas were listed.

The continued work of environmental volunteers to protect Black Cockatoos greatly increased their knowledge of the conservation of the species.

The collection of vital data necessary for experts to analyse and establish valuable reports are collected by environmental volunteers through citizen science projects.

One group stated that their strength is long term engagement, persistence and commitment, as these are crucial elements for continuous conservation practice.

Participants also recognised their connection and knowledge about the places they undertake their volunteering work as essential strengths and success.

Q24 Additional Suggestions

To collect ideas from environmental volunteers, survey participants were asked about any additional suggestions. Some answers to this question were directed to individual organisations or bodies, requesting better support, better regulations and policies to ensure environmental conservation, better networking, and more ongoing funding.

But some respondents also mentioned the issue of succession planning and the difficulties in attracting new and younger volunteers. Worries were expressed about the aging of committed committee members.



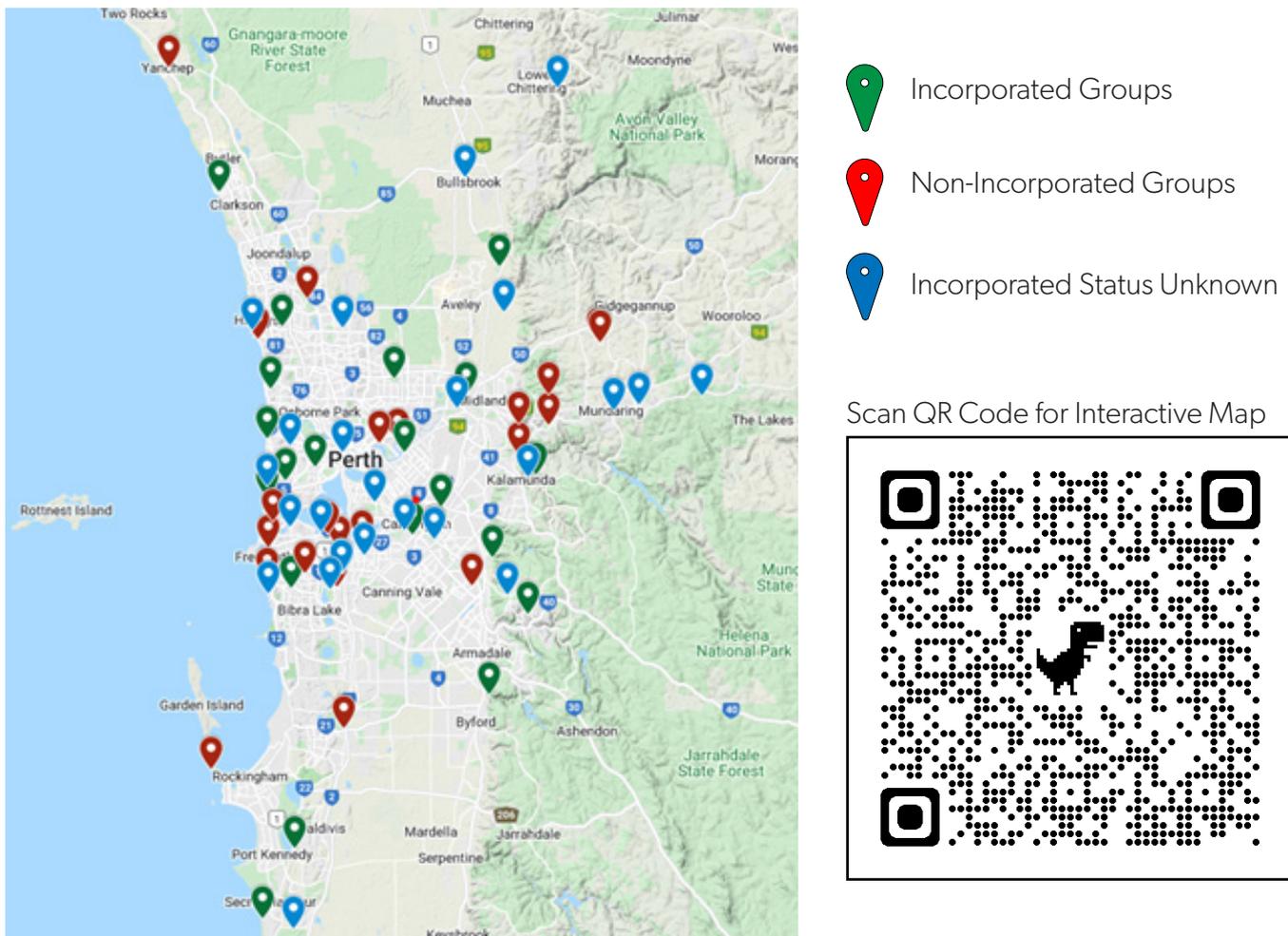
A group of Carnaby's Black Cockatoos. Photo by Gary Tate

PART B - SURVEY FOR GROUP REPRESENTATIVES 2021

A total of 74 groups have contributed to this section of the CCA2021. This part of the survey was designed and directed to group representatives undertaking work in the Perth region. This part of the assessment aimed to identify the current circumstances of environmental groups by enquiring about particular topics concerning group governances, partnerships, support received from LGAs, funding accessed by the groups and how groups achieve the engagement of their volunteers. Several questions allowed participants to talk about issues they are currently facing while leaving room to provide their suggestions on how to improve them.

Q4 Location of where Group is Undertaking work

Figure 11: Group Locations and incorporation status (n=71)

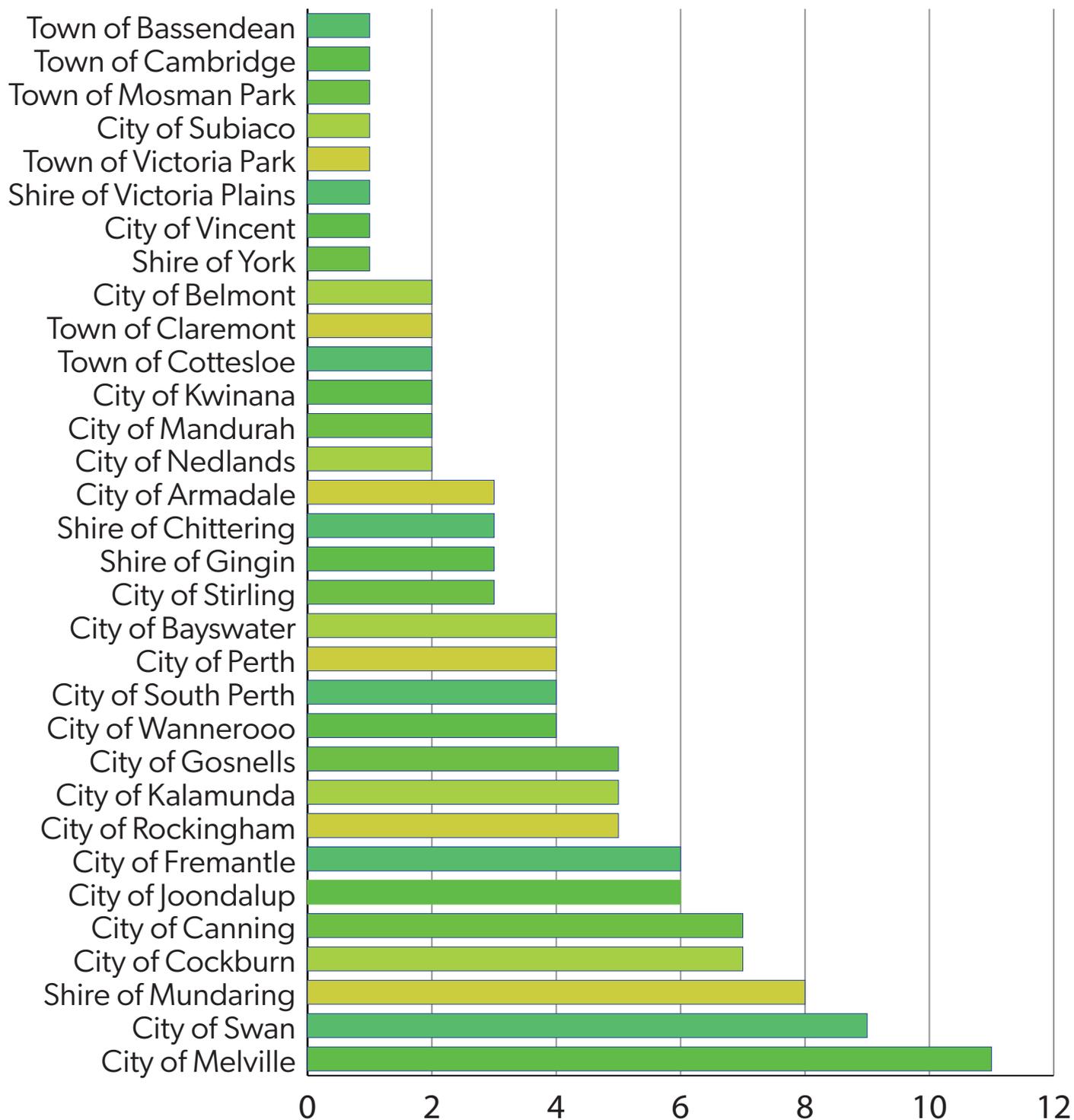


To question four, 71 participants responded, and additional information about the group's status was retrieved from question 16.

Q5 Local Government Area

Groups from 32 government areas contributed to the findings. Only two urban local government areas (Town of East Fremantle, Shire of Peppermint Grove) and four regional local government areas (Shire of Beverly, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Shire of Toodyay, and the Shire of Wandering) were not represented in this survey of Group Representatives.

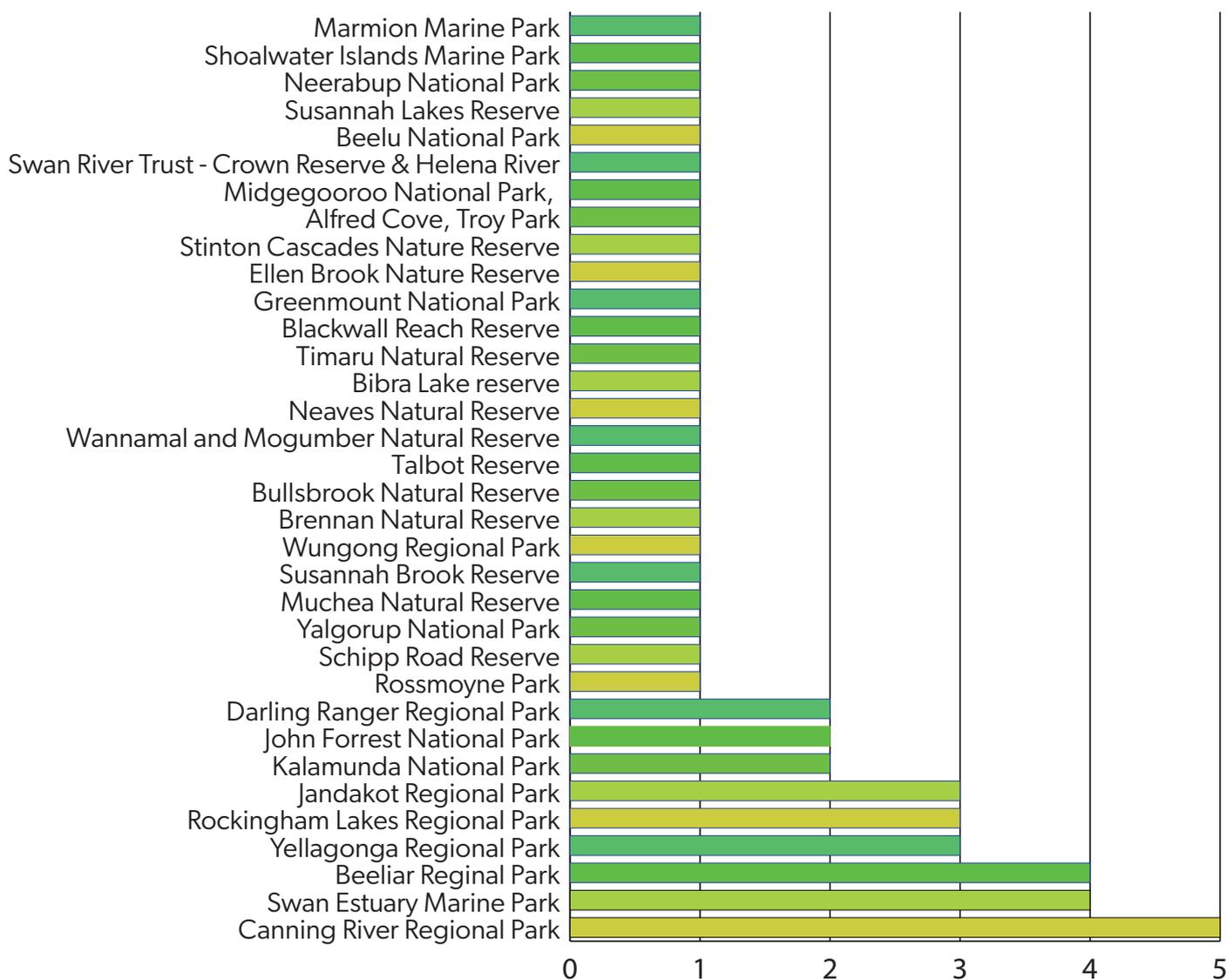
Figure 12: *Local Government Authorities (LGA) where participating group representatives reported their group is located. (n = 74)*



Q6 Work undertaken in National and Regional Parks

A total of 38 people responded to this question, stating that they are undertaking work in parks and reserves managed by DBCA. Many of those were already mentioned in the Survey for Individual Volunteers (Part A).

Table 14: Environmental volunteers undertake activities at regional parks and nature reserves that are managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (n=38)



Participants also named other areas such as Rossmoyne Park (City of Canning), Schipp Road Reserve (City of Kalamunda), Bibra Lake reserve (City of Cockburn), Blackwall Reach Reserve (City of Melville), and Susannah Lakes Reserve (City of Swan).

Q7 Work Undertaken in Parks and Reserves

Answers to Q7 have been incorporated into Table 14 with Q6 results.

Q8 Sizes of Bushland / Natural area in which work is undertaken

The responding groups reported undertaking environmental work on a total of 9998 hectares of land in the Perth area. The sizes of land people reported working on reach from 1 hectare to 2800 hectares. A total of 20 respondents said they conduct their work on patches of a size up to 10 hectares, 14 groups work on land between 10 and 100 hectares large and 11 cover between 100 to 2800 hectares.

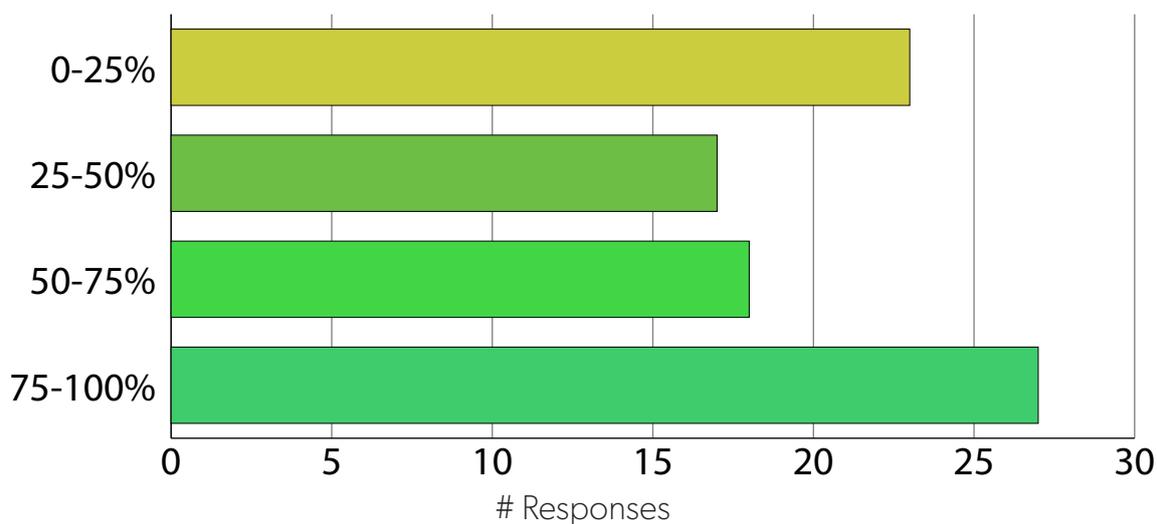
Q9 Percentage of Bushland/Reserve/Park area where Group work is undertaken

Within interviews and the co-design workshops, the question arose about how big the areas are in which environmental groups undertake their work in relation to the whole reserve.

This question was first included in the 2021 Community Capacity Assessment to gather data for this query.

The responses show that the land sizes in which groups are undertaking their work are diverse.

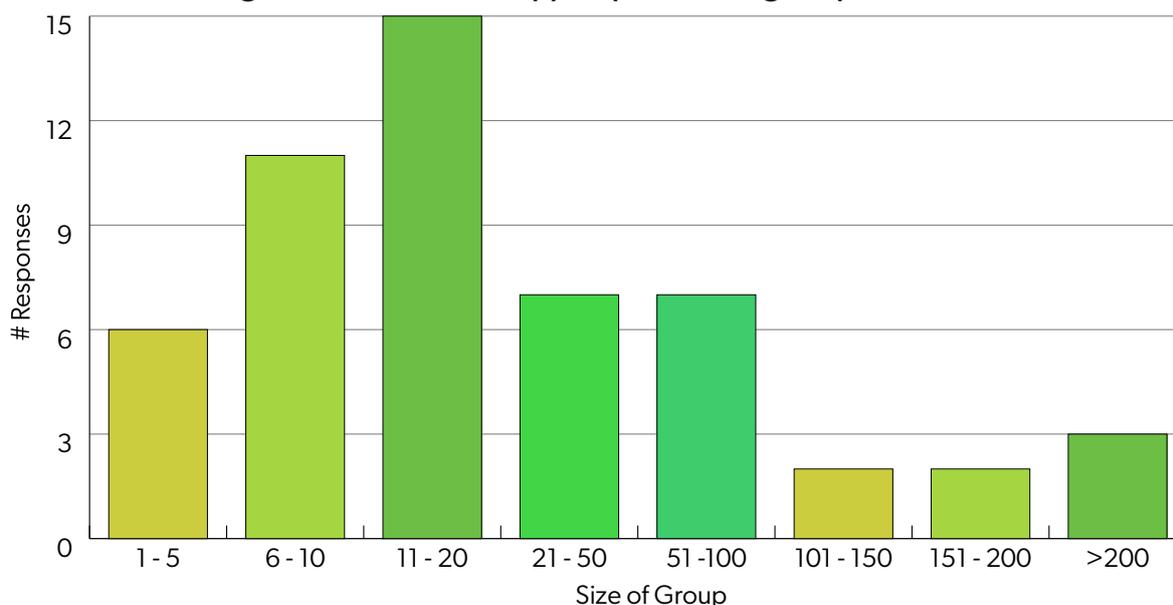
Figure 13: Percentage of bushland/reserve/park site managed by group. (n=44)



Q10 Size of Group

While in 2017, most of the groups reported having six to ten members, followed by groups with 11 to 20 members, the 2021 survey presents that most groups currently have 11 to 20 members. Only seven responses were received for groups with over 100 people. The three groups that reported having over 200 members are the Urban Bushland Council, the Friends of Hollis Park and the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise. The Friends of Lake Claremont and the Darling Range Wildlife Shelter undertake their work with the support of 150 to 200 volunteers, and the Cottesloe Coastcare and the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group stated a group size between 101-150 people.

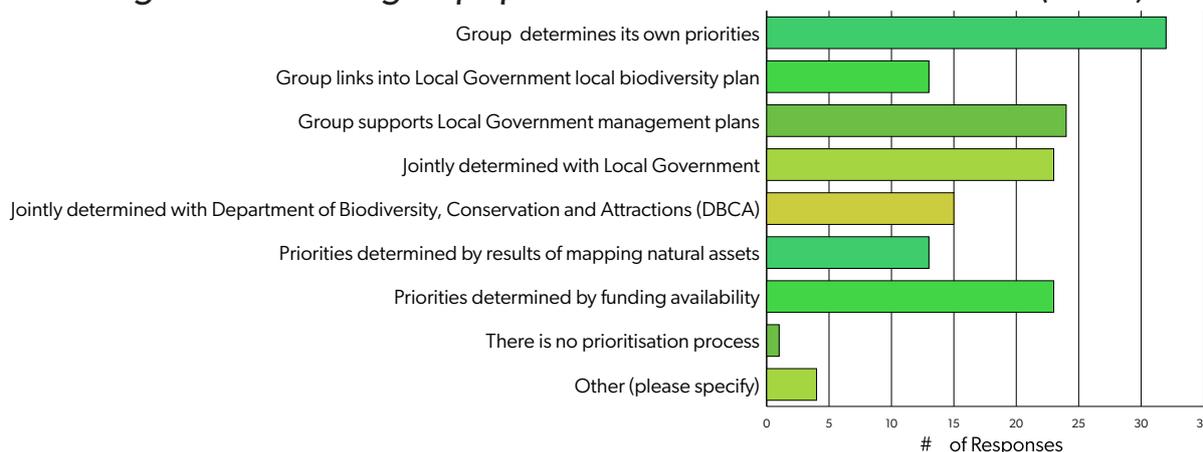
Figure 14: Number of people in the group. (n=53)



Q11 Prioritisation of Environmental Projects

Most groups determined their priority for environmental projects themselves. When comparing the outcomes of this survey with previous results, a big change can be seen in the jointly with LGAs determined priorities, which declined from 55.0% in 2017 to 43.0% in 2021. Respondents who selected 'other' stated that their prioritisation process is linked to the Department of Water and Environment, the Armadale Gosnells Landcare Group and Coastcare. They said that the prioritisation of activities is chosen based on the abilities of the volunteers present on the day.

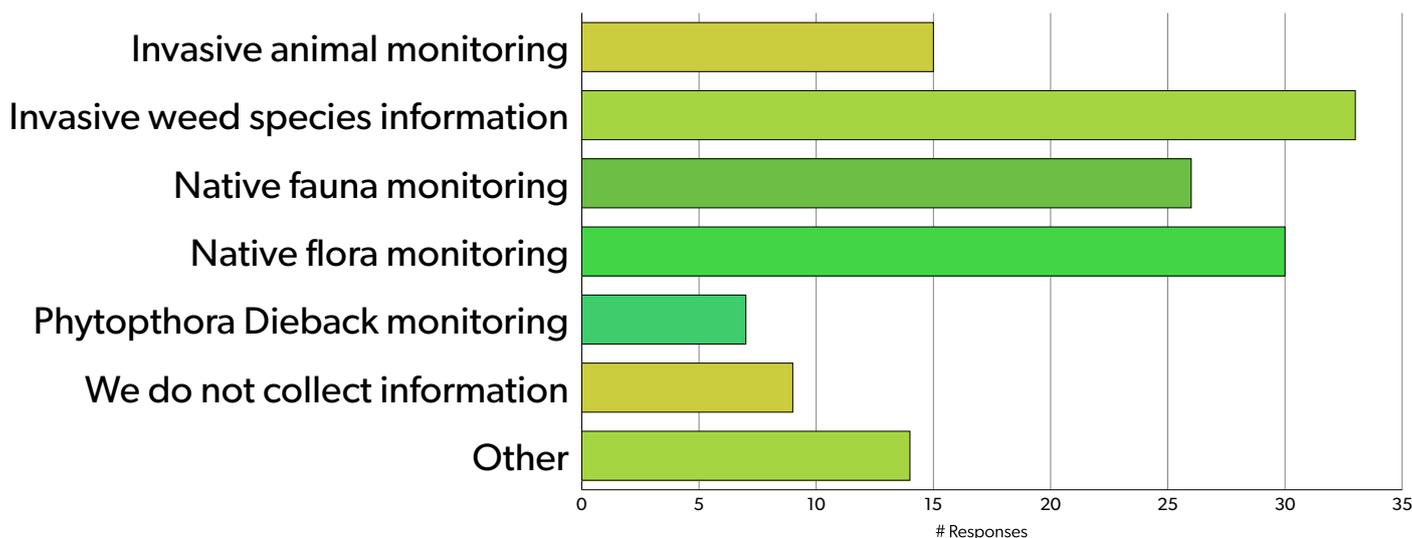
Figure 15: How groups prioritise environmental activities. (n=53)



Q12 Information Collected by Environmental Group

All participants stated that information is collected. Most groups collect information on invasive weed species followed by monitoring data about native flora and fauna in consecutive years. However, some groups selected 'other' to explain that monitoring and observations are undertaken by group members but are mostly informal.

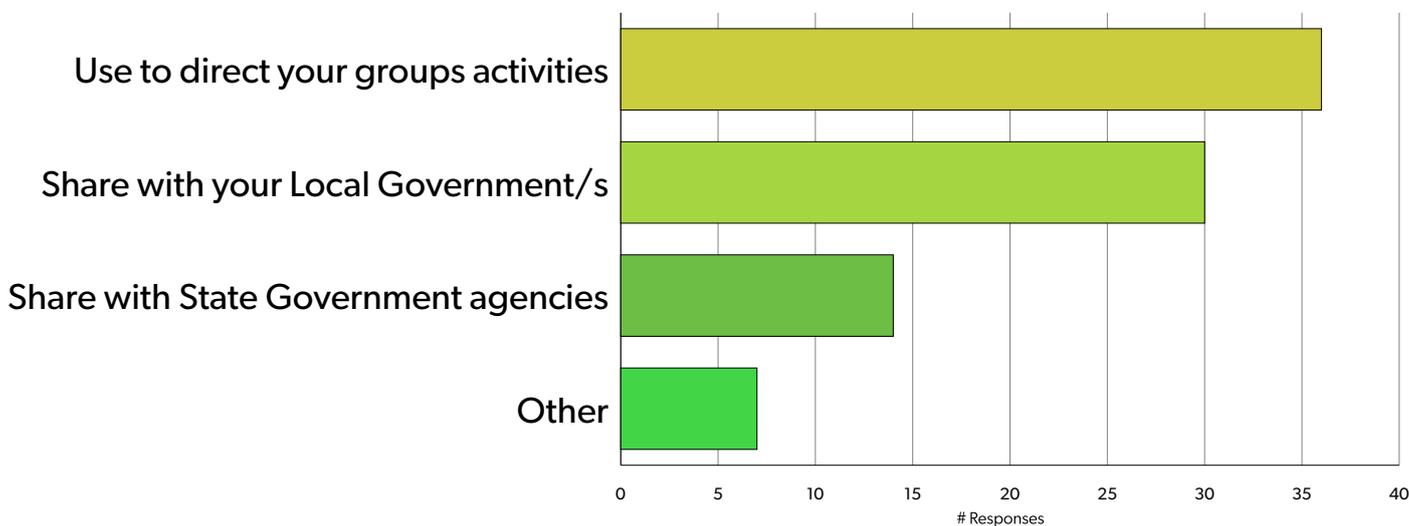
Figure 16: Environmental data collected by groups. Multiple responses were allowed. (n=53)



Q13 Use of collected information

The collected data and information were used to direct the group's activities (73.0%) and to share it with their Local Government (61.0%). As in previous years, participants stated that they additionally share their information with other organisations such as BirdLife WA, the National Museum and funding bodies. The number of groups that provide data to State Government agencies has increased from 22.2% in 2017 to 28.6%.

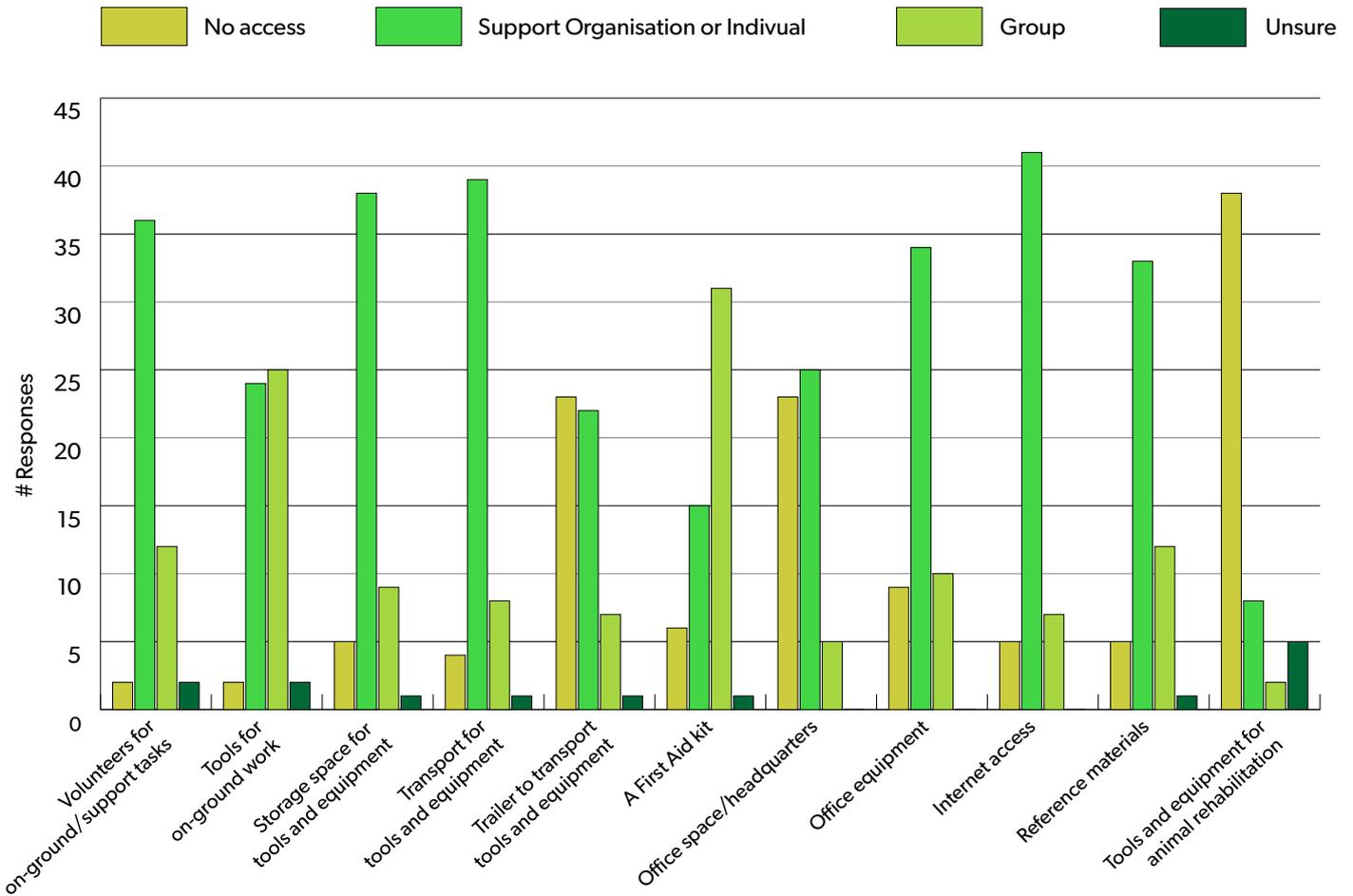
Figure 17: How groups share collected environmental data. Multiple responses were allowed. (n=49)



Q14 Group access to assets

Groups are self-reliant as most of the tools and equipment used are provided and stored by volunteers. This has been a consistent trend in all the consecutive years. Tools for on-ground work is the asset mostly owned by the groups themselves (47.0%). Even though 58.5% of respondents reported that their group possesses their own first aid kit, 11.3% stated that they do not have access to a first aid kit at all. Equipment for animal rehabilitation is repeatedly reported as unavailable to most groups.

Figure 18: Financial Capital – access to assets. (n=53)



Co-Design Workshop: Cluster Mapping Exercise @ Cockburn Wetlands Centre, July 2021

Q15 Organisational Capital

While the results of the 2017 survey showed an increase in 10 out of 11 mean scores, the study in 2021 shows declines in four areas, which include financial management systems and procedures, records of equipment/assets owned by the group, terms of reference/constitution and records of hours worked for on-ground and support activities. However, other areas show a slightly higher mean score than in 2017. These include documented policies and procedures, group websites and Facebook pages, orientation process and training, records of equipment/assets loaned to the group, risk assessment and management procedures, and safe work procedures.

Organisational Assets	Mean Score*				
	2021	2017	2016	2015	2014
Documented policies and procedures	2.6	2.5	2.0	2.3	2.5
Financial management systems and procedures	2.6	2.8	2.2	2.5	2.3
Group website or Facebook page	3.2	3.1	2.8	NA	NA
Orientation process and training for new members	2.6	2.4	1.8	2.4	2.5
Records of equipment/assets loaned to the group	1.7	1.6	1.6	3.0	1.6
Records of equipment/assets owned by the group	2.2	2.3	1.8	2.1	2.6
Records of hours worked for on-ground and support activities	3.2	3.5	3.0	3.3	1.7
Risk assessment and management procedures	2.9	2.7	2.0	2.1	2.7
Safe work procedures	3.2	3.0	2.1	2.6	2.3
Terms of reference/constitution	2.8	2.9	2.5	3.0	2.8
Work plans identifying priorities and actions	2.9	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.1

Table 15: Organisational capital: comparison of mean scores 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014 and 2021 (n = 53)

*This question used a 4-point Likert Scale, where Not Available = 1, Being developed = 2, Available = 3, and Established and Updated = 4. The mean of all responses was then determined.

Q16 Is your group incorporated

One of the essential questions that environmental groups and Friends of Groups ask themselves to determine how they operate is the question about the status of their groups. Participants were asked if their group is incorporated and, if so, why, or why not. The results show a decline of incorporated groups from 61.1% in 2015, 54.7 % in 2017, to 47.2% in 2021.

Many groups stated that they prefer to remain not incorporated as this would require a lot of time and complicated formalities. Others reported that their group does not need to be incorporated as they are sponsored by an Umbrella Group, LGAs or Catchment Group.

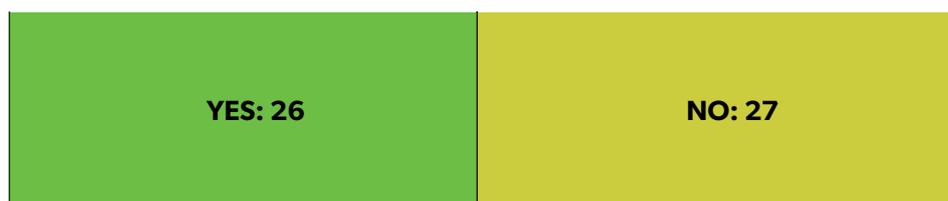
Figure 19: Incorporation status and reasons. (n=53)



Q17 Group Affiliation and Partnerships

Participants were asked if they had established any partnership or affiliation with another organisation. While one-half of the respondents answered yes, the other half did not yet engage in any partnerships. Further respondents (27) provided further detail about their partnerships and affiliation in which the following partnerships were identified: Catchment Groups (5), South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL) (4), Urban Bushland Council (UBC) (4), LGA (3), CCWA (2) and DBCA (2). Only three groups reported a partnership and/or affiliation with another Friends of Group or environmental group.

Figure 20: Groups working in partnership or affiliation. (n=53)



Q18 Insurance

While most groups hold their own insurance for on-ground activities (public liability) as in previous years or are insured through their LGA, this year's results show that some groups (2) are currently not holding any insurance at all. This year's responses indicate high data reliability as no participant was unsure of their insurance status.

Figure 21: Insurance coverage for community groups. (n=53)



Q19 Financial Capital: Viability

In consecutive years, grant funds have been reported to be the most frequent source of funding (71.7%), which has decreased by 8.3% since 2017. A higher discrepancy is reported in the corporate sponsorship and in-kind donations, which dropped from 51.6% in 2017 to only 35.9%. However, the biggest concern remains in the long-term financial viability of groups, which has dropped from 46.7% in 2017 to 37.7% in 2021. An overall decline of 33.0% across the three funding options can indicate the financial challenges environmental groups currently face.

	Yes	No	Unsure
We receive regular, reliable income	37.7% (20)	62.3% (33)	0.0% (0)
We receive corporate sponsorship or in-kind funding	35.9% (19)	58.5% (31)	5.7% (3)
We have received grant funds in the past year	71.7% (38)	24.5% (13)	3.8% (2)

Table 16: Financial Capital: financial viability. (n=53)

Q20 Financial Capital: Income

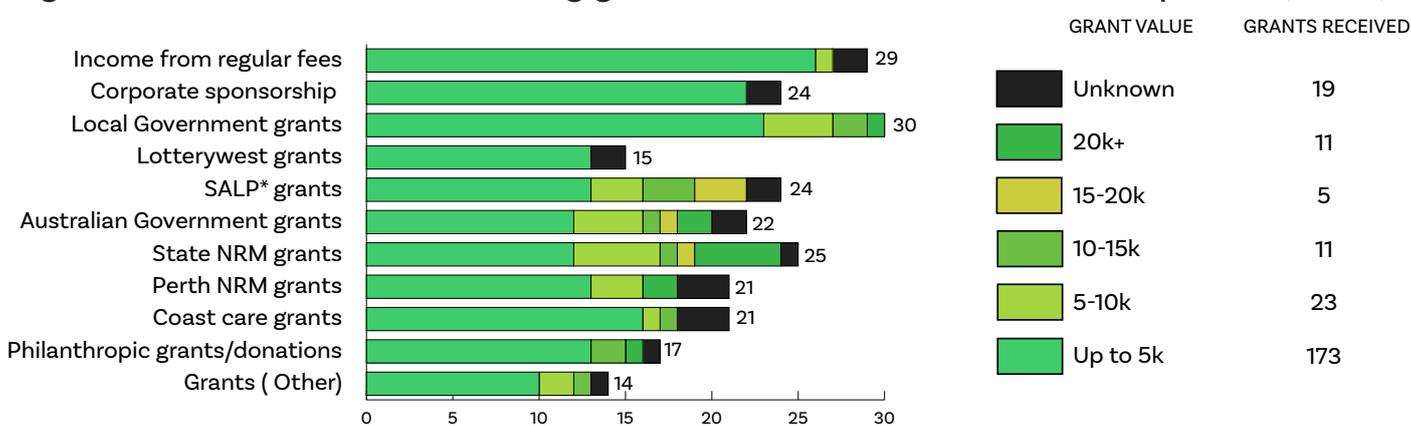
The most widespread type of funding was small funding sources up to \$5,000, represented by 173 responses across the ten different funding sources. While several responses (6 out of 30) indicated accessing income over \$15,000 from Corporate Sponsorship, in 2017, no groups participating in the 2021 survey reported receiving more than \$5,000 through Corporate Sponsorship.

Income from regular fees and Local Government Grants represent the most frequently accessed funding options. State NRM grants continue to provide most of the large grants.

Additional financial support was stated to be received from State Government grants, LGA grants. DWER, DBCA and NRM Biodiversity Grants.

The following table shows the source and size of funding identified within the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 22: Financial income showing grants received in the last 12-month period. (n=53)

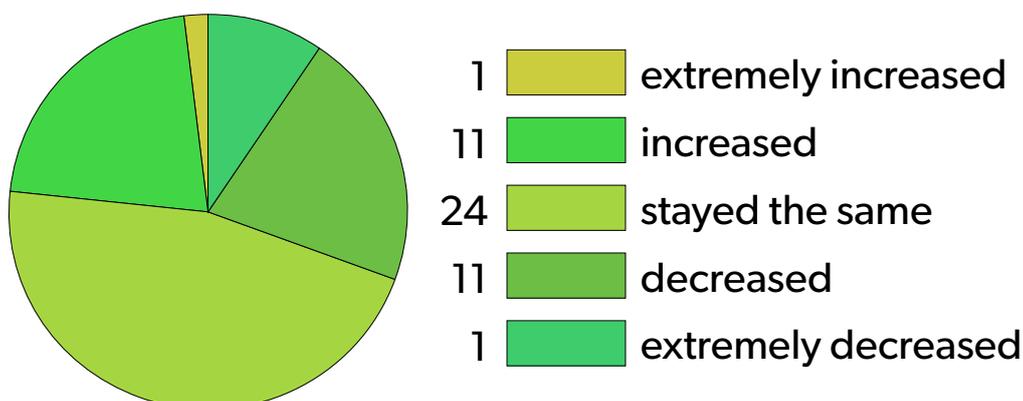


* Swan Alcoa Landcare Program (SALP)

Q21 Stability of Funding

Participants were asked if their access to funding has increased or decreased over the last few years. While it is positive to see that most of the respondents stated that their financial stability remained the same (46.2%), a total of 30.1% of the groups said that their access to funding has decreased or remarkably decreased.

Figure 23: Stability of funding. (n=52)



Q22 Additional support sources

For all volunteer groups, it is essential to be connected with a great support network. We have asked participants about their supporters. Out of the 32 responses, 15 named their local government, two NRM, two DBCA, and two named the Surf Life Saving Club. Few people noted that they are supported locally, such as men's sheds and schools. Some stated they receive donations from members or conduct fundraising events to support their group's goals.

Q23 Use of Contractors

This study shows that groups might have taken on more workload as the use of external contractors reduced to 56.6% compared to 74.2% in 2017.

Figure 24: Use of contractors. (n=53)



Q24 Proportion of Work Undertaken by Contractors

Out of the 53 participants who responded to this survey, 30 stated that their group uses external organisations to complete some natural resource management tasks. Most groups (36.7%) use contractors for only less than 10.0% and 33.3% for 10-25% of their workload.

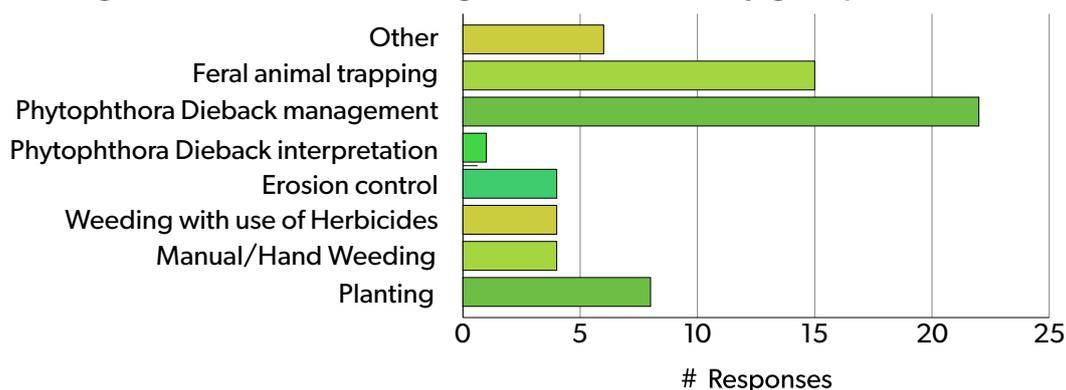
Figure 25: Proportion of activities undertaken by contractors. (n=53)

# RESPONSES	11	10	6	3
WORK UNDERTAKEN	Less than 10%	10- 25%	26-50%	51-75%

Q25 Activities Undertaken by Contractors

As in previous years, weeding was the main activity contracted out to external agencies. Several environmental groups (37) reported using contractors for hand weeding and weeding with herbicides. Furthermore, groups relied on contractors for activities that required precise technical knowledge and skills, such as Phytophthora Dieback interpretation and management and feral animal trapping.

Figure 26: Activities being contracted out by groups. (n=30)



Q26 Inclusion and Support from Local Government

Involving groups in regular meetings (65.4%), undertaking on-ground work together (61.5%) and providing funds for the groups to undertake their environmental activities are the areas in which groups are most supported by their LGA. However, joint on-ground work has decreased by 25.6% since 2017 (87.1%).

As in previous years, many groups stated that they do not receive any guidance with Aboriginal culture and support to learn about Aboriginal culture. Other areas that require improvement are joined grant applications, on-site surveys, and environmental management training.

Figure 27: Support/Inclusion from Managing Body (n=52)



Q27 Effectiveness of Relationship with Managing Body

A total of 69.2% of respondents rated their relationship with their managing body as positive (effective or extremely effective), and only 25.0% said their relationship requires some or a lot of work.

Responses	Percentage	n
Our group does not work with a Local Government or managing body	5.8%	3
Needs a lot of work	5.8%	3
Needs some work	13.5%	7
Neutral	5.8%	3
Effective	40.4%	21
Extremely effective	28.9%	15

Table 17: Effectiveness of relationships between environmental groups and Local Government or managing body. (n=52)

Q28 Actions that could Improve Working Relationships with LGA

When participants were asked what they believed could improve their relationship with their LGA, opportunities for knowledge sharing and networking were rated the highest, followed by an increase in available funding and improved communication between local government and environmental groups.

	Responses
More Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing and Networking	30
More funds could be made available by local government to deliver increased NRM outcomes	28
Increased communication between local government and groups on the management of natural areas	26
Participation in the management plan	22
Joint monitoring of on-ground results achieved	19
Regular Meetings with local government	17
Increased on-ground training from local government for volunteers	16
Assistance by local government in recruiting volunteers	14
Development of a shared understanding of NRM outcomes	14
LGAs could utilise the skills of volunteer groups more effectively	14
Other	9

Table 18: Suggestions to improve relationships. More than one response was allowed. (n=52)

Q29 Partnerships in Local Community

While in questions 17 group representatives were asked about their overall partnerships, question 29 was intended to focus on collaborations within the groups local community. A total of 39 people responded to this question and 20 (33%) confirmed their collaboration with other Friends Groups.

While umbrella and catchment groups such as SERCUL, Urban Bushland Council, Perth NRM and Chittering Landcare were named here as well, more unconventional partnerships with an Arts Centre the Church and the Men's Shed were also listed.

Groups have also partnered with local schools, one group partnered with a university, one with TAFE and one with a grammar school. Furthermore, partnerships were made with youth groups like Scout Groups and Millennium-Kids. A total of seven respondents (18%) reported not having any local partnerships and collaboration at all.

Communication Streams of Environmental Information in the Perth Region

To identify the best tools and strategies for communicating environmental information, group representatives were asked several questions about how they receive information, and how they share the events and concerns of their group.

Q30 Accessing Information about Environmental Events and Actions

Group representatives were asked which sources they were using to stay informed about environmental events and activities.

While the response was quite diverse, 15 people said they use Facebook and social media to inform themselves, and 11 stated to get their updates from the Urban Bushland Council.

Q31 How did you hear about this survey?

Most of the respondents who selected 'other' reported to have received information by email from the Perth NRM Community Engagement Project Officer or other support groups such as DBCA or the local government.

Information Source	Responses
Facebook and social media	15
Urban Bushland Council	11
Internet/Online/Websites	8
Perth NRM	7
Local Government	6
City of Swan	5
Bushland News (DBCA)	4
SERCUL	3
Conservation Council WA	3
Newsletters	2

Table 19: Sources through which environmental volunteers receive information about environmental events and actions.

Figure 28: How participants found out about the CCA2021 survey



Q32 Communication Streams with Volunteers

Most of the group representatives communicate via email with their volunteers (internal communications - see Table 20). The second most used method of communication is via Facebook, followed by meetings and other forms of social media.

Some groups reported communicating events to their Volunteers face-to-face and on their websites. One group additionally drops letters in their community twice per year.

Comparing those results with the responses from the individual volunteers, one discrepancy is highly distinct, and as only two group representatives indicate to collect their information about environmental events from newsletters, while most of the individual volunteers (41) responded newsletters were their main information source.

Internal Communications	Responses
Email	45
Facebook	22
Meetings	8
Other Social Media	4
Telephone	4
SMS	4
WhatsApp	3
Newsletter	2

Table 20: How environmental groups communicate with their volunteers. More than one response was allowed. (n=52)

Q33 Promotion and Communication of Group Actions and Events

Individual groups also communicate externally through flyers and posters, on notice boards, at events, signage, and monthly reports.

None of the groups mentioned communication through local TV, community radio or, for instance, the Act Belong Commit website, Twitter or TikTok.

Comparing these results with the answers to Q24 and Q35, the information indicates the need for alternative communication streams to effectively attract new and younger volunteers.

External Communications	Responses
Facebook	36
Email	24
Newsletter	13
Website	10
Social Media	5
Local Newspaper	3
MailChimp	2
Instagram	2
School	1

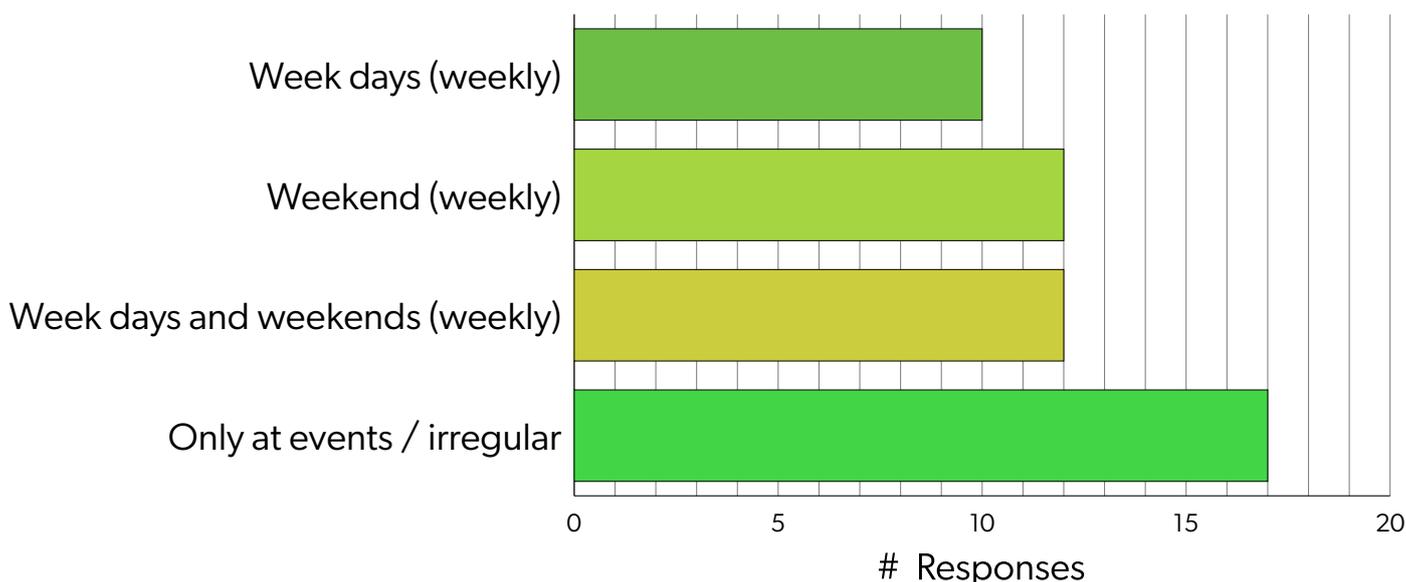
Table 21: How environmental groups promote and communicate their events and actions. More than one response was allowed. (n=52)

Q34 Group Working Days

During individual interviews with Friends Groups Representatives and within the discussion in the co-design workshops that were held prior to the online survey, it was identified that groups that undertake on-ground work on weekends were able to attract younger volunteers and families.

It is interesting to observe that many groups operate only through irregular events, while others undertake regular weekly on-ground work.

Figure 29: Times in which groups undertake their work. (n=51)



Q35 Attracting new Volunteers

Umbrella Group websites, e.g., Urban Bushland Council and DBCA, etc., are used for advertising volunteer positions. Furthermore, some groups are in contact with local volunteer centres, e.g., Rockingham Volunteer Centre (RVC) and University Guilds, to recruit more volunteers.

Leaflets are created, letter drops, and door stops undertaken, which adds to the group work and volunteering time. Some groups reported advertising on the Volunteering WA website, Seek and Go Volunteer.

Promotional events like bird walks are organised, communicated, and held by volunteers. A few groups have reported that advertising at their regular bush care activities is the most successful strategy they have used so far. Putting up signs and wearing t-shirts with the group name makes it easier for people to recognise them as a group and to come to engage with them. While most respondents use Facebook (18) to attract new volunteers, others (9) indicated that they consider it to be 'difficult' to attract new volunteers.

Recruitment Sources	Responses
Facebook	18
Events	11
Word of Mouth	9
Website	7
Newsletter	2

Table 22: Actions that groups undertake to attract new volunteers. Only the most common are listed. (n=47)



Co-Design Workshop, July 2021

Q36 Desire for Assistance with Succession Planning

Discussions around the issue of aging volunteers and group representatives arose in several interviews and in the two survey co-design workshops. As a result, the question of whether the group has a desire to get assistance with succession planning was integrated into this survey. The survey outcome reflects the initial conversations, as 63.3% of respondents have expressed a wish for support with succession planning.

Figure 30: Groups requesting assistance with succession planning. (n=49)



Q37 Factors that strengthen and keep a Group together

Most of the respondents believe that their shared passion for the environment is the main element that keeps their group together. Some expanded on this, saying a clear vision and goal encourages their commitment. Besides regular social interaction, the opportunities for shared home-baked morning teas and the connection to community play an essential part. For many volunteers, it is vital to see the impact and improvement in the environment and the success stories; it is about making a difference.

Q38 Support Requirements

To help identify support needs of the groups, group representatives were asked about their current requirements. The results show that support with grant applications and access to funding is most needed by environmental groups in the Perth Region. As also identified in other sections of the Community Capacity Assessment, assistance in attracting new volunteers is required. Further support areas that were identified were training in weed identification, first aid and monitoring.

1. Access to funding and support with grant applications
2. Attracting new volunteers
3. Training in weed identification and management
4. First aid training and safety
5. Monitoring
6. Communication with Local Government councillors and staff
7. Community engagement and conservation education

Q39 Success Stories

Many of the groups reported their success stories of revegetation of land and removal, control, and eradication of invasive weeds. Influencing decisions to retain bushlands, protect parks from private development and environmental advocacy were also named as the biggest strengths. Other respondents stated that their most significant strengths are the committed, energetic, and generous volunteers within their group. The conservation work that was often undertaken for 20 to 40 years was also noted as a valuable strength. Some groups report holding workshops for schools, guided walks, and regular weeding.

Q40 Additional Suggestions

In this section, respondents were able to add their groups' major concerns and suggestions. Many people stated the need for better support and funding for engagement with the Aboriginal community and expressed their desire to learn more through traditional knowledge. More actions from the LGA and DBCA were also requested, and issues about staff turnovers at their LGA were raised. Participants feel that the support provided by their Local Government Officers is related to the personality and willingness of the person in the role.

Better access to funding was mentioned again, but one of the main concerns communicated in this section was again the necessity to recruit more and younger volunteers. It was underlined that succession planning is vital to ensure environmental outcomes over the long term.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED GAPS

Human, social, financial, and organisational capital gaps that hinder groups from reaching their potential in providing NRM outcomes are listed in the following table.

The number of areas that required capacity building in 2021 was 23 compared to 20 that were identified in 2017.

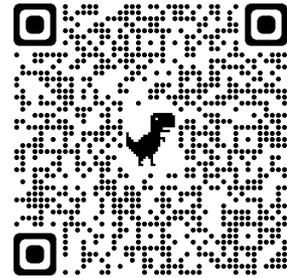
Capital	Capacity gaps identified
Human capital: On-ground and support investment	Identification of indigenous aquatic flora and fauna
	Methods for removing introduced species of aquatic flora and fauna
	Rehabilitation of injured native wildlife
	Scientific water quality monitoring
	Selection of indigenous plants and where to plant them
	Soil monitoring
	Terrestrial pest animal control – trapping/baiting
	Use of information and mapping technologies
Human capital: Support activities Social capital: Skills Financial capital: Income and assets investment	Working with Aboriginal people
	Effective connections with the Aboriginal community
	Trailer to transport tools and equipment
	Office space or headquarters
	Tools and equipment for animal rehabilitation
	Regular, reliable sources of income
	Increased corporate sponsorship /in-kind contributions
Organisational capital: investment	Documented policies and procedures
	Financial management systems and procedures
	Orientation process and training for new members
	Records of equipment/assets loaned to the group
	Records of equipment/assets owned by the group
	Risk assessment and management procedures
	Terms of reference/constitution
	Work plans identifying priorities and actions

Table 23: Capacity gaps identified grouped by capital

LINKS

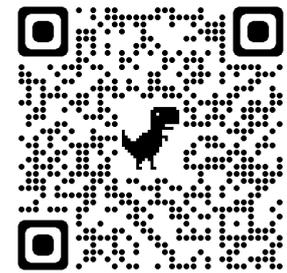
Perth NRM Community Capacity Assessment 2021 (Website)

<https://www.perthnrm.com/2021-community-capacity-assessment>



PNRM Enviro Network Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/377380367501767>



CCA 2021 Survey for Individuals (PDF)

https://www.perthnrm.com/nrmwp/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CCA2021_Survey-For-Individual-VOLUNTEERS.pdf



CCA 2021 Survey for Groups (PDF)

https://www.perthnrm.com/nrmwp/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CCA2021_Survey-For-GROUP-REPRESENTATIVES.pdf





*Community Capacity Assessment 2021 Event
WA Museum Boola Bardip, Hackett Hall*

Final CCA2021 event WA Museum Boola Bardip 19 May 2022

Two outcomes of the Community Capacity Assessment 2021 were presented at the Celebrating Community-Driven Conservation event at the WA Museum.

The event highlighted the multiple positive impacts of community volunteers on environmental conservation and restoration and outlined the challenges environmental groups and Friends Groups in the Perth region are facing. We celebrated the work of volunteers and provided an opportunity for networking and knowledge exchange between peers.

To respond to some of the identified issues, such as youth engagement, better engagement with the Aboriginal Community and learning of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and improved cross-sectoral partnerships, a set of 'Bright Spot' case studies were presented, and discussed during a panel discussion.

The overall benefits of environmental restoration to humans, communities and the environment were presented by the key speaker Dr Adam Cross, Curtin University Researcher and Science Director of the EcoHealth Network (EHN).

His work explores the EHN hypothesis that restoring an ecosystem will have significant positive health benefits for the people who interact with that ecosystem. An ecohealth thematic area is part of the recently funded \$13M Indigenous-led research project to explore the benefits of ecological restoration to the Indigenous Peoples of Western Australia. A tangible project where social work, health and environment meet was illustrated in the work of 'The Garden of Hope,' a partnership project between the Armadale Gosnells Landcare Group (AGLG) and the Harry Hunter Rehabilitation Centre.



Uncle Neville Collard's Welcome to Country at WA Museum Boola Bardip for the CCA event, May 2022.

Narelle Mewburn (Community Landcare Coordinator - AGLG) and Julie Scanlin (Horticulturalist/Volunteer - Harry Hunter Rehabilitation Centre) talked about the positive outcomes for recovery, physical, mental, and spiritual health that they were seeing throughout this project and explained how the project was conceived, financed, and supported.

How to develop an engagement of younger volunteers was presented by Perth Intrepid Landcare (Jacinta Saad – Founder, Cassie Howell, Lucy Steward and Jamie Wilson). This young and new group seeks to make environmental volunteering more fun, providing opportunities for young people to socialise, including music, DJs and BBQs.

Matthew Kickett, founder of Ngala Boodja - Aboriginal Land Care, illustrated an excellent example of the enhancement and connection with Aboriginal community members and Traditional Environmental Indigenous Knowledge.

Dr Catherine Baudains presented wonderful insights into Environmental Education and Education for Sustainability (EFS) opportunities in the Perth Region.

A holistic approach to environmental work that includes restoration, education and community was presented by the Trillion Trees Australia CEO, Denise True.

The Celebrating Community-Driven Conservation event received great feedback from participants who highly appreciated the opportunity to network and connect and learn more about emerging environmental community projects in the Perth region.

As the CCA2021 survey outcomes indicated the need for more networking opportunities and better visibility of the work of Environmental Groups in the broader community, the first Perth Week of Action to mark the United Nations International Day for Biodiversity (22.05.2022) was created with the intention of promoting environmental volunteering and environmental events collectively.

Apart from communication across the Perth environmental volunteering sector, different approaches were adopted, such as communication through RTRFM community radio to better reach people from distinct interest groups, age groups, and varying cultural backgrounds.

The Week of Action contained two Radio Interviews on RTRFM. Colma Keating from Urban Bushland Council (UBC) explained how to find and engage with Environmental Groups and Friends Groups in the Perth Region, and Hannah Gulliver, Citizen Science Project Manager and ReWild Engagement Officer at Perth NRM talked about the ReWild Perth project and online gardening platform.

Other events that formed part of the Week of Action were Harnessing the Benefits of Volunteerism in Natural Areas (WALGA), Environment Matters - Food and farming (CCWA), Samson Park Community Planting Day, Planting at Southernwood Park • Perth NRM, WA Naturalist Walks and a special screening of a new short documentary by Damon Gameau, *Regenerating Australia*, with a Q&A session.

A direct outcome of the CCA2021 was the initiation of the Environmental Umbrella Group Collective (EUGC).

Throughout the assessment process, it was identified that better cooperation and communication between Umbrella Groups, which support environmental community groups in the Perth region, is needed.

In an initial meeting, the CCA2021 findings were presented. All participants collectively agreed that initiating a EUGC with regular meetings to work on and address jointly in-common issues would be of high value.

Thanks to this cooperation, the EUGC Collective Action Plan, the Week of Action marking the United Nations International Day for Biodiversity 2022 and a joint Grant Application that seeks to continuously improve the identified issues and strengths of environmental groups in the Perth region evolved.

The study has shown that the future of community-driven Environmental Conservation and Restoration in the Perth region continues to be determined, firstly by how community groups and volunteers are supported by the land manager - LGAs and State Government and by Umbrella Groups. Secondly, the quality and ambition of stakeholders to partner and cooperate to enhance collective impact, and lastly but most importantly, it continues to thrive through the goodwill, the determination and the passion of Perth's environmental volunteers.

Thank you to all the sponsors of the *Celebrating Community-Driven Conservation* event.

- Perth NRM
- State Natural Resource Management Program
- Conservation Council of WA
- Coastal Connections

Interview with Local Government Champion – City of Swan

BRADLEY THOMPSON

Having a key contact person that is always available and provides needs-based support makes LG relationships with Environmental Groups efficient and effective.

How long have you been in the role, and how many groups are you supporting?

I have worked in the environmental field since I left high school in different capacities. I supported farmers to revegetate their properties with tree planting, and between 2011-2016 I worked in the Shire of Mundaring as a Bush Care Coordinator with 89 volunteer groups. Since 2016 I have been working for the City of Swan, supporting 47 environmental volunteer groups and roughly 200-300 volunteers.

How do you support your local groups?

When working with Volunteers, it is crucial for them to have a contact point, and this is the role of my job - I am this contact point. If they want native seedlings, tools or support with extra weed control through contractors, they know that they can contact me.

When it's time to order native seedlings, I send out an email to ask which species of seedlings they would like to place and order for them then. The key method is having a contact point for those sorts of things.

The Friends groups themselves do weed control on their reserves, tree planting, litter pick-up. Some of them do die-back injection or citizen science projects such as bird habitat boxes and bird surveys etc.

There is a wide variety of things that they can do on-site. Basically, I am there to help support them in doing those things.

Are there any support or partnership mechanisms installed that groups can count on?

It is not really set up like that. If there are particularly tricky issues about a site or any difficulties, we will put together an action plan for the reserve. This highlights which areas the groups are working on and the priority tasks to do in that area. That is the easiest way of doing it.

I contact friends groups typically at the end of the year to ask them about ordering seedlings for the following year. I contact them twice a year to get their volunteering hours to establish six-months by six-month snapshot about the volunteering hours spent on each reserve.

I send general information as it comes through via email to the group coordinators.

We also have a series of volunteering workshops called *Nature Know-How*, about which I send updates to friends groups to let them know about the opportunities for them to attend.

It is difficult to have regularly scheduled meetings because there are many groups.

I try to remain available to them so they can contact me at any time with any concerns, and I try to help to sort it. If groups invite me to meetings, I always try to attend.



The CCA survey outcomes about communication of environmental events from the City of Swan was rated highly efficient. How do you communicate with your groups?

The City of Swan has a few officers working in the environmental space. Amy Kontor is the Sustainability Officer, focusing on environmental and sustainability projects.

Between her, myself, and the library team, we put together the *Nature Know-How* workshops etc.

Amy also has a monthly newsletter about Sustainable and Environmental Events coming up, and we both are sending those out to our contacts. This is one way we are getting our communication out.

I try to keep my number of emails to friends groups to a minimum. This is because people often feel bombarded by emails when they sign up for different programs.

I try to keep it as succinct as possible, giving an update about friends groups, workshop opportunities and potential grants; and I always say contact me anytime if you need help, and I can come out and help you immediately. I provide information that is directly relevant to them and not too much other information because I do not want volunteers to get burned out.

The thing environmental volunteers enjoy doing is working on-ground. So I am there to support them with their work on-ground and provide relevant and interesting information.

It is essential to have this main contact because local governments are massive organisations. It is not easy to get through to one particular person if you do not know them and if you need to seek the Environmental Officer within the Local Government; whereas, I put it on all my emails; contact me, here is my number, give me a call any time. That is the sort of way that works because they know I am there, and if they need something or something goes wrong, they just come to me, and we are trying to fix it.

In the CCA survey the performance of the City of Swan about their relationship with environmental groups was rated as extremely effective. What do you think is most important to establish effective relationships with environmental groups and volunteers?

Being available to them is the main factor for establishing effective relationships. I also have the benefit of working with a lot of volunteer groups for a long time. I think it is really important to do what you say. If someone is asking for help, they need some help, so we go and help them. It is kind of that simple.

You go through with what you say you do and don't promise things that you can not do. If you can not do something, you can offer alternatives and check if that would be ok for the volunteer groups. Usually, we come to a good negotiated outcome with these sorts of things. That is kind of the trick as well as building up trust. If someone comes to you for something, it is important to help them out. You can not let people hang. The program's point is to get the things done, so we need to remember that it is about getting the on-ground outcomes in reserves and we are here to help people do that.

In some areas where other LG were rated deficient, the City of Swan received a positive rating. Those are guiding with Aboriginal Consultation and providing support to learn about Aboriginal Culture. Can you tell us more about the support you provide to your groups in this area?

I have sent out some information in regards to Aboriginal Engagement opportunities within the City. But I guess the biggest thing is that the City of Swan has two Aboriginal trainees coming out on site for planting or other events and working jointly with the groups.

Maybe this is part of the engagement that really stands out to groups and people. A lot of governments are currently looking to engage Aboriginal trainees and traineeship, and I really encourage it. This is a fantastic project. There is a lot of benefits of working with different organisations and getting the trainees their skills. They then go on into a different area in the environmental field.

One of our former trainees (Matthew Kickett), for instance, has started his own Aboriginal Landcare business – Ngala Boodja. He has achieved great outcomes and gets a lot of major contracts with main roads etc. It is really satisfying to see this full circle.

We've just got a new supervisor for our bush regeneration and Indigenous trainees program who has got an excellent background in mentoring young people. We are really hoping for more benefits to come from that program in the future. This must be the reason why we were rated high for our support to engagement with the Aboriginal community.

Joint on-ground work has decreased massively in the last years. Survey respondents stated that the City of Swan is still undertaking joined on-ground work with their groups. Could you explain more about this?

I think it comes back again to have that contact. If friends groups need assistance and they do not have that main contact, who can they go to? I am not sure how it works in other local governments, but at the City of Swan, volunteers can come to me or whoever is sitting in my role.

If they need assistance, for example, in making sure weed control is done before a planting day, we can organise that. The bush crew can come out, or we could get contractors out beforehand. So it is really not only down to money.

For instance, the Shire of Mundaring, where I worked before, was not hugely wealthy Local Government, and it is still able to get things done and support their groups. This doesn't cost a lot of money. It is just having a contact to be able to talk to and make sure their needs are well catered for. It is just as simple as that and does not cost a lot of money.

You can help a group out a lot and make a planting day much more efficient. If you organise the weed control and dig the holes beforehand, the whole project goes more smoothly, especially when you got kids and students participating. So it is just about helping them out and getting the group the basic needs covered so they can go on from there. It is about providing support to the groups when they need it.

Succession planning is one of the main concerns of environmental groups and umbrella groups. This is why the transfer of knowledge plays a crucial role. Could you describe how you provide opportunities for the transfer of knowledge?

We are lucky in the City of Swan because we have such a large population compared to the other hills LG. With this population, if you have 1% of people interested in a neighbourhood surrounding a bushland area, you already have around 50 people coming to planting events.

Younger people have lots of things going on in their lives, but they are still really keen to come out to environmental events if they are well planned. As long as there is one person to organise it and I can support to do it, younger people will come.

The groups we formed in the City of Swan are relatively new and younger than other groups. This is where we have some advantages because we are forming new groups with a lot of younger passionate people.

I believe one of the keys is to go back out there to the same community that has come to work there before and contact as many people as you can to ask them if they are interested in coming out to events like this.

There are young people who are passionate about the environment. It is about getting in touch with them. Maybe social media may not work as well because it is hard to get through the noise, I think.

I guess making sure that there are people out there talking in the community. For instance, I live in the Perth Hills and I met someone that was interested in doing some work in the bush while going for a walk with my dog. We started a group and are active now with organising some weed pulling events etc. If someone is interested in doing a friends group, word of mouth seems to be a good way to get more volunteers, I think.

What would you like to share with or recommend other environmental officers that would like to improve their work with environmental groups?

Recommendations that I would have for other people in my role would be to get out there, do not over-promise and under-deliver, just work within our capacity because there is a lot of support you need to deliver for a large number of volunteers.

Build trust with people, support them, and do not put extra pressure on volunteers. If people want to only do tree planting in the reserve once a year, say thank you very much, it is your time. If people are not interested in using chemicals in their particular reserve, respect that and supply people with alternative weed control methods.

The people are donating their time, so the important thing is to support them because they are giving their time for free. This is basically what I always try to keep in mind; people are giving you the time, so you need to help them in the best way possible. People are volunteers, have their own lives, have grandchildren, and work in a lot of cases. If they donate their time to look after this, you need to help them do it because it is work they are putting in to really help the community. You can't take that for granted. It would be an incredible insult to take their work for granted.

Aboriginal Engagement and Natural Resource Management

MATTHEW KICKETT

After completing a conservation and land management traineeship with the City of Swan, Matthew Kickett started Ngala Boodja Aboriginal Land Care, with the long term goal of providing traineeships to other indigenous people.

What is your current role and the work you are engaged with and your cultural background?

My current role is operating, managing, and owning a small Indigenous environmental and natural areas business. Specialising in land management and conservation and horticultural fields and providing these types of services at the highest level possible.

I am a proud Whadjuk Noongar and half Australian man with ties to the Balardong region also.

Our main types of works consist of overall all services related to large scale revegetation projects – maintenance of all natural areas – weed control – vegetation control and things of that nature i.e., conservation and land management (CLM) and natural areas works.

How did you become interested in this kind of work?

I became interested in this field of work immediately once I started my CLM Traineeship at the City of Swan and realised what this field of works was and how it all operated. Prior to this I had no idea of CLM and how it was incorporated into natural areas and how I could make a career being outdoors and having a good impact on our land.

Being an outdoors kid, I was always out hunting, fishing, playing sports and just being outdoors generally, so this type of work was right up my alley. Once I was shown the ropes and gained experience out onsite with City of Swans Bush Crew and mentored by Michael Cook and Bradley Thomas, I knew quickly I wanted to make this a career.

Looking further into Aboriginal businesses in the environmental fields (CLM etc) I quickly learned there were not any that were Indigenous owned, operated, and managed that were actively trying to grow into a vessel to offer up traineeships like the one I completed to younger Indigenous people or more generally.

This pushed me to start my business on completion of my traineeship and have a direction I wanted to go with it. Four years down the track, I am still operating and getting closer each day to the end goal: traineeships for younger Indigenous peoples in CLM/Natural areas.

What are the challenges and the benefits of your work in this sector?

At the start I faced many challenges. I started the business using my savings acquired throughout my traineeship at City of Swan. This limited me in the beginning with the facilities and equipment not being available and therefore limited to what services I could provide. Thus, unlike other businesses it's been a slow growing process. Being young I was, and still am, uncomfortable taking out large loans at this stage but I have come a long way on my own in that regard, saying that in the near future we will be taking the next steps to go to the next level of business and get closer to the vision I've had since the start.

Being an Indigenous business, there was some scepticism on the services and quality of services we provided which was only overcome by being given, I guess you could say 'chances', and proving ourselves a contender in this industry and to now most of our best clients. Being a younger individual added to the scepticism toward my business as I was 23 when I started this off.

The benefits? I have met some of the best people I know in this industry, hands down, as previously I've worked in the construction industry, and this is worlds away a better environment all around.

Being able to control the direction of this business, watch it grow and watch the plans come together to move towards our goals is amazing, and I would not give it up for anything. Being able to fill that gap in the Indigenous businesses sector for the environmental industry plus move towards traineeships for our people is a great feeling and needs to be done as soon as possible.



What were the most significant learning and experiences you made throughout the Indigenous Trainee Program you undertook with City of Swan?

The most significant experiences and knowledge I made throughout the program was understanding how much knowledge in the Noongar community has been forgotten, and how there are individuals like Michael Cook who have such extensive knowledge about Indigenous ways and knowhow. There should be widespread programs to almost re-educate young Indigenous peoples, including by people like Michael Cook and Elders of the Noongar peoples.

From not understanding how natural areas were managed, and directly how Noongar peoples have been doing it for 10000s of years previously was quite eye opening. That, mixed in with modern education on how to do the tasks required to look after land, revegetate, burn off correctly and manage natural areas, or even make them from scratch, greatly affected my connection to land. It therefore gave me the ambition to further my studies and start Aboriginal Land Care.

This program gave me all the skills and knowhow I needed to start and have a successful business which is now in its fourth year and going strong. If I didn't do this program, have the mentors I did, gain that connection with land and therefore have the confidence in myself to start this business it would never have happened.

The Community Capacity Assessment has identified that Environmental Volunteer Groups in the Perth region would like to learn more about traditional knowledge and engage more with Aboriginal Culture and Community. Do you believe your work contributes to improving this, and why?

I do believe Indigenous natural areas business like my own would be an excellent fit to work alongside Friends groups and Environmental volunteer groups, as it goes hand in hand. They want to help keep all our lands at this point in good order, and we want the same. Their knowledge mixed with Indigenous peoples would be a great combo to make things happen and open possibly more doors to gain more resources for these tasks, which is greatly needed.

Are there any suggestions that you could give Environmental Volunteer Groups on how to enhance this knowledge and connection better?

Communication is key. Contacting a business or environmental Indigenous group and explaining what the goal is, and the tasks involved, is 100% needed from the start. From there, working directly together through all things needed from start to finish i.e., involving all groups throughout all processes would be the best way to go about it, and have the best results, as both groups can integrate and use all resources and connections on both ends to achieve what's needed.

Do you have any suggestions for Local Government Officers on how to enhance Aboriginal knowledge and the connection with Aboriginal Culture and Communities better?

Working with local Indigenous community groups and the Elders of those groups is key. If that's not possible, having a contact that is known to each group can help bridge the communication between the two is needed, which is sometimes a challenge, but they are there.

The best example I can give is having someone like Michael Cook who knows a lot of Indigenous families and groups, therefore has the connections to help bridge a relationship with Local government officers leading to enhancing Aboriginal knowledge and the connection with Aboriginal Culture and Communities. It's all about making that connection with a group or Elder and from there spending the time to build a relationship to get that connection and co-operation.

Insights into the Life of an Environmental Volunteer

UNICE ROBINSON

Years ago, Unice Robinson was taking her baby out for a stroll when she discovered a sandy track leading to a wetland, where volunteers were weeding. Forty years later, she is the representative for the Friends of Mary Carroll Wetlands.

Can you describe the history of the Friends of the Mary Carroll Wetlands?

In the late 70s, there was a group that started in a nearly developed park. The group was weeding the grass area in the park. After some time, the people said they were actually more interested in the natural area, the Wetland that they were interested in. They talked to the City of Gosnells, so they sent out someone to instruct the people about the plants, to understand which plants were native and what was a weed.

In the early 80s, the group that was called the Mary Carroll Park at that time became better established. We had meetings and a voice through an advisory group at the City of Gosnells. That was our official start. Carrol Maddison was the president at that time. When she went back to work, she handed the role over to me. I like the on-ground work more than paperwork and meetings, so the on-ground work has gradually increased.

How many volunteers are involved in your group?

We have approximately 30 volunteers that I call the on-ground crew, of which ten volunteers are the core Monday working group. On Thursdays, we have four regular volunteers, but weekends can be very different. We have people that attend official meetings and one person who really enjoys going to meetings. This is an immense help to me.

Some volunteers take care of plants in their back yards. We are currently growing mainly Sedges; in the early days, it was Marri and Acacia seedlings, but there are some species we cannot grow. I germinate them, and once they are pot size, they go to the volunteer's backyard, and when they are big enough, we plant them into the Wetland. We also have a space in the community garden where we have around 12,000 plants currently growing.

Quite a few members are interested but just received our Newsletter. I call them associated groups such as the Water Bird Conservation Group and the Darling Range Wildlife Shelter. These are groups that we can call on but we do not have much involvement with.



How did you become interested and engaged with the Mary Carroll Wetlands?

When my first child was still in the pram, I walked through a sandy track from my house and found the Wetland. That is when I saw the people sitting and weeding on the lawn. One day I asked them and joined them. The area is just really beautiful.

That was about forty years ago, but initially it was only once a month. As time went on, I became more and more involved. It was my choice to become more engaged with the work of the group.

Can you describe your weekly tasks as a Group Representative of the Mary Carroll Wetlands?

The administrative work includes communicating on Facebook, which takes approximately 30 minutes daily, emails, following up on Centrelink paperwork, meetings, checking on weekly contractors who are going to be in and out of the wetlands, and discussing grant applications. It is basically anything that just pops up. I also take photos that I share on Facebook. All the administrative work can take a lot of time, but it also really depends on what else is happening in my family life as to how much I actually put in.

For the on-ground work, I have two working days, Mondays and Thursdays, from 8am -12pm. I am always there one hour earlier and one hour after. This is just to prepare, get the stuff out, making sure the site is right. Then at the end of the day, it is about putting all the tools away into the shed and things like that.

Although often the volunteers would help with that, I need to make sure the site is right, and tools in the shed are packed away well. Every third Saturday from 9am -12pm, there is a workday at the community garden to look after our sedges, where I always turn up 10-15 minutes earlier.

In between, I am going down to the site to whipper snipper. This is important as the batteries on the whipper-snipper only last for an hour or so. So I go down between the working days that we have with the group, so we are still able to get a huge covering.

If there's not a lot of on-ground work to do, I go down to have a wonderful time by just taking photographs. I go back and check on the rehabilitation sites. With the group, we also measure our water. We have habitat boxes up where we have to keep an eye on them. It is a continual cycle per season. Every week is a bit different.

The volunteer engagement includes the days we are working. Once a month, I check in with our volunteers that have plants in their backyard. This is to see if they need anything, like potting mix. I also see if people are sick and check with them and visit some as well, depending on the circumstances.

I meet with new volunteers if we get new ones. We attract them through Facebook, and Armadale Gosnells Landcare Group (AGLG) is sending people through a Centrelink program that are coming to complete some volunteering hours. These are partly people from rehab centres doing community and reintegration hours. We do not have many new volunteers coming, but it is more by word of mouth if so.

There are many older volunteers. Also, some volunteers come through the school. AGLG sometimes do volunteer work at the Mary Carroll Wetlands with some corporate groups. But it is mainly organised by AGLG, and I am only helping out and assisting them. And then, I also have weekend volunteers that only come once or twice a year. A school close to us is also a great volunteer source. We had an event this summer, and we got a lot of people coming from everywhere, even from Mandurah and Byford.

Sometimes, I just do not have the time for other things, such as partnership building. One of the problems is that partnerships always come with additional work and commitments, for example, regular meetings or fundraisers.

We have partnerships with the community garden and AGLG where we need to go to the meetings. I never mind going to AGLG because we are getting so much support from them. The same with SERCUL.

There is also the Water Bird Conservation Group, but this is a loose partnership as we do not have any commitments. The Darling Range Wildlife Shelter takes our injured birds, so we do fundraising for them as well. If you are in a good associated partnership, then it also involves extra work.

If we have a volunteer to go to the meeting, and we are lucky to have one, that helps a lot because we can share those tasks, but sometimes it still ends up coming back to me. We also had something called Befriend. This is a social group that encourages people to engage in natural areas. They also have a lot of young people. We did it for three months, where we committed to one morning per week, but no one turned up. So, sometimes partnerships can be really hard work without getting benefits. Unfortunately, sometimes, you do not know until you are down the track.

Where do you and the Friends of the Mary Carroll Wetlands get the most support from?

The AGLG – they do all the grant writing and look after our money very well. They organise contractors if we need that because our group is not incorporated. This is a big win, as is reducing paperwork. We are doing a leaflet on waterbirds for the area, where AGLG is helping us with the pictures and putting everything together. This is the help with the paperwork side.

Their help with the on-ground work, for instance, is that they provide us with tools, such as wheelbarrows to move the tree mulch when we need it. We know we can count on their help. If we need anything, we can contact them, and they will help us sort the issues. Also, if we had any issues with the City of Gosnells, which we have not had so far, AGLG would come and talk me through that as well. It is nice to know that I've got that back up.

The City of Gosnells is very supportive of us and responds to our requests, and they will come and do it. The other two are SERCUL which I use more for information. When I go to their events, I take a lot of informational leaflets and share them with our volunteers. Our local MP, Chris Thelentine, is also extremely supportive of our work. He comes down and works with us.

Who do you think should be more engaged with the work that the Friends of Mary Carroll Wetlands are undertaking?

There are two areas where I would love to see more engagement. One would be with our Noongar community members. It would be really nice if a few of them came along to work with us in the Wetland.

The other group of people that I would love to see more involved are migrants and new people coming into the country. I would love to teach them about our bushland. When I had the opportunity to speak to some people new to the area, I understood they were frightened of the bushland. So I would love them to learn about it and be able to enjoy it better. They do not have to come to work here if they do not want to, but I would just love to teach them and have them come along at any of our events or walks.

How do you see the future of the Friends of Mary Carroll Wetlands and the wetland itself?

Because we have so much support from AGLG, I think the Friends of Mary Carroll Wetlands can function quite well. Unless things change with the City of Gosnells, this bush site is a second priority for the City of Gosnells, so I feel the site be well taken care of.

Are there any suggestions that you could give other stakeholders, organisations, local government and the communities on how they could better support the work of the Friends of the Mary Carroll Wetlands?

Come and see what we do. Once they've seen what we do, they can have more ideas about how they can better support us.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

I would like to encourage people to go and join a Friends Group or Environmental Group. Just go for half an hour, meet new people, see what they do, and if you like it, do a bit more.

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