

UPPER HOPKINS
LAND MANAGEMENT GROUP

Committee Handbook

Prepared 2021

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We acknowledge and respect Traditional Owners as the original custodians of this regions land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past, present and emerging, whose knowledge and wisdom ensures the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

1. Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook has been prepared to assist Upper Hopkins Land Management Group (UHLMG) Committee members to gain an understanding of their role and responsibilities and to inform the governance of UHLMG.

This handbook may be amended with the approval of the members of UHLMG at a general meeting.

2. About Upper Hopkins Land Management Group

2.1 Introduction

The UHLMG is a volunteer run organisation established in 1991 that facilitates funding and coordinates a range of environmental projects.

2.2 Mission and aims

The mission of UHLMG is:

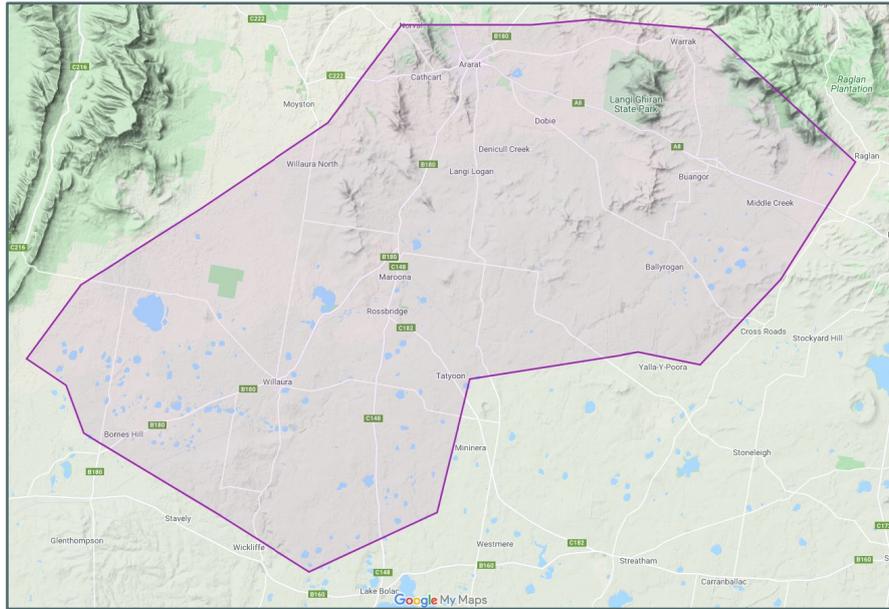
Protecting the environment, encouraging productivity, engaging our community to ensure sustainable farming for current and future generations.

The aims of UHLMG are:

- *Engage our community in Landcare*
- *Improve soil health*
- *Control pest plants and animals*
- *Protect and enhance remnant vegetation, wetlands and waterways*
- *Ensure a sustainable future*

2.3 Map

The area that UHLMG cares for is approximately 250,000 hectares, and extends from Ararat towards Beaufort, south-west to Lake Bolac, across to Glenthompson and up along the Grampians National Park eastern boundary to Moyston.



2.4 Structure

UHLMG comprises a Committee (discussed below at 4) and a group of around 150 Members.

3. Relationship to Landcare Victoria Inc

UHLMG is an unincorporated Member Group of Landcare Victoria Inc (LVI). LVI acts as an umbrella body that confers some of the benefits of incorporation on UHLMG without the need for UHLMG to dealing with the legal requirements in relation to becoming and remaining incorporated. In some cases, LVI must act as the auspicing body for UHLMG grant applications.

3.1 About Landcare Victoria Inc

Landcare facilitates community-based care for the land through land and water management practices that bring together productivity and resource protection. LVI is the independent representative body for Landcare in Victoria. LVI is an incorporated association and operates under a set of Rules (the LVI Rules) and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic).

Purpose of Landcare Victoria Inc

LVI exists to be a charity whose purpose is the protection and enhancement of the natural environment in Victoria. LVI's purpose will be achieved through:

- a) encouraging and facilitating community based, cooperative, multidisciplinary approaches to caring for the land, by groups of like-minded people;
- b) providing a strong voice on behalf of Landcare in Victoria; and
- c) promoting sustainable land and water management practices which balance economics and ecology as well as productivity and resource protection.

In return for payment of UHLMG's annual subscription fee, LVI provides services including insurance cover, grant support, information on current issues (including through the Landcare magazine), training and advice.

3.2 Rights of UHLMG and its members in relation to LVI

UHLMG has the right (exercised through the President) to vote at general meetings of LVI and in the election for a regional committee member for the Glenelg Hopkins Committee. It is also entitled to receive notice of and access to the minutes of LVI general meetings and submit items of business for consideration at general meetings.

UHLMG members have the right to:

- stand for election for LVI's Committee; and
- nominate for the LVI Members Council.

3.3 Responsibilities to LVI

UHLMG must ensure that it:

- provides LVI with a current list of UHLMG members complete with postal addresses and join dates (this also enables the UHLMG members to receive the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine);
- keeps adequate financial accounts, holds them for a period of seven years and provides LVI with a summary each year;
- informs LVI of any significant change to UHLMG's purposes or activities; and
- does not distribute surplus monies to UHLMG members.

3.4 Liability

Although UHLMG is not incorporated, it is protected by LVI's incorporation, provided that:

- UHLMG pays its annual LVI subscription and insurance cover fee;
- UHLMG complies with the LVI Rules;
- UHLMG ensures that any by-laws or own rules it adopts are consistent with the LVI Rules and the LVI Purpose set out above in point 3.1– to date UHLMG has not adopted any by-laws or own rules; and
- UHLMG and its members do not enter into any contract or incur any "material" obligation or liability without the written approval of the LVI Committee.

Being protected by LVI's incorporation means that LVI bears responsibility for all liabilities incurred by UHLMG or its members in conducting UHLMG activities.

4. The Committee

The details of the current Committee members are attached in Appendix A. Under the LVI Rules, the Committee of a Member Group must include (at least) a President and Secretary. The UHLMG includes the following members:

- President;
- Vice President;
- Secretary;
- Treasurer; and
- General Committee Members.

4.1 Appointment and service

Committee members are appointed by election at the Annual General Meeting. All paid members of UHLMG are entitled to vote in the election. Committee members serve for three years. Their term ends at the end of the second Annual General Meeting following their appointment.

The Committee may appoint additional Committee members in between Annual General Meetings to replace a Committee member who resigns. These Committee members will serve until the next Annual General Meeting.

At each Annual General Meeting the paid members of UHLMG must appoint a President and Secretary from among the Committee members, together with any other office bearers they consider appropriate.

These office bearers will serve for one year.

UHLMG Committee members should expect that the role will involve 20-30 hours per year for general committee members and 40-50 hours per year for Executive committee members (President, Secretary, Treasurer), including attending Committee meetings, the UHLMG Annual General Meeting and participating in UHLMG activities. Although attendance at every UHLMG activity is not mandatory for Committee members, it is expected that Committee members will make the effort to attend a majority of UHLMG activities. This gives Committee members an opportunity to communicate and connect with members and volunteers and to practically support the work of UHLMG. Importantly, it ensures that Committee member discussions are informed by an on-ground understanding of how activities are conducted and members and volunteers engaged.

4.2 Role of Committee members

The key roles of Committee members are set out below:

Office	UHLMG
President	<p>Leadership and coordination – delegating tasks, involving and motivating members, ensuring projects are completed on time, ensuring the committee functions well, keeping UHLMG focused on its goals and objectives.</p> <p>Representation – voting on behalf of UHLMG at LVI general meetings, representing UHLMG at meetings and signing official documents on behalf of UHLMG.</p> <p>Chairing meetings – facilitating Committee and members' meetings to promote discussion, support decision making</p>

	<p>(resolutions) and ensure resolutions are properly and clearly recorded.</p> <p>Convening meetings – calling Committee and members’ meetings, preparing an agenda with the Secretary, ensuring the venue and any guest speakers are arranged.</p>
Vice President	<p>Supporting the President</p> <p>Chairing all or part of a meeting if the President is unable to attend or has a conflict of interest</p>
Secretary	<p>Correspondence – manage all correspondence and ensure it is available to the Committee on request. Act as nominated contact for LVI.</p> <p>Notice – sending out the notice of Committee and member meetings.</p> <p>Agenda and minutes – preparing the meeting agenda with the President, recording minutes and ensuring they are available to the Committee (in the case of Committee meetings) or members (in the case of general meetings) on request.</p> <p>Record keeping - the Secretary should ensure that physical and electronic records including emails, correspondence, contracts, reports, minutes and agendas are stored securely and in a format that can be readily passed on to future secretaries. Electronic records should be backed up. UHLMG must store records for at least seven years.</p> <p>Register - the Secretary must maintain a register of UHLMG members, including their name, address, email, phone, date of becoming a member and date of ceasing to be a member. Contact details should be removed for former members.</p> <p>Manage HR for Facilitator by signing timesheets and working with employment agency.</p> <p>Annual Reporting to LVI – ensure that accurate reports are submitted annually (including membership lists, group activities, finances and volunteer efforts).</p>
Treasurer	<p>Manage UHLMG transactions (including banking and full and accurate record keeping with relevant correspondence), issue invoices and receipts, pay UHLMG bills and accounts and manage petty cash.</p> <p>Ensure transactions are approved by the Committee (either beforehand in a budget or after the transaction has occurred).</p>

	<p>Develop finance reports or keep a cash book stating all income and expenditure and providing regular financial reports to the committee.</p> <p>Provide a financial report for the AGM</p> <p>Keep financial records including receipts, cheque books stubs and tax invoices.</p> <p>Ensure grant or project money is separately accounted for.</p> <p>Track cash received including providing receipts to donors if appropriate and counting the money at regular intervals during events, recording amounts received and what the money was for.</p> <p>Maintain records of assets and liabilities</p>
All Committee members	<p>Promote UHLMG and its work.</p> <p>Support the group, including developing strategy and ensuring the group's aims are achieved.</p> <p>Participate in UHLMG Committee meetings.</p> <p>Ensure the good governance of UHLMG – this is discussed further below at Section 7.</p>

5. Members and volunteers

5.1 Membership

UHLMG has approximately 150 members. To become a member, individuals must apply through the UHLMG website or directly to the Secretary. Members must pay a membership fee for one or three year membership. Membership will lapse at the end of this period unless the membership fee is paid for a further period.

The Secretary is required to record the details of members in the member register. A sample member register is attached at Appendix B.

As well as voting at UHLMG general meetings and being entitled to stand for election to the Committee, members receive benefits including:

- funding opportunities from various sources;
- quarterly newsletter;
- invitations to practical workshops and seminars (often no or low cost);
- advice on Landcare-related issues specific to their property; and
- access to boom spray for gorse control.

Members are also entitled to use UHLMG resources free of charge, including:

- Tree planters;

- Direct seeder;
- Spray unit/trailer (for woody weed control);
- 4 x remote sensor cameras (for monitoring native and pest animals on your property);
- Water quality testing kit; and
- UHLMG promotional banners.

Decisions reserved for the members

The following decisions can only be made by the members (although the Committee may make recommendations to the members):

- setting the rate of UHLMG membership fees;
- electing the Committee members;
- winding up UHLMG (requires a special resolution of 75%);
- adopting by-laws or own rules of UHLMG (requires a special resolution of 75%).

The Committee may choose to seek a decision from the members on any other matter.

5.2 Volunteers/community members

UHLMG has around 600 community members on its database. UHLMG is required by LVI to keep details of regular volunteers who participate in its activities.

Volunteers who are not members are not entitled to vote at UHLMG general meetings or to stand for election to the Committee.

6. Facilitator

UHLMG receives funding from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to employ a part-time Landcare facilitator. Funding is for a fixed term (usually, four years). The facilitator's employment is managed through Skillinvest, a local employment agency.

The facilitator supports UHLMG to deliver on-ground projects that protect, enhance and restore the land and natural environment. The facilitator does this by providing strategic planning, securing funding and collaborating with local communities.

The facilitator is not a Committee member, but should participate (as a non-voting member) in Committee planning and decision-making. The facilitator ideally will make recommendations to the Committee rather than making significant decisions on behalf of the Committee. The Committee may, however, delegate some decision making functions to the facilitator and allocate a budget to the facilitator. The Committee should ensure these delegations are minuted and set clear parameters and priorities for the facilitator.

The facilitator will generally only be excluded from Committee meetings where the discussion relates to the facilitator's terms of employment.

Role of facilitator

The key work areas for Landcare facilitators include:

1. Build local community capacity to enable groups/networks to be self-sustaining
2. Undertake community engagement and build partnerships
3. Assist with planning and priority setting processes
4. Support the development of on-ground natural resource management projects
5. Secure project grants and other funding
6. Assist with monitoring, evaluation and reporting
7. Extend support to more groups, networks and landholders.

Across these areas, activities include the wide range of traditional roles that Landcare facilitators play, such as training, extension events, linking groups to opportunities, helping groups access information and expertise, and supporting the development of natural resource management projects.

7. Good governance

UHLMG Committee members are responsible to ensure it is well governed. Good governance will ensure UHLMG achieves its purpose most effectively and minimises risk to all Committee members and members. The key features of good governance are:

7.1 Ensuring UHLMG complies with its obligations

- Complying with the LVI Rules, including:
 - reporting to LVI when required;
 - maintaining a register of members and regular volunteers; and
 - complying with the LVI insurance requirements (Appendix C).
 - adopting and complying with the LVI Code of Conduct (Appendix A).
- UHLMG must also have a grievance policy and workplace health and safety policy in place while it retains a facilitator. These policies are attached at Appendix A. All Committee members should ensure they are familiar with these policies.
- Complying with any requirements of the Catchment Management Authority, such as:
 - Annual Report for Landcare Facilitator program, including the contribution of volunteer hours by members;
 - meeting the requirements of any funding agreements; and
 - participating in monthly facilitator meetings.

- Complying with any requirements of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, including:
 - meeting the requirements of any funding agreements most importantly the Facilitator funding agreement; and
 - ensuring good governance is met to satisfy the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program funding requirements.
- Meeting any legal requirements, such as:
 - Keeping records for all activities;
 - Running meetings in accordance with fair meeting principles;
 - Ensuring safety and risk requirements are met;
 - Only using permitted chemicals to control weeds or pest animals; and
 - ensuring trailers and vehicles are registered for road use.

7.2 Providing leadership

- Determining how best to achieve UHLMG's purposes;
- Selecting and organising projects;
- Communicating with stakeholders;
- Promoting the work of UHLMG; and
- Convening and conducting member meetings.

7.3 Managing UHLMG activities

- Ensuring projects are well run;
- Ensuring UHLMG equipment is used safely;
- Keeping good records of attendees at UHLMG activities; and
- Managing risk in UHLMG activities, including health and safety and child protection risks.

7.4 Complying with common law duties

UHLMG is unincorporated and is not a registered charity, so its Committee members are not subject to any statutory requirements in relation to how UHLMG is governed. However, the Courts have found that even unincorporated Committee members must comply with certain duties when they make governance decisions. In summary, these include:

- acting with reasonable care and diligence;
- acting honestly and fairly in the best interests of UHLMG and for its purposes;
- not misusing their position or information they gain as a Committee member;
- disclosing and managing conflicts of interest; and
- ensuring that UHLMG's financial affairs are managed responsibly.

UHLMG's Committee must also be accountable to its members. This can be achieved through:

- holding an annual general meeting, where its members are given proper notice, are provided with an annual report and financial report, and can ask questions and vote; and
- providing information to its members on its activities and finances.

8. Meetings

8.1 Committee meetings

The Committee meets approximately 4 times a year. A calendar of proposed meeting dates will be circulated at the beginning of the year by the Secretary. All Committee members will be given prior notice of Committee meetings by email. Meetings may be held in person or using technology.

Decisions at meetings will be made by majority vote. The Secretary will take minutes of meetings and circulate them to all Committee members following each meeting.

A sample agenda and minutes for Committee meetings is attached at Appendix B.

8.2 General meetings

Meetings of UHLMG members are called general meetings. The members will meet together once a year in around September for an Annual General Meeting (additional “special” general meetings may be called if required but will be the exception rather than the rule).

All members will be given at least two weeks’ prior notice of general meetings by email. Meetings may be held in person or by using technology.

Decisions at meetings will be made by majority vote, except for special resolutions which require a 75% vote. The Secretary will take minutes of general meetings and circulate them to all members following each meeting.

A sample agenda and minutes for general meetings is attached at Appendix B.

9. Finances

Although the Treasurer has specific functions (set out at 4.2) in relation to UHLMG finances, all Committee members are corporately responsible to ensure that:

- UHLMG finances are managed responsibly;
- Expenditure is directed towards furthering UHLMG’s purpose; and
- Individuals do not receive an inappropriate personal benefit from UHLMG expenditure.

UHLMG requires the approval of the LVI Committee to hold a bank account and any major equipment.

9.1 Bank account details and signatories

UHLMG must ensure that at least three Committee members are approved signatories for its bank account at all times. All cheques and electronic payments

must be approved by at least two signatories. Prior to making any payment, the signatories must confirm that the payment is related to funding received by the Group or another income stream.

9.2 Transparency

Funding spreadsheets for each grant received (and associated income and expenditure) will be updated and stored in the Committee Google Drive to ensure transparency.

Income may include membership fees, sponsorships, donations and grants.

Expenses may include postage, room hire, equipment purchases, labour and catering.

The Treasurer will provide updated reports on project income and expenditure against budget at its meetings to ensure the Committee is informed and can make adjustments if necessary.

UHLMG uses Xero (an accounting software program) to code income and expenditure so that financial reporting is streamlined and transparent. A local accounting firm is engaged to audit the annual financial report presented at the AGM.

10. Insurance

As an unincorporated Group Member, UHLMG is insured through LVI for Public and Product Liability, Personal Accident (Voluntary Workers), Directors and Officers and Professional indemnity.

This insurance is conditional on UHLMG continuing to meet the following requirements:

- payment of LVI membership fees;
- keeping the UHLMG register of members and regular volunteers up to date;
- following the LVI Rules;
- meeting all health and safety obligations when conducting activities;
- complying with all legislation relevant to UHLMG activities;
- recording the details of all participants at UHLMG activities;
- ensuring that any independent contractors engaged by UHLMG hold their own insurance;
- ensuring all labour payments are related to an agreed contract of employment or services;
- obtaining written permission from landholders for all UHLMG activities; and
- if UHLMG organises any unusual activities or activities with potentially greater than 250 attendees, contacting LVI well in advance to check that LVI insurance will cover the proposed activity;
- if alcohol is being consumed other than at a licensed venue:

- ensuring activity organisers have completed a Responsible Service of Alcohol program; and
- providing restricted areas if any attendees are under 18;
- if an accident or incident occurs which may be covered by LVI's insurance, UHLMG should:
 - take care not to admit liability; and
 - notify LVI as soon as possible.

Details of LVI insurance cover are set out in the LVI Insurance Program Summary (Appendix C).

11. Managing risk

UHLMG has a legal and moral responsibility to provide a safe working environment to prevent risk or injury to members and volunteers involved in its activities. This includes complying with the Workplace Health and Safety Policy and ensuring that any contractors comply also.

The Committee is responsible to consider whether any additional policies or procedures are required to protect activity participants.

There are tools here (<https://www.landcarevic.org.au/resources/health-and-safety>) that may assist, including:

- a Risk Prevention Toolkit;
- OH&S Toolkit (which applies to UHLMG as employer of the facilitator); and
- A volunteer health and safety handbook.

It is the responsibility of the Committee to establish and maintain a culture of risk prevention in relation to UHLMG activities. All members are required to comply with Committee policies and processes and to take reasonable care to prevent injury to themselves or others. The Committee should carry out a risk assessment, taking into account considerations such as:

- A process to identify and determine how to mitigate risks – including a documented risk assessment prior to all activities;
- What personal protective equipment is appropriate (including sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, safety glasses, suitable footwear and gloves as well as specialist PPE);
- A process for reporting injuries or hazards to the supervisor (person designated to supervise the activity);
- Induction to ensure that site safety requirements and other general information is conveyed;
- Ensuring appropriate first aid equipment and firefighting equipment is on hand;
- Obtaining material safety data sheets for chemicals and ensuring they are properly stored, handled and disposed of;
- Tagging of all portable electrical appliances (AS/NZS 3760); and
- Ensuring appropriate licensing/ticket is held for individuals using equipment.

Appendix A: Policies

Code of Conduct

Grievance Policy

Workplace Health and Safety Policy

Risk Management Policy

Child Safety Policy

Appendix B: Forms

Register of Members

Committee Register

Committee Meeting Agenda and Minutes Template

Annual General Meeting Agenda and Minutes Template

Appendix C: Key documents

Strategic Plan 2016-2021

Health Check

Landcare Victorian Inc Insurance Program Summary

Appendix D: Current Committee Members

Biographies and contact details of the current Committee members are provided below.

Name (President) Phone number Email	INSERT PHOTO HERE
[Professional bio]	

Name (Vice President) Position held Phone number Email	INSERT PHOTO HERE
[Professional bio]	

Name (Secretary) Position held Phone number Email	INSERT PHOTO HERE
[Professional bio]	

Name (Treasurer) Position held Phone number Email	INSERT PHOTO HERE
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[Professional bio]

Name Position held Phone number Email	INSERT PHOTO HERE
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Name Position held	INSERT PHOTO
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Phone number	HERE
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[Professional bio]	