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***governance options***



# ***Tasmanian Midlands***

## ***Options to Improve Biodiversity Governance Arrangements***

*Options for consideration at 25 March 2014 Scenario Planning Workshop  
Campbell Town, Tasmania*

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Landscapes and Policy Hub

# FOREWORD

The big challenge facing biodiversity conservation today is the ability to protect iconic species and communities, maintain the health and function of ecosystems, and at the same time keep our options open for the production of food and other commodities demanded by an increasingly affluent, urbanised and growing population.

The Landscapes and Policy Hub is taking an approach to this question that integrates social, economic and ecological perspectives to develop tools, techniques and policy options to support regional biodiversity planning.

An important element of this research is investigating plausible futures for the communities that live and work in these landscapes and the institutions that have responsibility for overseeing the governance of their natural resources. Led by Sue Moore and Michael Lockwood and supported by researchers Michael Mitchell and Sarah Clement, this team is using a combination of conceptual modelling, scenario planning, surveys, interviews and focus groups to develop a range of governance options to assist biodiversity policy and decision-making.

The governance options for the Tasmanian Midlands in this document are presented as background to the second of two scenario planning workshops designed to test the governance options developed through this research. The material in this background document is built on the knowledge, experience and opinions of people who live and work in the region, are responsible for some aspect of its regulation, or have interests in its future.

We are particularly grateful for the generosity of all those who have participated in one-on-one interviews, workshops and focus groups and their thoughtful and candid contributions.

**Ted Lefroy**

Director, Landscapes and Policy Hub

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## About this document...

This document provides background reading to prepare for our scenario planning workshop on March 25, 2014. At the workshop, we will consider two governance options aimed at improving biodiversity outcomes in the Tasmanian Midlands. These options are detailed on pages 10-15.

These governance options were initially developed by Sarah Clement as part of her PhD study, with the support of the Social and Institutional Futures Research Team. The governance options were then modified following a number of focus group discussions. The purpose of this workshop is to test the usefulness of these options for improving biodiversity outcomes in the Tasmanian Midlands using scenario narratives. The scenario narratives are detailed in a separate document, *'An Overview of Plausible Scenarios in 2030 for the Tasmanian Midlands'*, compiled by Michael Mitchell.

Put most simply, governance is about who decides, how and why. Improvements to these arrangements are needed because projections for the future of biodiversity in the area under a range of different scenarios in 2030 all suggest a decline in biodiversity values.



# Governance Options

## *Why we generated governance options*

Conserving landscapes rich in biodiversity requires long-term planning and understanding of how social and ecological systems co-evolve. How such landscapes are governed (that is, the structures and processes that determine who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable) is pivotal to the long-term conservation of this biodiversity. Being able to govern across diverse landscapes, like the Tasmanian Midlands, where there are multiple landholders and multiple values, is a challenging task.

Governance can improve biodiversity outcomes indirectly by enabling decision-making and management actions that are more responsive to environmental and social conditions. Better biodiversity outcomes could mean improving the extent and/or condition of biodiversity values or reducing the threat to those values. For example, this could be an increase in extent and improvement in condition of lowland native grasslands. Better outcomes might also include a decline in threats from invasive species or a land use mix that is more favourable to conservation.

The process to generate the two governance options presented in this document is pictured on the following page. The research team developed two initial proposals for governance arrangements through an analysis of findings from key informant interviews, complemented by a review of the literature to identify whether best practice case studies elsewhere could offer innovative ways forward. The two proposed options were then discussed at three focus groups: one that prioritised input from Tasmanian Midlands landholders and their representative organisations; one focused on input from the Tasmanian state government staff; and one that focused on input from Australian Government staff.

As a result of these focus groups, the following modifications were made to our proposed options:

1. We have reorganised the options as a series of phases that are a plausible pathway towards alternative governance arrangements as they might appear by 2030. Presenting the options as pathways rather than one end point was preferred by most focus group participants.
2. We have redefined the first option as a more 'bottom-up' landholder-driven approach.
3. We have adopted the term 'alliance' for our second option, emphasising that the pathway involves alliance building among key organisations representing communities of interest in Tasmanian Midlands land use.
4. We have increased our emphasis on market mechanisms, especially for Option 2, recognising that relying on government funding as the principal method for encouraging landholders to meet community expectations for biodiversity conservation is likely to be insufficient. The view was put to us convincingly that resourcing conservation initiatives on private land is a challenging communication issue. It involves raising awareness in the broader community about how societal expectations can be more directly transferred to achieve action on the ground by landholders, and that there are costs involved.

The detailed presentation of the findings from the key informant interviews follows, with notes on how the two options (listed below) have addressed these findings. The two options are then summarised in a table and then detailed.

### ***Governance Options***

**Option 1: Landholder-Driven Regional Program of Action**

**Option 2: Midlands Alliance**

# Steps to Generating Governance Options



## Issues Regarding Future Governance of the Tasmanian Midlands

The following findings summarise the key issues for future governance of the Tasmanian Midlands. These findings are principally based on an analysis of input from interviews with expert informants as they diagnosed current governance arrangements. The analysis was supported by consideration of input from a 2013 scenario planning workshop and a review of relevant literature.

**FINDING 1** *Governance arrangements could benefit from innovative approaches allowing greater consideration of the practical realities of farmers as part of a broader, more integrated approach to biodiversity conservation in this production-focused landscape.*

Government conservation initiatives in the Tasmanian Midlands have become more mindful of the needs of farmers over the years, but a gap still remains between the needs and capacity of agencies and the needs and aspirations of private landholders. Government agencies, often short on funds and concerned with spending public funds responsibly, prefer conservation agreements with private landholders that are long-term and prescriptive. Landholders, faced with climate variability and uncertain and sometimes volatile markets, request more flexible, shorter-term contracts enabling them to participate in conservation in a more adaptive way so that they can remain financially viable. Ongoing incentive programs and market-based initiatives have contributed to the expectation that biodiversity conservation on private land should be supported by public monies. In addition,

current biodiversity policy is built around the protection of threatened species, neglecting other biodiversity conservation values of the Tasmanian Midlands landscape (for example, native grasslands that are not listed). Some workshop and interview participants sought a shift from focusing on rarity to a focus on healthy, functional landscapes.

There are a number of promising biodiversity initiatives in the Tasmanian Midlands that seek to make biodiversity conservation on private land more economically viable. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) and Bush Heritage Australia collaboratively run the Midlands Conservation Fund, established as part of the Midlandscapes program. The Midlands Conservation Fund is a perpetual fund providing stewardship payments to landholders who enter into a 10-year stewardship agreement. It was discussed in interviews as a positive step forward in making conservation a viable land use on productive properties. Big-picture thinking landholders, including members of the Tasmanian Rangelands Group, have also sought support for conservation on working farms. Drawing on their links with innovative conservation initiatives in America (for example, Carrus Land Systems, The Nature Conservancy and the Malpai Borderlands Group), these Tasmanian efforts provide a strong base on which to build. Expanding the reach of such initiatives will require commensurate resources and formal recognition of the roles and powers of such non-governmental initiatives and organisations.

***FINDING 2 Governance arrangements supporting active adaptive, collaborative management are encumbered by current approaches to conserving biodiversity in the Tasmanian Midlands, which need to be stronger and more flexible to achieve biodiversity outcomes.***

Many participants called for more innovative and modern approaches to biodiversity conservation and they noted that regulatory, covenanting and planning measures may not have improved biodiversity outcomes at larger scales. The Tasmanian Government's recently released Natural Heritage Strategy includes objectives and suggested actions that could broaden approaches to biodiversity conservation. Included are those directly related to landscape-scale biodiversity conservation (for example, implementing cross-tenure landscape approaches to regulation, planning and conservation) as well as improving governance and legislative arrangements so that they support collaboration and adaptive management. Interviews often highlighted areas where institutions were a poor fit for the long term and unable to handle future unknowns.

Regulatory approaches were identified as leaving important gaps, for example, a narrow focus on listed species and communities, allowing degradation through 'benign neglect' and failing to cover important land use changes. Recent critiques of private land covenants and the assessment and implementation of the Midlands Water Scheme highlighted issues with current tactics, which provide a starting point for new approaches.

The covenant approach had probably reached its limits, with few new covenants expected in the area. For landholders already engaged, there is a desire for more feedback on biodiversity outcomes and being able to undertake active adaptive management in covenanted areas (for example, active use of fire to enhance regeneration). For the Midlands Water Scheme, although processes of review have been built into landscape-scale monitoring and the farm water access plans, their strength in protecting biodiversity and overall ecosystem health has been questioned. The strategic assessment of the Midlands Water Scheme undertaken under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* was viewed by some of those interviewed as a blunt instrument addressing only pockets of the landscape, as being politically motivated and failing to address broader ecosystem health and the multiple drivers of biodiversity decline<sup>1</sup>. The associated monitoring protocols and farm water access plans face their own challenges, including balancing flexibility and learning over the life of the Midlands Water Scheme with the need for strong mechanisms to achieve compliance. Unclear roles and responsibilities for landscape-scale impacts have compounded these issues. Questions were also raised in interviews regarding who, if anyone, has the authority to rapidly address negative impacts from irrigation if they arise.

<sup>1</sup> Some workshop participants objected to the way the Midlands Water Scheme has been portrayed here. Their argument was that the irrigation footprint for the scheme does not intersect with any remnant pockets of listed grasslands. However, our points here relate to a broader definition of the grassland ecological community to include both listed and non-listed native grassland remnants, and their place in a broader notion of future Midlands landscape-scale biodiversity composition and function.



**FINDING 3** *Governance arrangements could benefit from identifying strategies to buffer against volatile political circumstances.*

The pursuit of biodiversity conservation is a long-term agenda. Most of those interviewed were of the view that such a long-term agenda is constrained by the volatile dynamics of short-term political cycles. On the other hand, some focus group participants perceived the short-term political cycle as an inevitable reality, as well as an opportunity to engage with the public in ways that could shift dominant discourses. The public discourse in Tasmania is generally marked by strong tensions between pro-conservation and pro-development. This also affected government departments responsible for natural resource management. Politically-driven organisational restructuring, which can be most acute following changes of government, helps to embed these tensions and affects organisational dynamics. For example, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment employs both public servants with expertise and interest in working to support the development of primary industries, as well as those with expertise and interest in working to understand and enhance biodiversity conservation. Those in the latter category often feel disempowered, as their views may not align with the current political realities in the state.

Both in the department and more broadly, the future of the Tasmanian Midlands is viewed through two different and sometimes incompatible lenses – through a biodiversity lens or an economic development lens. One illustration of this was the Tasmanian Government's decision not to list grasslands as a threatened community, creating policy misalignment with the Australian Government. From the state's and landholder perspective, the Australian Government did not sufficiently consult on its decision to list the grasslands and undermined the goodwill of landholders who prided themselves on long-term stewardship of their grasslands. These political and inter-jurisdictional tensions were highlighted in discussions of the strategic assessment for the Midlands Water Scheme.

**FINDING 4** *Governance arrangements could benefit from enabling greater engagement of all Tasmanian Midlands landholders to secure landscape-scale biodiversity outcomes as part of a 'working landscape'.*

Landholders are recognised as a key part of the solution to biodiversity decline. Engagement of some landholders in biodiversity conservation programs is strong, but could be expanded beyond 'the usual suspects' to achieve larger-scale biodiversity outcomes and broader social equity. New approaches are needed to actively engage with other landholders, as part of a broader strategy to support sustainable agricultural development. Farm water access plans could widen landholder engagement and be adapted to enable better monitoring, evaluation and improvement processes, and enhanced landscape function. Property planning could also be extended and coordinated to become multi-property land use planning processes. The multi-property Vegetation Management Agreement secured between the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment and the three landholders involved in the Midlands Rangelands Group represents one example of such a development driven by landholders.

There are strong networks in the Tasmanian Midlands, built over multiple generations and through local community groups, however there are also untapped opportunities to mobilise these networks for biodiversity conservation. Trusting landholders to be responsible for management and to meet outcomes is supported, such as in the Midlands Conservation Fund, complemented by government agencies guiding facilitation, monitoring, and the identification of improvement strategies, particularly with anticipated changes under the Midlands Water Scheme. While individual landholders can adopt landscape-scale approaches as part of their management at a property scale, to manage landscapes across multiple properties requires establishing opportunities for collaboration among multiple landholders. The current political environment is supportive of collaborative approaches and the concept of landscape-scale biodiversity conservation, as evidenced in both government and non-government approaches; but more long-term commitment and effort needs to be directed towards securing the effectiveness of biodiversity management. (Note, the political environment may be different after the election for the Tasmanian Government on 15 Mar 2014).

While many visions have been created for the Tasmanian Midlands, there is not yet a broadly shared vision including a broad cross-section of the communities of interest and providing a shared understanding of what 'landscape-scale biodiversity conservation' means for them. While some interviewees suggested such a vision be created,

there was no agreement on who should lead this collaborative exercise. There are many organisations and individuals with interests in the health of the Tasmanian Midlands, so creating a shared vision could enable better power sharing and the pursuit of a collective purpose through constructive debate built on trust and respect. Such a vision could also potentially clarify and expand the current conception of biodiversity conservation. While participants at one focus group strongly endorsed these views on the value of building a shared vision, participants at another focus group considered that such visioning exercises are likely to be a turn-off for landholders. If they were to be undertaken, this latter group of participants suggested that the process would have to be instigated and led by organisations representing landholders' interests.

***FINDING 5 Governance arrangements can build on existing efforts by promoting collaboration and inclusiveness rather than competition, clarifying allocation of roles and responsibilities, and enhancing learning across organisations.***

While Australian Government funding provides incentives for projects that involve partnerships between multiple organisations, this remains competitive and does not nurture inclusive collaboration. There are many parties working in the Tasmanian Midlands, strengthening governance by providing redundancy, buffering against government reductions and diversifying approaches. Yet overlapping organisations also creates competition, ambiguity over roles and responsibilities, and can be confusing and inefficient for landholders, who would prefer a single port of call. Several interviewees promoted the creation of an independent coordinator role. The Midlands Coordination Group was established to improve coordination, but has been impeded by various practical realities (for example, limited human resources and multiple understanding of the group's role).

Collaboration across tenures and sectors is already an established norm in the Tasmanian Midlands. Even in this crowded space, the pursuit of landscape-scale biodiversity conservation could benefit from more diverse networks. Greater involvement of organisations such as Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA), Landcare, local governments, Tasmanian Irrigation and Hydro Tasmania could foster an approach that is better able to integrate biodiversity conservation as part of a broader land use planning strategy. The Tasmanian Midlands has benefited from strong champions who have nurtured collaboration and innovation, however succession planning is needed to nurture new leaders in the government and in the community.

Some information sharing has been formalised (for example, through the Land Information System and TasVeg), but much remains informal, sporadic and ad hoc, and could be greatly enhanced. Information sharing is also constrained by legitimate landholder privacy concerns, which can inhibit transparency. Like other areas of Australia, few organisations practice reflective learning beyond project and site-level learning and adaptive management tends to be reactive. There are likely to be benefits from multiple organisations getting together and reflecting on how biodiversity conservation can be done better in the Tasmanian Midlands. The capacity to do this is limited by ongoing resource commitments and is undermined by short-term political and funding cycles.

***FINDING 6 Governance arrangements need to be resilient to the pressures brought about by lean government and tight purse strings.***

The issue of providing resources to landholders, whose biodiversity conservation efforts involve taking action for the public good, remains a challenge given the current trend towards lean governments, and a reduction in and short-term nature of funding for biodiversity conservation programs. This issue is tied with the new norm and expectation of receiving payment for conservation work (Finding 1) and affects long-term monitoring and adaptive management. It is also tied with the political cycle. The Australian Government has provided leadership in the promotion of landscape-scale biodiversity conservation, but their funding for this is coming to end. So while state agencies, natural resource management organisations and non-government organisations have generally embraced the approach to incentivise and support conservation on private land, future lack of funding will reduce their capacity to expand or even continue these approaches. This is difficult to buffer against as it is part of a broader decline in financial resources for conservation. While the non-government organisations are coping by diversifying their funding base, this is more difficult for state and federal governments.



As a biodiversity hotspot, the Tasmanian Midlands is able to access a greater amount of funding for biodiversity conservation than other areas; however, human and financial resources are limited and focused more heavily on certain areas of the Tasmanian Midlands and on aspects of biodiversity deemed important by governments. This also affects relationships between government and landholders, with reduced staff resources making it difficult for the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment to provide feedback to landholders on improving management of covenants. Shrinking public funds mean that much of the front-end delivery of conservation projects has been devolved to non-government organisations, leaving government departments focusing more on wearing their compliance hat. Non-government organisations have also been stepping up to fill the gap in the loss of science being done by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. Frustration with 1-3 year funding cycles was part of the rationale to establish Midlands Conservation Fund as a perpetual fund, and non-government organisations like Tasmanian Land Conservancy have been proactively seeking philanthropic investment to cope with leaner government.

### *Identifying and describing the governance options*

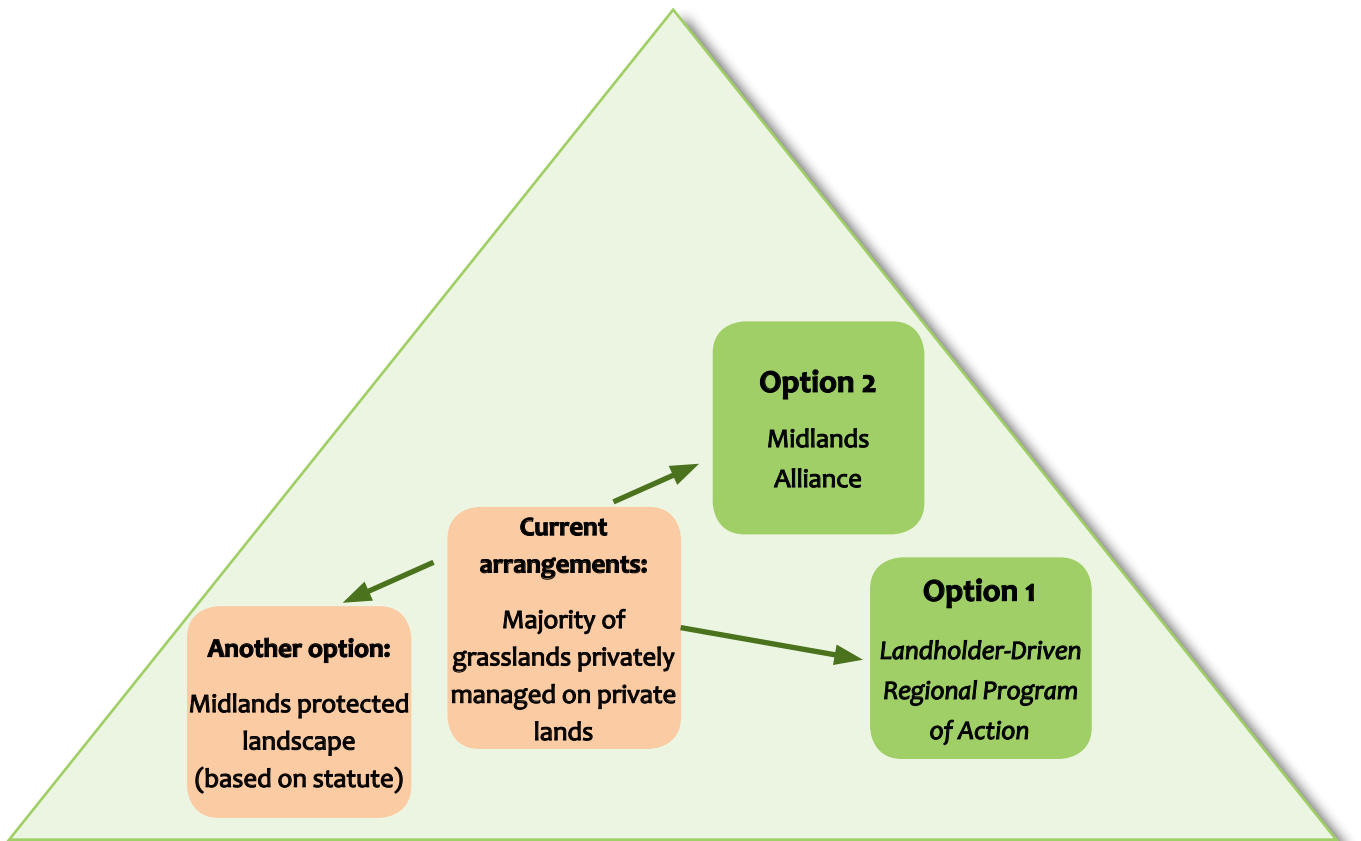
A broad range of governance options were identified and a selection of these are illustrated over the page. This range has been constrained to those considered possible within a democratic Westminster-style system of government. The other conditions bounding the scope of options considered are detailed in the table over the page and relate to how land and biodiversity management responsibilities are allocated and realised in Australia. Of the range of possible future governance approaches (see figure over the page), two in particular (shaded green) seem to be best placed to address the major issues and build on current strengths, as identified through interviews, analysis of best practice elsewhere and feedback from focus group participants. These two options are further detailed below.

<i>Conditions Bounding the Possibilities for Future Governance Arrangements</i>	
<i>Institutional element</i>	<i>Implications for governance options</i>
Under the constitution, the states have responsibility for land management, and history suggests constitutional change in Australia is difficult.	Limits federal government involvement.
Biodiversity is a public good but is tied to land tenure, and the Midlands is predominantly under private ownership.	Since land tenure is unlikely to change dramatically (that is, all biodiversity values will not be decoupled from the private land on which they sit), this limits options on the extreme public end of the spectrum.
There is a strong cultural norm in Australia to allow landholders to have control over what they do on their property.	Further limitations on private property rights are unlikely to be supported and many land use decisions will remain in the hands of landholders.
The Tasmanian Midlands is predominantly a privately owned landscape with agriculture an important part of its social and economic fabric.	Any large-scale land use changes will have significant consequences for the long-term social and economic viability of the region.



## Selection of Governance Possibilities

Market



Government

Community

The figure above shows the directions that various alternative governance arrangements could take into the future. Option 1 is designed to take a decisive direction towards a more community-oriented set of governance arrangements. Option 2 heads more moderately in that direction as well as heading towards more market-oriented governance arrangements. We also considered the option of a more legislative government-oriented set of governance arrangements, but this option was not favoured.

## Governance Option 1: Landholder-Driven Regional Program of Action

### Overview

The steps in the following table represent a potential pathway for the progressive implementation of Option 1, Landholder-Driven Regional Program of Action, over the period 2015 to 2030. Each step begins with a word of action, and the key governance question to be considered is who will take that action, and how. Such details are provided in the descriptive text below the table.

<b>Potential Steps in a Pathway Towards Option 1: Landholder-Driven Regional Program of Action</b>	
<b>Phase 1: 2015-2020</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create an opportunity for local landholder representative groups to initiate a comprehensive program of action related to Tasmanian Midlands land use that places priority on landholder engagement.</li> <li>2. Identify governance arrangements that are best placed to facilitate development, delivery and review of the regional program.</li> </ol>
<b>Phase 2: 2020-2030</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Complete negotiations with relevant government and non-government organisations about how they can best support further development and delivery of the program.</li> <li>4. Implement a process for ongoing and adaptive monitoring and review of the program.</li> <li>5. Establish a trust fund to support ongoing development, implementation and review of the program.</li> </ol>
<b>The Outcome: 2030</b>	<p>By 2030, the Tasmanian Midlands will be an exemplar around the world for how to initiate and implement a community-led regional program of action.</p> <p>The program is championed and supported by a network of committed landholders so that the associated time commitment is widely shared and capacity enhanced so that a succession of leaders and champions is guaranteed.</p> <p>This network has evolved into a more formalised representative body operating in collaboration with a local branch of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA), which has opened an office in Campbell Town. This local office operates as a key bridging organisation to facilitate communication and coordination across the landholder network.</p> <p>The local office also works in close collaboration with a dedicated set of local, state and government extension officers. The program of action is used to direct how government and non-government agencies provide support.</p>



## Rationale

The Landholder-Driven Regional Program of Action option is based on an appreciation of the Tasmanian Midlands as a productive working agricultural landscape with highly valued but threatened biodiversity features, where Tasmanian Midlands landholders have primary responsibility for the landscape, including its biodiversity. It aims to enable landholders to determine the most effective management strategies necessary for achieving biodiversity outcomes commensurate with Australia's national and international obligations.

To pursue such a landholder-driven approach at a multi-property landscape scale, the option involves their collaborative engagement in developing a region-wide program of action. It relies on existing informal and formal networks among landholders to facilitate engagement of a broader cohort of landholders in developing a regional program integrating production with biodiversity conservation.

The option also aims to break through the divide between those championing development and those championing conservation. It builds from an appreciation for the rich cultural heritage in the Midlands, especially that relating to grazing management of native grasslands. A desire to retain high value for this heritage needs to be integrated with a similar desire to safeguard and enhance the natural heritage and aesthetic appeal of the Midlands landscape.

### *A pathway for establishing a landholder-driven regional program*

The following details comprise a plausible pathway towards the development of a landholder-driven regional program of action. This is not meant to imply that this is the only or best way to achieve such an outcome. Importantly, this is a process that needs to emerge as a self-organising initiative of Midlands landholders. Nonetheless, for the purposes of testing the usefulness of this option for improving biodiversity outcomes in the Midlands, we ask you to accept the plausibility and utility of the following pathway.

### *Phase 1: 2015-2020*

#### **1. *Create an opportunity for local landholder representative groups to initiate a comprehensive program of action related to Tasmanian Midlands land use that places priority on landholder engagement.***

To create such an opportunity requires the following changes to current governance arrangements.

1. Government and non-government officers who have decision-making responsibilities concerning land use planning and conservation program initiatives need to ensure sufficient space for landholders and their representatives to take a greater lead in initiating a regional Midlands program of action. These officers need to reorient their contributions so they play a supporting and capacity building role, advised by the emerging Tasmanian Midlands network of landholders who are taking the initiative in leading the development of the regional program.
2. To help establish the above network, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) calls for expressions of interest from Tasmanian Midlands landholders, who then establish an initial working group. There is initial resistance to establishing an independent structure for this group, and for the time being, it functions and communicates under the auspices of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association. Financial support is provided to those involved in the working group to facilitate and incentivise their efforts to kick-start and coordinate the process. This funding is provided as a pooled grant from federal and state governments to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association. Given the experimental nature of this approach, and the degree of interest it is generating, those involved in planning and implementing

Tasmanian Midlands landholders leading this initiative are able to learn from best practice strategies for community-based, landscape-scale and adaptive planning processes elsewhere. This includes engagement with the burgeoning Resilience Planning Community of Practice coordinated by the Australian Resilience Centre, especially those with experience in the benefits and pitfalls of community-led planning-by-doing processes. Other experiences that Tasmanian Midlands landholders can learn from through visits and exchanges include the Reef Rescue program in Queensland, the Malpai Borderlands Group in the United States, and the Room for the River programme in the Netherlands.

Establishing the regional program takes several years, and includes a process of engaging the landholder community in discussions to:

- i) identify shared ideals and a common purpose
- ii) identify priority values enhancing landscape functions
- iii) explore the effect of different planning and land use options
- iv) identify relevant constraints and opportunities, and
- v) drive implementation.

The program is framed by an acceptance of the current legislative arrangements to protect and enhance biodiversity, and an analysis of what biodiversity means to landholders. A clear agenda for the program of action is to identify practical strategies to modify the ways in which the purposes behind biodiversity-related legislation are framed and applied so that these processes can more effectively incorporate the strong stewardship ethic among landholders towards biodiversity conservation, as well as their longer-term aspirations.

Creating opportunities for broader landholder engagement in the process is determined by the initial working group. As momentum for the program develops, the need for the group to operate with greater autonomy becomes apparent. A local branch and office of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association provides an initial step towards greater autonomy. The program of action working group, with the support of the Tasmanian Midlands branch of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association encourages independent self-organising efforts among landholders and the emergence of additional informal networks or groups of farmers, and ensures that the interests and needs of these additional networks are considered as part of the program of action. These emergent initiatives inspire a sharing of information that make the most of the experiential and adaptive learning acquired, thus allowing other landholders to benefit from new knowledge gained. It also creates the drive to seek out additional information support where required such as from relevant scientific expertise. A process is established through which each group involved in these initiatives can put forward ideas and projects that can contribute to the development of the program, together with a process for determining which projects and ideas receive further support. Landholder groups are also able to use this process to build external alliances to pursue financial recompense for implementing biodiversity-friendly land management practices.

The work of building alliances between the working group, its associated network of emergent landholder-based initiatives and other relevant organisations with an interest in Tasmanian Midlands land use gathers momentum as the landholder-driven approach increases landholder capacity. Landholders and their representatives approach representatives of these other groups and organisations to negotiate their engagement in such a community-led process. This includes representatives of local governments, relevant state and federal government departments, regional natural resource management agencies, irrigation and other agricultural service providers, environmental non-government organisations, as well as academics in the social, ecological and economic sciences. Such a process inspires some modifications to the common purpose behind the program of action as the group of landholders respond to suggestions from a broader range of stakeholders.

## **2. *Identify governance arrangements that are best placed to facilitate development, delivery and review of the regional program.***

It has been clear from the outset that landholders do not want this project to create another layer of bureaucracy that they would have to deal with, and they prefer a more self-organised network of groups to develop. The advance on prior governance arrangements is the greater appreciation of and capacity for enhanced communication and coordination between these self-organising groups and the working group taking the initial lead in developing the program and its implications.

The individuals in this working group have also become best placed to take the lead in negotiating with relevant government organisations at all levels to identify how these organisations can best support and serve



the development of the community-led regional program. They receive financial support for this work via funds provided to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association. Careful consideration is taken to ensure that negotiations between the landholder group and others are conducted effectively, based on open and constructive dialogue, and where everybody engages as equals. Landholders also take the lead in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each organisation that becomes involved in supporting the development of the program and the collaborating organisations accept this. Some organisations have chosen to formalise this as an agreement or set of agreements with each other. The agreements demonstrate the value placed in these partnerships and identify areas in which each organisation takes on a specific role, based on relative organisational strengths and capacities. The organisations also seek to establish agreements with the landholders group, and this leads the group and its associated network down the path of establishing a more formalised and autonomous representative body. This body is based at the local Tasmanian Midlands office of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, and works in close collaboration with them.

## **Phase 2: 2020-2030**

### **3. Complete negotiations with relevant government and non-government organisations about how they can best support further development and delivery of the program.**

As a result of the above-referred negotiations, landholders have been able to secure the re-establishment of government supported extension officers, and those appointed to these positions have the necessary skills and devolved responsibility to facilitate ongoing negotiations with landholders to advance the program. This includes an Australian Government extension officer who has been empowered to develop a strategic assessment in support of the community-led initiative. Staff within the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment have become comfortable with the new way of working with Tasmanian Midlands landholders where the landholders set the direction, and departmental staff respond. Their work has emphasised capacity building and to facilitate succession planning for the next generation of landholders. Landholders also draw on the expertise of those within the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment able to contribute to developing biodiversity management strategies undertaken by landholders individually and collaboratively, and how to integrate that as part of whole-of-property and multi-property planning.

Landholders have also determined that support from government and other agencies for the program be invested in facilitating a review of existing land use planning documents, property management planning, the Midlands Water Scheme program documents and the Conservation Action Plan for Midlandscapes. Following best practice suggestions, a synthesising process is used to guide an understanding of the Tasmanian Midlands as a social-ecological system, and thus enable landholders and others directing the review to focus on a limited number of key strategic issues for prioritisation and intervention. These key choices are thus able to inform landholder-driven recommendations regarding investments and management actions.

And finally, landholders have been able to successfully recommend a range of incentive instruments and market mechanisms designed to support i) those providing biodiversity or other priority values, ii) those initiating multi-property collaboration, and iii) those successfully engaging new landholders in land management practices that support conservation. The design of these instruments have been developed collaboratively. Such instruments include green branding and other means through which landholders can receive premium prices for products developed using sustainable approaches to native grassland grazing and other rural land use systems. A range of incentive instruments are provided by governments with guaranteed funding for ten years or more. The effectiveness of these incentives are adaptively reviewed, and assessment criteria are determined by the landholder group in negotiation with government agencies, with the driving consideration that they be outcome oriented, as further detailed below.

#### **4. *Implement a process for ongoing and adaptive monitoring and review of the program.***

Best practice suggestions have also inspired the design of a planning-by-doing process that enables effective review of goal setting, implementation strategies, and monitoring to identify improvements – that is, adaptive management. The aim is to facilitate regular reflections on how well the program is working through regular updates, and enable the adaptability necessary to respond to emerging issues. A regular and public review of the program is undertaken to foster wider community support and accountability. The emphasis of this approach is on learning to improve and adapt, in contrast to the frustration landholders had previously experienced involving a heavy emphasis on narrow accountability. Emphasis is now placed on the extent that collaboratively-determined outcomes have been achieved, and how to further enhance achievement of those outcomes, or whether those outcomes need to be redefined. The approach is encouraging experiments to trial innovative approaches which receive external financial support and advice on experimental design. It has included a review of existing Tasmanian Midlands covenants and management agreements to enable more flexible, adaptive management instruments. Reliance on outcome-based monitoring – as spearheaded by the Midlands Conservation Fund – is providing greater scope for landholders to determine their own management actions. Fulfilment of legal obligations and long-term security of biodiversity values is achieved by default.

#### **5. *Establish a trust fund to support ongoing development, implementation and review of the program.***

The value of a single trust fund account to support the community-driven program is being realised. The existing Midlands Conservation Fund initially fills this need before a new and separate trust fund is established, which is administered by a board of trustees on behalf of the newly formed autonomous landholder representative body. Like the Midlands Conservation Fund, the new trust fund enables diverse funding sources to be accessed from a range of philanthropist and government programs, including agricultural government agencies, and partnerships with innovation organisations (for example, Australian Innovation Research Centre). The Midlands Conservation Fund operates in parallel but not in competition. Those responsible for the two funds appreciate the potential of operating in close collaboration towards shared goals for the Tasmanian Midlands. As the work involved in the regional program continues to increase, interest earned from the trust fund associated with the program is used to employ dedicated personnel that can continue to provide support for the program into the future.

### ***The Outcome: 2030***

By 2030, the Tasmanian Midlands will have become an exemplar around the world for how to initiate and implement a community-led regional program of action. The program is championed and supported by a network of committed landholders so that the associated time commitment is widely shared, and capacity enhanced so that a succession of leaders and champions is guaranteed. This network has evolved into a more formalised representative body operating in collaboration with a local Tasmanian Midlands branch of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, which has opened an office in Campbell Town. This local office of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association operates as a key bridging organisation to facilitate communication and coordination across the landholder network. It also works in close collaboration with a dedicated set of local, state and government extension officers. The program of action is used to direct how government and non-government agencies provide support.



## Governance Option 2: Midlands Alliance

### Overview

As with Option 1, the following overview table and descriptive detail below represents a pathway for establishing a Midlands Alliance, and is not meant to imply that this is the only or best way to achieve such an outcome. Many aspects of the steps suggested for the Landholder-Driven Regional Program of Action Option are also incorporated into this option.

<b>Potential Steps in a Pathway Towards Option 2:</b> <i>Midlands Alliance</i>	
<b>Phase 1:</b> <b>2015-2020</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create an opportunity for a diverse range of stakeholders to identify a shared commitment for the Tasmanian Midlands as a landscape that combines high productive capacity with strong stewardship of its biodiversity. Encourage the formation of an alliance amongst those stakeholders who identify a shared commitment.</li> <li>2. Establish and implement a process to determine a shared set of objectives for the alliance, and how to achieve those objectives. Include in this process opportunities for other stakeholders to become involved.</li> </ol>
<b>Phase 2:</b> <b>2020-2030</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Establish a ten year agreement signed by all those actively supporting the alliance, endorsing details on how its strategic program will be developed and implemented over that period.</li> <li>4. Establish a board of representatives endorsed by the alliance to oversee program development, a secretariat to coordinate delivery, and a trust fund to support the costs of execution and review.</li> <li>5. Implement a process for ongoing and adaptive monitoring of the program and its implementation, and undertake a full review every five years.</li> </ol>
<b>The Outcome:</b> <b>2030</b>	<p>By 2030, the Midlands Alliance will have undertaken its five year review since its establishment. It has strong support from landholder-based organisations who have found it an effective way through which landholders can deliver a Tasmanian Midlands landscape that combines high productive capacity with strong biodiversity stewardships.</p> <p>Through the alliance, a range of marketing schemes have been established to support landholders implementing management practices that enhance conservation of the highly valued natural and cultural features for which the Tasmanian Midlands have become renown. In particular, the alliance has spearheaded the establishment of a Landcare accreditation scheme that is quickly becoming the means through which consumers can select food and fibre goods produced in Australia that meet a set standard for a duty of care for biodiversity on private land.</p> <p>The alliance has also proved a powerful platform from which landholders communicate their perspectives about land management to the broader populace.</p>

## Rationale

As with Option 1, the Midlands Alliance Option also builds from an appreciation that the Tasmanian Midlands is an agricultural landscape where landholders have primary responsibility for how biodiversity is managed on their properties. The key point of difference for this option is the emphasis on building an alliance among stakeholders concerned about Tasmanian Midlands land use and biodiversity conservation as equal and interdependent partners. Advocates for biodiversity conservation recognise that achievement of their aspiration is dependent on effective interaction with landholders, and landholders need more effective interaction with government agencies and others to avoid experiencing national and international obligations related to biodiversity conservation as an onerous, unwanted burden. The result is greater engagement with wider society as consumers of Tasmanian Midlands products, and an associated increased use of market mechanisms to support landholders undertaking conservation-friendly practices.

Interactions among the range of stakeholders involved is directed towards joint decision making regarding land use arrangements across the Tasmanian Midlands. Such a process takes several years across Phase 1, leading to a formalised agreement for the alliance in Phase 2. Any organisation or individual who wants to be involved is able to sign on to the agreement, as long as they endorse the shared purpose underpinning the alliance, and is able to make a contribution towards the achievement of that shared purpose.

## A pathway for establishing a Midlands Alliance

As noted above, the following details comprise one plausible scenario for how a Midlands Alliance might evolve, and is not meant to imply that this is the only or best way through which such an alliance could emerge.

### Phase 1: 2015-2020

- 1. Create an opportunity for a diverse range of stakeholders to identify a shared commitment for the Tasmanian Midlands as a landscape that combines high productive capacity with strong stewardship of its biodiversity. Encourage the formation of an alliance amongst those stakeholders who identify a shared commitment.**

To create such an opportunity requires the following changes to current governance arrangements.

1. The Midlands Coordination Group, a subset of a working group of government and non-government organisations known as the Tasmanian Healthy Landscapes Alliance, is appreciated as a positive initiative. A more successful advance on this initiative results from ensuring that organisations representing or actively involved with Tasmanian Midlands landholders take a much more prominent role. Such a development enables the emergent alliance of collaborative governance to be reinvigorated, and gives it greater purpose. A practical starting point involves establishing an open discussion between key people who have an interest in the Tasmanian Midlands within the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Landcare and Tasmanian Healthy Landscapes Alliance. Initial discussions involving the emerging alliance are directed at establishing a rationale and purpose for collaboration.
2. Sufficient financial support is provided, especially to ensure more effective involvement of those who participate in a voluntary capacity rather than as part of their paid work responsibilities. Under-resourced organisations taking an active role in building the alliance are also financially supported. Such resourcing is enabled through funds associated with the establishment of a new strategic assessment for the Tasmanian Midlands by the Australian Government. The purpose and terms of reference for this strategic assessment are negotiated with the Australian Government, but led by those involved in the emerging alliance.



A range of ideals and vision statements already exist for the region, so these are used as part of the process to identify a new vision for the Tasmanian Midlands that builds greater unity. There is a shared commitment to enhancing the regional environment and economy in ways that will sustain the rich but threatened natural and cultural heritage of the Tasmanian Midlands. There is also a shared interest in exploring agricultural practices that can enhance ecological functionality, maintain traditional agricultural pursuits as well as innovative entrepreneurial diversification, and nurture a community that values its local produce, its strong, cohesive and attractive local identity, and its ability to attract visitors.

These discussions have necessitated frank and constructive dialogue between those who are perceived as predominantly pro-development and those who are seen as pro-environment. The discussions have relied on expert and independent facilitation drawing on skills and strategies that help to overcome the cultural and political tensions arising. People have been prepared to take the time necessary to enable trust to develop between all those involved.

Attention is also necessarily directed to establishing a mechanism for adequate representation of Tasmanian Midlands landholders in these developments. As with Option 1, there is a clear preference among most landholders not to introduce a new layer of bureaucracy, and to facilitate multiple and diverse means through which landholders can have a stake in these developments. The Tasmanian Farmer and Graziers Association continues to play a key role in facilitating landholder representation, but other emergent and informal representatives are made welcome. This includes the revitalisation of latent Landcare groups.

Initially there is no change to the status quo biodiversity governance arrangements, including the manner in which the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* procedures are undertaken. However, part of the vision is that a duty of care for biodiversity would eventually become a social norm in the Tasmanian Midlands, and that the emerging alliance would result in Australia's national and international obligations for biodiversity being achieved without the need for regulatory intervention. The mechanism to achieve this is a strategic assessment funded by the Australian Government, with this assessment undertaken as part of the process of establishing the Midlands Alliance.

**2. *Establish and implement a process to determine a shared set of objectives for the alliance, and how to achieve those objectives. Include in this process opportunities for other stakeholders to become involved.***

The above discussions and developments lead to a more formal initiative through which a broader range of stakeholders seeks to establish an alliance with a shared set of objectives. The existing members of the informal alliance provide a basis for this initiative, but recognise the need to involve others. These other stakeholders are identified and approached. An expert facilitator is then recruited to guide a process towards the establishment of the alliance, its objectives, and how the members of the alliance would collaborate on achieving those objectives. As noted above, this process is aligned with a regional strategic assessment jointly devised by the existing members of the burgeoning alliance and the Australian Government's Department of the Environment.

The objectives so determined include details of management directions and implementation strategies for conservation of the region's biodiversity. The roles and responsibilities of each member of the alliance in relation to these strategies are also identified. Particular attention is given to how organisations and administrations at local, regional, state and federal government levels collaborate and their engagement is coordinated. As with Option 1, the alliance seeks to recognise the value of partnerships as well as the complementary strengths and capacities that each member organisation can bring to the collaborative effort. This includes partnering with state and federal governments to ensure that future developments can complement legislative requirements as well as processes and opportunities available through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

## Phase 2: 2020-2030

### 3. **Establish a ten year agreement signed by all those actively supporting the alliance, endorsing details on how its strategic program will be developed and implemented over that period.**

The Midlands Alliance is established with a diverse range of members, including landholder representative organisations, organisations providing irrigation and other rural services to the area, local government, state and federal government departments, non-government organisations, individual landholders with biodiversity responsibilities, and other organisations and individuals keen to support the work of the new alliance.

The alliance involves a formal signed agreement between the members which is ratified by the Tasmanian Parliament, and authorised to operate for ten years. The process of establishing this agreement is determined through a series of planning meetings that builds on the initial set of shared objectives. The process takes place over at least a year, and is funded through a pooling of federal and state government funds. These planning meetings discuss the roles and responsibilities of every member, arrangements for ongoing and adaptive planning and coordination, and financing, as further detailed below. Part of the agreement also details a process through which legislative responsibilities related to biodiversity is to be managed. The expectation is that effective fulfilment of good governance principles by the alliance would enable the legislative stick to be replaced by a bilateral agreement between the Australian and Tasmanian Governments to devolve responsibility under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to the Midlands Alliance.

The ten year agreement also specifies that its conclusion will be followed by a three year period where members can re-consider the future of the alliance and develop a new agreement to be established for the ensuing ten years.

The process of establishing the strategic program of action will follow a similar process as that used to establish the regional program in Option 1. It is an adaptive approach that changes and evolves over several years. It begins with a process where Midlands Alliance members lead a series of discussions with local landholders to:

- i) identify priority values enhancing landscape functions,
- ii) explore the effect of different planning and land use options, and
- iii) identify relevant constraints and opportunities, including biodiversity obligations.

It similarly builds on a social-ecological systems driven synthesis of existing planning documents, and be designed to support an ongoing adaptive process of learning to improve and collaborative accountability. The strength of trust between alliance members and the identification of a shared common purpose for the program enable frank and constructive dialogue about any trade-offs required at a Tasmanian Midlands landscape scale for the pursuit of both high productive capacity and strong stewardship of biodiversity.

### 4. **Establish a board of representatives endorsed by the alliance to oversee program development, a secretariat to coordinate delivery, and a trust fund to support the costs of execution and review.**

The formal agreement to establish the alliance details the establishment of a board, secretariat and trust fund. The board comprises representatives from among the signatories, including elected representatives of landholder members who are not represented through any other organisation. The board is authorised by the agreement to provide oversight regarding the establishment, implementation and ongoing review of the program.

The secretariat comprises a multi-disciplinary technical team and is responsible for day-to-day coordination of activities between alliance members towards the achievement of its shared objectives as detailed in the ten year agreement. The secretariat also serves as a single point of contact for all matters related to the Midlands Alliance and its activities, and facilitates the implementation of the program by its members. The board is given responsibility for determining the process used to appoint secretariat staff.



The program is undertaken as a collaborative exercise by Midlands Alliance members. Day-to-day decision-making remains the responsibility of each member organisation and individual, including Tasmanian Midlands landholders, as directed by the ten year agreement. As with Option 1, there is a strong emphasis on partnerships and collaboration, and this is reinforced with incentives offered to landholders. That is, the landholders benefiting from incentives are not only those landholders who provide biodiversity or other priority values, but also those who initiate multi-property collaboration, or who successfully engage new landholders in land management practices that support conservation.

A trust fund is established to enable payment of these incentives, and to support the activities of the board, secretariat and the program. Funding for the trust account is diverse and sourced from a range of philanthropist and government programs, including agricultural government agencies, and partnerships with innovation organisations. Recognition is also given to in-kind contributions from parties signing up to the alliance, and some organisations are required to pay a membership fee.

To support longer term and more sustainable landholder engagement with conservation practices, a working group is established to identify strategies for direct market mechanisms that can recompense the costs incurred by landholders. This working group is also effective in communicating to a wider audience the challenges landholders face in meeting social expectations related to biodiversity protection. A campaign is implemented to promote direct market investment through green branding schemes, including those where retail chains set baseline standards for products they purchase, and other mechanisms for direct purchase of farm goods by consumers. The 'Landcare' brand is identified as one that easily conveys a message to consumers wanting to purchase goods that meet on-farm production standards for biodiversity enhancement.

**5. *Implement a process for ongoing and adaptive monitoring of the program and its implementation, and undertake a full review every five years.***

In addition to the adaptive planning-by-doing process adopted for the program, as detailed above, a full review is undertaken every five years (that is, at the mid-term period of the agreement, and at the end of the agreement). This full review involves public reporting and facilitated public engagement to ensure wider interest and accountability.

## ***The Outcome: 2030***

By 2030, the Midlands Alliance will have undertaken its five year review since its establishment. It has strong support from landholder-based organisations who have found it an effective way through which landholders can deliver a Tasmanian Midlands landscape that combines high productive capacity with strong biodiversity stewardships. Through the alliance, a range of marketing schemes have been established to support landholders implementing management practices that enhance conservation of the highly valued natural and cultural features for which the Tasmanian Midlands have become renown. In particular, the alliance has spearheaded the establishment of a Landcare accreditation scheme that is quickly becoming the means through which consumers can select food and fibre goods produced in Australia that meet a set standard for a duty of care for biodiversity on private land. The alliance has also proved a powerful platform from which landholders communicate their perspectives about land management to the broader populace.



## Acknowledgements

We are particularly grateful for the generosity of all those who have participated in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Throughout the research, we have engaged with more than 150 people who live and work in the region, or are responsible for some aspect of its regulation, or have interests in the future of the Tasmanian Midlands. Our understanding of the current governance arrangements and development of alternatives would not have been possible without their engagement, honesty, and eagerness to share their knowledge and passion for the region.

In particular, we acknowledge and thank Louise Gilfedder for her guidance and advice on our engagement activities with the people of the Tasmanian Midlands. Her wealth of understanding and empathy for people who live and work in the area has meant that we have involved the right people at the right time, gaining the right information to feed into the scenario planning process. Louise's passion and knowledge of the natural and human ecology of the Tasmanian Midlands has been invaluable.

We would also like to thank the many policy experts and colleagues that helped in the development and refinement of the conceptual framework that was used in this research. This framework provided the vital structure through which the important insights of stakeholders could be viewed and better understood.

Finally, we appreciate the contributions to both the consultation process and the production of the background documents by Suzie Gaynor, the hub's Communication Manager. Suzie's talent at taking our text and massaging it into readable, accessible publications has contributed enormously to the success of our communications.

### Schedule of consultation and engagement

In their research, the Social and Institutional Futures Team (Sue Moore, Michael Lockwood, Michael Mitchell and Sarah Clement) has liaised and consulted with people from the Tasmanian Midlands and the Australian Alps, and all levels of government with an interest in these areas. The key engagement activities included workshops, interviews, surveys and focus groups as follows:

Key Informant Interviews ( <i>Michael Mitchell</i> )	Aug 2012 Jul & Oct 2013
Stakeholder Interviews ( <i>Sarah Clement</i> )	Feb-Apr 2013
Scenario Planning Workshops - round 1	
Tasmanian Midlands	1 Mar 2013
Australian Alps	10-11 Apr 2013
Focus Groups on Governance Options	Feb 2014
Scenario Planning Workshops - round 2	
Tasmanian Midlands	25 Mar 2014
Australian Alps	1-2 Apr 2014

## About the Landscapes and Policy Hub

The Landscapes & Policy Hub is one of five research hubs funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Research Program, for four years (2011-2014) to study biodiversity conservation.

We integrate ecology and social science to provide guidance for policymakers on planning and managing biodiversity at a regional scale. We develop tools, techniques and policy options to integrate biodiversity into regional-scale planning.

The University of Tasmania hosts the hub and involves researchers from the University of Tasmania (UTAS), The Australian National University (ANU), Murdoch University, the Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC), Griffith University and Charles Sturt University (CSU).

