

# Summary of the NSW Decade of Landcare Evaluation



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# Landcare

groups consist of volunteers of all cultures, ages and backgrounds having a common concern about the quality of the land, water and vegetation in their local area.

Landcare groups undertake a wide range of activities on both public and private land throughout New South Wales (NSW), including on-ground works, research, education and community awareness, as well as providing a valuable social network. They include Dunecare, Coastcare and Rivercare groups, as well as urban groups working mainly on bush regeneration. These groups operate in rural, coastal, urban and metropolitan areas.

The years 1990 to 2000 were declared the 'Decade of Landcare' by the Australian Soil Conservation Ministers in 1989. This was in response to a joint proposal of the National Farmers' Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation to the Commonwealth Government for action on land degradation in Australia. The Commonwealth and all States and Territories developed Decade of Landcare Plans which aimed to reverse and prevent land degradation and achieve sustainable land use and management.

At the end of the Decade of Landcare, it is timely to reflect on what Landcare has achieved in NSW and look towards the future of community involvement in sustainable natural resource management. The Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) and the NSW Landcare Working Group (LWG) have collaborated to evaluate the Decade of Landcare in NSW, as the final action specified in the NSW Decade of Landcare Plan. The evaluation was funded jointly by the Natural Heritage Trust and DLWC.

This booklet is the summary of the full report of the NSW Decade of Landcare Evaluation, which reviews Landcare's influence and achievements against the Plan goals, objectives and actions. This summary features information about groups and references to key documents and tables and explores the future of Landcare in NSW. The information has been provided by Landcare groups, support staff, government agencies, non-government organisations, local councils, business and industry who contributed to actions specified in the NSW Decade of Landcare Plan.



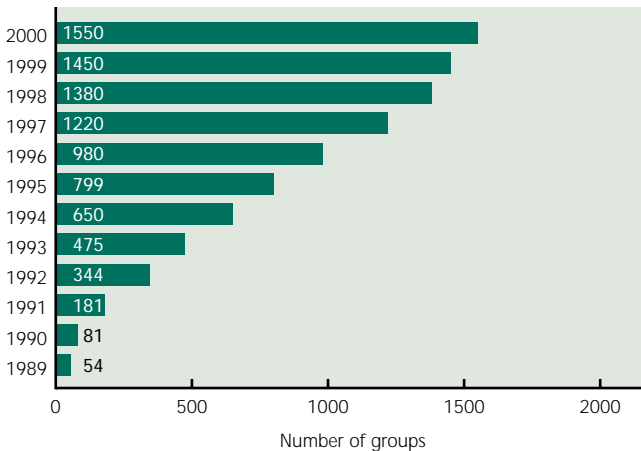
The full report of approximately 180 pages is a detailed reference for policy makers, researchers and students, and provides a perspective on the influence of participants in Landcare.

The full report is available on the internet at: [www.landcare.nsw.gov.au](http://www.landcare.nsw.gov.au) or by phoning the DLWC Landcare Information Officer on (02) 9228 6506 during office hours, or by emailing [jperrott@dlwc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jperrott@dlwc.nsw.gov.au)

## Landcare Groups and Networks

The number of Landcare groups has increased throughout the Decade from 81 in 1990 to 1550 in 2000, increasing the social and natural resource benefits in communities (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of Landcare groups listed on DLWC NSW Landcare Directory 1989–2000



(Source: DLWC NSW Landcare Directory).

Landcare groups combined to form Landcare networks. There were 50 Landcare networks in May 1996, which increased to 74 in November 1997 and 96 in June 1999.

**The future:** The number of Landcare groups and networks are expected to continue to increase. The further development of Landcare networks will increase the ability of Landcare groups to undertake larger, integrated projects.

## Landcare Support Staff

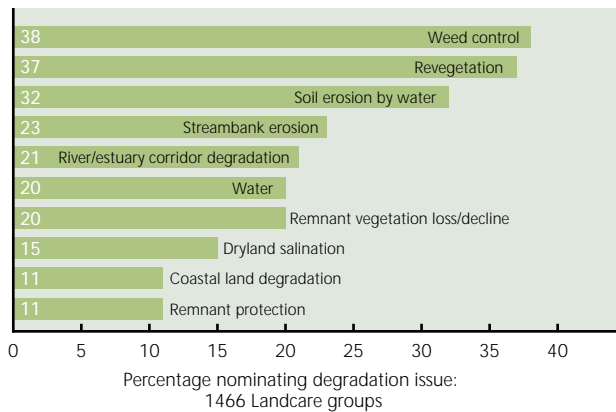
NSW Landcare groups have been supported by regional Landcare facilitators, Landcare coordinators and DLWC Landcare support staff. Measured in full time equivalents, there were 65.2 Landcare support staff in May 1996, which increased to 75 in November 1997 and 98.5 in June 1999.

**The future:** Support staff are recognised as essential to the operation of Landcare and will increasingly fulfil a crucial role in linking group actions with regional and catchment scale projects.

## Activities of Landcare Groups

Landcare groups worked on a wide range of natural resource issues. The three most common in December 1999 were weed control, revegetation and soil erosion by water (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Top 10 Landcare issues in NSW as at 8 December 1999



(Source: DLWC NSW Landcare Directory)

**The future:** Groups will continue to work on locally relevant issues, but increasingly these will need to be identified as priorities in sub-catchment and catchment plans to gain funding support from government.

### Nullamanna Landcare Group: Inverell, North West region



BEFORE: The group focussed on issues including water with the salinity levels of sea water and nine metre deep gullies.



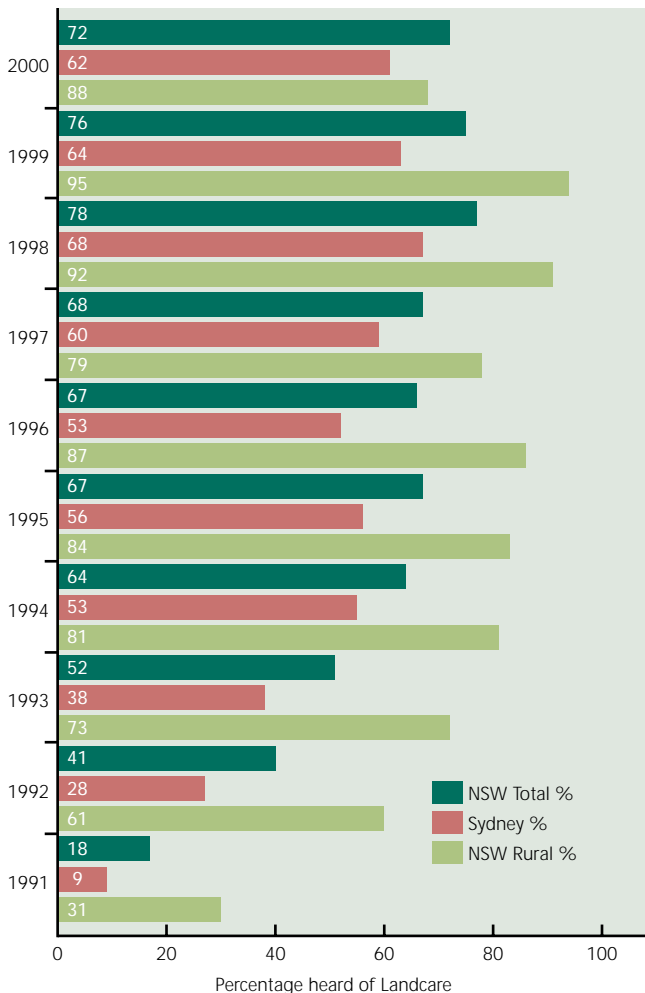
AFTER: The site was stabilised by planting 1700 trees, constructing dams and pouring a concrete flume, which slowed flow, reduced erosion, and achieved water-use efficiency improvements of 30%.

## Raising the Profile of Landcare

Landcare was promoted regionally through Landcare groups and also through statewide initiatives.

Groups promoted their activities and received media coverage in a wide variety of ways including displays, community days and field trips, newsletters, radio broadcasts and print media stories. Groups were also assisted in obtaining sponsorship.

Figure 3: Landcare Awareness: 1991-2000



(Source: Roy Morgan Research, for Landcare Australia Limited)

Statewide promotional initiatives included Landcare Month and National Landcare Day, the Royal Easter Show, the Angry Anderson Challenge and Olympic Landcare. These involved thousands of people including Landcare group members, school students, urban volunteers, sponsors and celebrities in activities to raise awareness and plant native trees. By 2000, 72 percent of people across the state had heard of Landcare (Figure 3). The peak awareness time in 1998 was attributed to the Olympic Landcare Program.

The NSW Landcare Awards were held in 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999. Two NSW Landcare / Catchment Management Forums were held, in Western Sydney in 1996 and Orange in 1998.

**The future:** The growth of Landcare through increasing awareness and action is necessary to maximise community involvement and demonstrate best land management practices. Regional support will be needed to assist groups to promote themselves, as will innovative promotional strategies that reach people not already involved in Landcare. A current priority is raising awareness of Landcare by business and industry, which will provide extra resources for Landcare activity and encourage better land management by business and industry.

## Structure

As a community-led, autonomous movement, Landcare in NSW began with little formal structure. However, a peak body called the NSW Landcare Working Group (LWG) prepared the NSW Decade of Landcare Plan, in consultation with the Landcare community, between 1990 and 1992. The LWG evolved over the Decade to include 12 regional community representatives of Landcarers throughout NSW by 1999. The LWG supports and promotes Landcare, and helps to link Landcare and government at all levels.

**The future:** The LWG will advise government on Landcare-related issues, assist communication within Landcare and promote and evaluate Landcare.

### Reefcare: Warringah, Sydney Harbour region



BEFORE: The remnant vegetation on the headland was threatened by weed invasion.



AFTER: The group removed bitou bush and acacia and planted over one hectare of native shrubs and grasses.

## Training

The activities of Landcare groups have created a need for training, to improve the skills and understanding of landholders and support organisations. This has been provided informally through the groups and community. Many institutions provided training in natural resource management, including NSW Agriculture's CB Alexander (Total) College and DLWC's Wellington Training Centre. Total College developed the Certificate in Landcare in 1995 and the Diploma of Landcare in 2000.

Farming For The Future's property management planning courses were attended by thousands of Landcare group members between 1993 and 2000. The program was supported by NSW Agriculture, DLWC, National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Farmers' Association and the Commonwealth Government.

Farmers in Landcare groups in NSW had significantly higher participation levels in training than farmers not in Landcare from 1993/94 to 1995/96. This included attendance at:

- At least one training activity - by 89% of Landcare farmers, 47% of non-Landcare farmers.
- Landcare group workshops / field days (excluding PMP training) - by 70% of Landcare farmers, 16% of non Landcare farmers.
- Industry grower groups or crop / pasture checking groups - by 38% of Landcare farmers, 19% of non-Landcare farmers.
- Property management planning workshops / activities - by 34% of Landcare farmers, 12% of non-Landcare farmers.
- Other short courses (excluding PMP training) - by 29% of Landcare farmers, 11% of non-Landcare farmers.
- TAFE courses - by 27% of Landcare farmers, 17% of non-Landcare farmers.
- Other training (including Distance Education courses and other tertiary studies) - by 19% of Landcare farmers, 13% of non-Landcare farmers.

(Source: Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics 1998).

**The future:** Training of members of Landcare groups will continue to be a key activity of education providers and Landcare support staff.

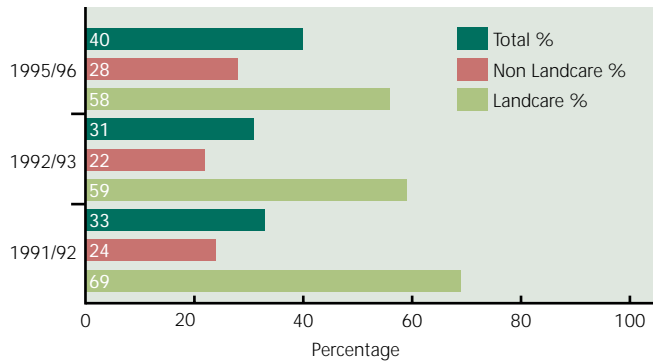
## Planning

Landcare has developed the integrated management of natural resources across property boundaries, through the integration of individual property plans into group and sub-catchment level plans. As the Decade progressed,

groups became increasingly involved in the broader scale of catchment level planning processes.

Farm planning was adopted more quickly by farmers involved in Landcare (Figure 4). In 1995/96, 75 percent of farmers used their farm plan to make management or development decisions (ABARE 1997).

Figure 4. Percentage of farmers in NSW with a farm plan



(Source: Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) 1993, 1994, 1997).

**The future:** Landcare will continue its involvement in developing and implementing property, subcatchment and catchment level plans. A future challenge is to ensure that sub-catchment level plans are integrated into catchment, regional and state plans.

## Natural Resource Management Policies and Landcare

During the Decade the NSW Government developed policies and legislation that enabled and supported Landcare outcomes. DLWC, NSW Agriculture, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Environment Protection Authority, and Department of Education and Training (Board of Studies) included the Landcare ethos in their policies.

Community consultation processes over the Decade changed significantly and led to public participation in policy and planning, through the LWG, workshops, Landcare facilitators and coordinators, and DLWC's support for Landcare. The networks established and maintained by Landcare facilitators played a pivotal part in assisting the community to respond to policy documents released for public comment. Almost 500 written submissions were received from a wide variety of stakeholders across Australia, including many NSW Landcare groups, concerning the 1999 paper 'Managing natural resources in rural Australia for a sustainable future: a discussion paper for developing a national policy'.

**The future:** Landcare will continue to influence the development of natural resource management policy through community involvement.

## Research

Groups undertook research through trials and demonstrations, often in partnership with government agencies and other research centres. Support staff assisted groups to compile and utilise research information and Landcare groups were recognised as leaders in the uptake of new technology.

**The future:** The trend of funding applied research will continue to increase the role of Landcare as a partner with research organisations. Landcare groups and networks will play a pivotal role in distributing and implementing research findings.

## Partnerships

Landcare groups have developed a range of partnerships with organisations and their local communities. Organisations have provided and maintained policies and programs that have supported the growth of Landcare. Organisations and communities who were partners in Landcare included:

- Department of Land and Water Conservation was the lead State Government agency for Landcare in NSW. The Department's State Landcare Team coordinated the NSW Landcare Support program jointly with the LWG. In the regions, DLWC has facilitated and supported the establishment and operation of a network of Landcare facilitators and coordinators, to work with Landcare groups and networks. Additionally DLWC provided technical advice and funding to Landcare groups.
- Landcare Australia Limited aimed to develop a Landcare ethic in the community through education and awareness, promotion and publicity, sponsoring activities, and engaging the corporate sector in the sponsorship of Landcare activities.
- National Parks and Wildlife Service provided advice and support on the management, community involvement and conservation of biodiversity and public land. It led the development of the Biodiversity module of Farming For The Future and the Voluntary Conservation Agreement program.
- NSW Agriculture provided support through research, information dissemination and provision of training courses, technical advice in managing soils, water, weeds and vegetation, the production of decision support systems such as SOILpak, Farming For The Future and the Certificates and Diploma in Landcare. The Policy for Sustainable Agriculture in NSW was released in 1998, incorporating Landcare principles and plans.
- Environment Protection Authority supported Landcare through its environmental protection initiatives

involving education, publications and monitoring, and by working in partnership with business, industry, government and community organisations in regulatory functions.

- Schools, Department of Education and Training and the Board of Studies supported Landcare. Many Landcare coordinators and groups worked with their local schools and communities throughout the Decade. Around 45 percent of schools took part or assisted in Landcare type activities, which included nearly all NSW primary schools. Types of activities included raising seedlings in shade houses, planting trees, restoring degraded areas and Streamwatch. Schools also participated in Arbor Day, World Environment Day, Landcare Month, and National Tree Day. This led to the incorporation of Landcare in school curriculums by the Department of Education and Training and the Board of Studies.
- Total Catchment Management (TCM) / Catchment Management Committees and Trusts (CMC/Ts) supported Landcare's ideals and activities. CMC/Ts and their support staff assisted Landcare groups by providing TCM Enhancement, Small Scale Projects grants and other funding, strategic advice, promotion and publicity.
- Greening Australia provided groups with funding, machinery, human resources, materials, and technical and specialist advice for projects.
- NSW Farmers' Association represented farmers in bodies such as Farming For The Future, Native Vegetation Advisory Council and the LWG.
- Conservation Volunteers Australia assisted Landcare groups and networks by providing volunteers from Australia and overseas for on-ground projects such as tree planting, weed removal, erosion control, fencing, surveys and heritage conservation.
- Aboriginal interests were represented on the LWG. Regional and agency training and publications have focussed on working with Aboriginal communities.
- Local government has supported Landcare groups by employing support staff and providing resources for work on public land. Landcare in urban areas is mostly driven by local government and has its own momentum and networks, which the majority of councils have embraced.

**The future:** The development of Landcare's programs will rely on the strength and quality of existing and new partnerships with participating organisations. Landcare is now an important part of school curriculums which will



BEFORE: A gravel bench was constructed by the group to widen the channel and stabilise the bank.



AFTER: The channel was realigned and the group undertook maintenance works.

lead to stronger involvement and initiatives from schools in enhancing school and local environments as part of the wider Landcare community. Groups to be targeted for involvement in Landcare are Aboriginal people, landholders not yet involved and local government. This will involve understanding different expectations of outcomes and different cultures, values and attitudes to enable negotiation, compromise and participation. Partnerships will further develop between the local Landcare communities and local councils, to support group projects involving planning, works and council managed land.

## Sharing Information

DLWC has coordinated the communication of information concerning Landcare groups at statewide and regional levels. Publications were funded by DLWC and the Natural Heritage Trust and promoted participation in Landcare and communication with the Landcare network. Publications included 'Catchment Management News' and subsequently 'Care Update', fact sheets and brochures on Landcare in urban, rural and school communities, and covered other topics such as sponsorship, the GST and communication strategies.

Information on groups was made available through the NSW Landcare Directory and by NSW Landcare's website [www.landcare.nsw.gov.au](http://www.landcare.nsw.gov.au). The website offered publications, supporting information and access to 'Community Landcare Information Online' - the first interactive statewide map on the internet that displayed contacts, natural resource issues and activities of NSW Landcare groups.

**The future:** There will be a continued usage of technology to improve community access to information, and technologies will be developed to provide more comprehensive and accessible summaries of land-related data.

## Financial Resources

Landcare has been resourced principally by the time, labour and funds of landholders. In addition, there have been financial contributions from sponsorship and grants, as well as in-kind assistance. Funds have been provided by Commonwealth, State and Local Governments, landholders, community contributions, business and industry, and other organisations. DLWC provided a start-up grant of \$100 for new Landcare groups.

Government funding was provided by State Government programs such as Rivercare, Salt Action and TCM Enhancement, and by Commonwealth Government program funds, principally the National Soil Conservation Program until 1992, the National Landcare Program (NLP) from 1992 to 1996 and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) (including the NLP and Bushcare) from 1996.

The NHT invested \$1.5 billion over six years in Australia's natural resource base. Its objective was to stimulate activities for the conservation and repair of the environment. As stated by the NHT 'this objective can only be met if the community and all levels of government work in partnership'. In 1998-99 the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) was by far the biggest source of natural resource management funding from the Commonwealth Government. The NHT provided NSW with \$66 million, of which approximately \$37 million went to community managed projects.

**The future:** There will be continued commitment to Landcare from community, government and business through partnerships and programs. The Commonwealth Government has announced that the Natural Heritage Trust will be extended for five years from 2002. Funding for natural resource management for the next ten years will be largely directed to the priority actions in catchment blueprints, developed by catchment management boards.

# Future Directions

Landcare looks set to continue for at least another decade as the major form of organised involvement of volunteers in natural resource management in NSW. Landcare activity will continue to be undertaken by Landcare groups and networks in partnership with business and industry, local communities, non-government organisations and government at all levels.

One challenge for the future is to achieve greater involvement in Landcare by Aboriginal communities and local government, and to reach landholders not yet involved. Another will be to link the sub-catchment plans and activities of Landcare groups and networks more closely to catchment and state planning processes.

Corowa and Districts Landcare Network:  
Murray catchment, Murray region



Erosion control project site for Redlands Mulwala Landcare Group, one of four groups in the network.



The network held a Corowa Councillor Landcare tour.

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Compiled by Dianna Horvath.

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