



Speaking Points, Rob Dulhunty, Chair, Landcare NSW

NSW Parliamentary Friends of Landcare Meeting

Parliament House

21 October 2015

Thank you Katrina. I would like to acknowledge your leadership of this group, and the progress that's been made since the idea was seeded only a few months ago.

Thanks also to deputy chair Mick Veitch, Treasurer Jeremy Buckingham, Secretary Rick Colless and the other members of the management committee. Thank you to the staff members in your offices who have worked behind the scenes to get this group off the ground.

Thank you to everyone for joining the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare, and for making the time to be here today.

The Landcare community is very appreciative of your support and keen to hear your ideas about how we can make this group fulfil its potential.

I'm only going to speak for 5 mins today, to leave plenty of time for discussion.

- I'll give you a brief introduction to Landcare NSW.
- I'll talk a bit about Landcare and the new Landcare Support Program
- Finally I'll offer some ideas on how we might work together.

Landcare NSW

Landcare NSW is the representative body for the community Landcare movement in NSW. We were established by volunteers in 2007 to provide a voice for Landcare and to support Landcare groups with information, advice and services.

Our 22-member council represents around 60,000 Landcarers and 3000 groups and meets three or four times a year in Sydney.

Our next meeting is on 11 November in Sydney and we would like to extend an invitation to the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare to come along to meet our Council. We have amongst our group working farmers, an emeritus professor of agriculture, former senior public servants, land management experts in conservation and sustainable agriculture plus many other extremely capable Landcare leaders.

Among our Council is Megan Rowlett who you will hear from in a moment. Megan is a great example of the quality of people we have in Landcare and she's an outstanding ambassador for youth involvement.

Landcare

Many of you are already involved with your local Landcare group. It may have a different name such as bushcare, friends of a particular area, coastcare or a farming system group...but we're all part of the one movement – whether conservative farmers from the western division or alternative lifestylers from the north coast.

That's the great thing about Landcare – it's a model that can be adapted to whatever the issues and needs are in the local community. One community will be working to eliminate wild dogs while another is planting a corridor to protect an endangered species. We work on private land, national parks, crown land, council land and every tenure. Because we are a community movement, not a government program, we have a lot of success in building partnerships across physical and social boundaries.

The group of farmers who started Landcare in Victoria 26 years ago in response to severe land degradation would never have dreamed it would become an Australian institution, and a successful Australian export with Landcare now in more than 25 countries.

There are many reasons for Landcare's success.

At its heart, it's a simple but powerful idea that captures people's imagination.

It taps into our connection with the land. It's practical, hands on – it draws on the Australian ethos of common sense and resourcefulness.

While Landcare is independent, it's always enjoyed the support of all political parties...bipartisanship is a core value.

Landcare was born from a marriage of Conservationists and Farmers. This collaboration is an integral part of our identity.

A core strength is that we're volunteer-led, driven by the aspirations of local communities.

But an equally important feature is our partnership with Government – state, local and federal. Landcare relies on a strong Government policy that recognises our contribution, and helps pay for the support volunteers need to do the work they want to do. In this way we're similar to surf lifesaving, the RFS or the SES.

In recent years government support from all levels has reduced. Institutional arrangements have changed and become more complicated. And this has led to Landcare struggling in some areas.

Many of you will know the *Sustaining Landcare* campaign we took to all parties prior to the election.

We got a very good hearing from members and candidates from all parties.

This was greatly appreciated by the entire Landcare community.

Organisations that had been on the brink of closing due to a lack of recognition and support decided to keep their doors open.

Landcare Support Program

We now have a new Landcare Support Program, with new funding of \$15m over four years.

We're very pleased that delivery of this program is a shared responsibility between Landcare NSW and Local Land Services.

There are fact sheets in your folders if you'd like to learn more.

The majority of the funding will support 50 or 60 part time coordinators to drive local Landcare activity...these roles will be based in community Landcare organisations. They will build the capacity of the community to manage natural resources and leverage significant additional resources.

These local coordinators will form a network supported by a small central team. This will ensure good practice can be replicated...knowledge and resources can be shared.

An integral part of this program is that we are building collaborative relationships with key government agencies, particularly Local Land Services and the Office of Environment and Heritage – the agencies responsible for management of our natural resources. These agencies rely on community involvement and Landcare provides a statewide platform.

Finally, we are securing the future.

There is no question that Landcare will continue to be needed. It's a proven model and an effective means for government to engage with the community on a wide range of issues. The environmental challenges we face are escalating. Governments and the community have already invested heavily in Landcare and we have put a lot of work into modifying and improving it.

For Landcare to succeed into the future, we need a sustainable funding source. There will always be a need for volunteers to be supported by local coordinators. We need to support them with training, professional development, access to scientists and other experts...all this costs money.

So part of the new support program is a commitment to develop a Landcare Trust. Our vision is that this Trust is able to attract funds from a range of sources – government, corporate, philanthropic, community fundraising – so this support is funded into the future.

Parliamentary Friends of Landcare

We are thrilled to have this Parliamentary Friends of Landcare group up and running.

In your folder you will find we've put together some ideas about how we might work together – but we would also like to hear what you would like to do. We have also included the phone numbers of our Councillors so you can find out more about Landcare in your region.

I imagine a lot of your interaction will be with Landcare in your local area.

Katrina has mentioned you would like to sponsor an award. This would be very welcome.

We would like to have an annual event in Parliament – the Council of Landcare NSW meets in Sydney three or four times a year so we could organise a function on one of those dates when Parliament is sitting.

We would like to invite Members on a field trip to a site in Sydney – we have nearly 1000 groups in the Greater Sydney Landcare Network. Members may wish to talk to Landcarers or even get involved in some work.

We would also like to work with you to build support for Landcare into the future.

In particular, your ideas on the Landcare Trust would be most welcome. This is quite an ambitious and bold idea – but one the government has seen fit to make part of their Landcare policy.

It is a high priority for the Landcare movement to secure ongoing funding for the basic support needed by the volunteer movement. We are very committed to this goal and we would value your support.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to our discussion.