



## **Landcare NSW Chairperson's Report - 2013**

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The word Landcare means many things to many people. But at the heart of it, Landcare is a specific approach to natural resource management. It is an approach based on voluntarism- in that no one is forced to do it, and the model is set up to encourage people to participate. The term Landcare embraces a wide variety group NRM activities from volunteers pulling out weeds in a coastal reserve to farmers working together to address wild dog issues.

There is a focus on groups and group activities. There is a focus on practice change, not just on discrete on-ground investments. There is a reliance on peer to peer training and influence, and this community-based learning and action is at its most effective when supported by a network of coordinators and facilitators.

LNSW is a representative body that exists to support and provide a voice for the Landcare movement. We don't seek to do Landcare. Landcare is a local phenomenon. We work to ensure that local Landcare communities can be the best they can be.

Landcare NSW has played an important role over the past year, in both supporting its Landcare groups with practical help, advocating on their behalf, and working in the policy space to make the most of opportunities for the long term support and recognition of Landcare.

We secured from the incoming NSW coalition government a \$2 million commitment to supporting Landcare. We have worked with them to ensure that this package provides the critical and strategic support to make it easy for local Landcare groups to reach their potential. This NSW Government Landcare business plan has been a missing link for the Landcare movement to effectively function especially now in the transition to LLS.

We now have the role for delivery of some aspects of this plan including:

- The provision of governance, insurance and administration support to groups
- The collation of a policy and procedure bank of documents
- The provision of training in all the key skills required to run a Landcare group such as strategic planning, governance, financial management, communications etc.

In terms of advocacy LNSW has been, and continues to be involved in many spheres.

With the Local Land Service reforms, we worked closely with our groups and other stakeholders to provide informed advice into the establishment of LLS. We sat on the reference panel with NSW Farmers and the CMAs and got involved in the public debate about the direction the LLSs should take.

We also sought and won legislative amendments to improve the Objects and Functions of the Local Land Services Act. I am please to say that the LLS Act now is written not just so this new organisation does NRM and biosecurity and extension, but it is written so as it must also support the community in doing these things too.

We also mobilised and supported our members when the Catchment Action NSW funding stream was looking like not being continued. Our members quietly visited their local MPs and made representations to Ministers at a state and federal level. The topic was raised again and again at the LLS public meetings. Questions were put and speeches were made in Parliament by a number of MPs. This created the space and pressure for funding to be restored

In the transition to LLS the role of Landcare groups will be critical. This package, particularly the formal training, allows groups and networks to reach a level of proficiency where the government can be confident of investing through them. The administrative support and the provision and update of policies allows groups to concentrate on what they need to concentrate on without having every committee in the state trying to decipher the latest changes to WH&S or incorporation rules etc.

We will continue to work with the LLS boards and chairs to ensure that they understand the lessons of the past and can adapt well to a changing future. It is critically important that the LLSs develop a sense of the how they are going to work with the community to achieve all of its aims.

We will also be seeking to work with the NRC to improve the current state standard in relation to community engagement and partnering. We also think it is time to revisit the body of evidence that is out there in relation to achieving NRM, agricultural extension and Biosecurity aims. This should be compiled with an eye on what is the role of community, networks and trust in achieving these goals.

Finally, we will be working with the federal government, hopefully in concert with the state government on the reforms to the Caring for our Country Program as it transitions into the National Landcare Program.

The efforts of the Council, Committee and staff over the last twelve months have seen an enormous amount of activity. A few highlights are:

### **Governance**

- Internally LNSW re-examined and amended its constitution and governance structure, broadening our membership base to include incorporated groups
- LNSW now has a Council of endorsed regional representatives and members co-opted for their skills. The Council provides the strategic direction for the organisation, and from this Council, a Committee of Management is elected to manage the affairs of LNSW in line with the direction set by the Council.
- Our Council members play an extremely valuable role they gather information from their networks within their regions to bring information to LNSW and disseminate information back from LNSW. When issues arise, our representatives need to be able to gather the view of our grassroots so we can advocate effectively
- We have established a strategic framework to guide our operations, and business systems to underpin the work of LNSW.

## Advocacy

- **LLS** - The main advocacy task over the past 12 months for LNSW has been the implementation of the NSW Local Land Services. At the outset we suggested an Implementation Panel to assist the process, this suggestion was heeded and Landcare NSW secured a seat at the table. Through the LLS implementation panel, it was the role of LNSW to pull together the disparate views of the Landcare community and put forward a single view. We gained credibility by working on solutions rather than focusing on problems. Our input has been constructive and members have been impressed with our ability to hold our seat at the table.
- **Catchment Action funding** – There was a lot of noise around the State regarding Catchment Action funding ending at the end of June – as a consequence of all the noise that was made by Landcarers it has been flagged that this funding program will continue but this will not be formally announced until the budget. Our success here proves the effectiveness of the Landcare movement. Congratulations – this was a great result.
- **RLF Program** - LNSW was successful in helping to secure the RLF program and members successfully lobbied Ludwig that RLF's should be housed in community where this has worked in the past.
- Through the background work of LNSW, Landcare was the topic of speeches in Parliament by both Richard Torbay as well as Jeremy Buckingham.
- Throughout the year, members represent LNSW on various committees and working groups. These include: Landcare Australia Limited Advisory Council; National Landcare Network; Department of Primary Industries Steering committee for Business Plan; Office of Environment and Heritage Roundtable; Regional Landcare Facilitators; Pest Animal Council.

## Fundraising

- Received \$40K from the NSW Environmental Trusts Lead Environment Community Grant.
- Received \$6,000 from the Federal Government's GVESHO program
- Received contracts worth \$180,000 under the NSW government's State Landcare Support Program Business Plan to deliver services that support landcare group function
- Worked with department to rework the Business Plan to include a budget for items such as training for networks.

## Member Services

- Landcare NSW was contracted to deliver several of the Landcare Support Program projects. These include:
  - the Snapshot and Prospectus projects;
  - a Community of Practice project which has produced case studies;
  - A Member Services officer, Fiona Adams as the main point of contact for Landcare groups and networks for services such as insurance, incorporation and governance;
  - A series of governance, administration and management fact sheets, "tips and tricks" publications and "useful templates"; known as Landcare in a Box
  - Hothousing Landcare Leaders workshops.
- We asked groups, networks and individuals to provide information to be included in the final products. These products and services were launched at the NSW State Landcare and Catchment Forum in September.

## Communications

- Throughout the year LNSW has been active in social media on both Twitter and Facebook. Both forms of social media are complementary and each have a place in effective communications.
- The Advocate was produced following all but the February Council meeting.
- With the finalisation of the Communities in Landscapes (CiL )project, final reports and newsletter articles were produced.
- Landcare featured in the media through the year in publications such as “The Land” as well on ABC radio programs.
- The Muster was held at the Newcastle Landcare Forum in September this year. With around 160 participants it was the largest Muster held to date and validated the role that LNSW has played in supporting and advocating for Landcare. The information gathered from this Muster will help chart the direction that LNSW will take over the next two years.

It has been a year of great achievement for LNSW, however this is only possible because of the foundational work of many longstanding LNSW members –notably the work of Mandi Stevenson, and David Walker, past Chairs of LNSW, and stalwarts like Chris Scott, Chris Cumming, Bill Piggott and John Hughson.

Thanks must also go to the staff of LNSW - Tim Beshara whose knowledge and skills has helped Landcare NSW make significant inroads into the world of policy. Tim worked for LNSW for just over a year and his input has left a lasting legacy – we look forward to working with Tim in the future through his consultancy business. Thanks also to Sonia Williams, our General Manager and her team of staff – Amanda Harris, Fiona Adams, and Lucy Chapman, who have helped build the business base of LNSW and provide our member services. Their efforts as a team, have produced significant results over a relatively short space of time

And finally to all my fellow Council members and Management Committee members – your input to LNSW, on a volunteer basis, over and above that which you give to your own groups and regional bodies, is what helps LNSW remain relevant and focussed. This commitment is no small ask and is highly valued.

I look forward to working with you all as Landcare in NSW enters an exciting phase of opportunity and promise.

Kind Regards



Rob Dulhunty

Chair, Landcare NSW

*Presented to the AGM of Landcare NSW, Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November*