



Chair's Report – 2014

The past year has seen sound progress against the goals we set for our organisation. Through the commitment and hard work of our volunteer Council and dedicated staff we have fulfilled our role as the representative body for community Landcare in NSW.

The year began with a significant structural change with the formation of NSW Local Land Services (LLS). We were influential in ensuring community involvement in LLS and we have endeavoured to form a constructive partnership at the state, regional and local level. Following a forum in Dubbo mid-year, a Partnership Steering Committee was formed and a MoU is due for completion before Christmas. It is still early days in this relationship but we have worked well at the State level and a strong focus for the future will be to build a workable partnership in all regions at all levels.

During the year we represented the voice of local Landcare in many policy debates, providing submissions to the development of the LLS Performance Standard, National Landcare Program consultation, Biodiversity review, Senate Committee Inquiry into Landcare, Weeds Review, Agricultural White Paper and 20 Million Trees. We raised our profile and kept members informed through our website and regular bulletins and had a strong presence at the National Landcare Conference in Melbourne, delivering two addresses (including one keynote) and a poster presentation as well as having a stall.

In the area of member services, we provided information and advice, training workshops, standard policies and templates and case studies through the Landcare Support Program funded by the State Government and we continue to work on a project to streamline insurance services. A highlight of the year was the partnership we formed with Pozible to bring crowdfunding to Landcare. As a result of this partnership \$200,000 has been pledged to Landcare projects. This is an outstanding result and great example of innovation. I would like to acknowledge the hard work by all involved in this exciting initiative.

We have also directed our efforts at how we can build a solid, properly functioning, sustainable organisation. With funding from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation we now have our first formal strategic plan. The focus for 2015 is securing a funding base that enables us to implement key strategic priorities.

As part of developing the strategic plan we conducted interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. Through this process we formed the view that it is timely to examine current arrangements in Landcare nationally to see if they remain fit for purpose. The environmental challenges facing Australia are immense and cannot be solved by Government alone. If the Government wants to see an effective and strong Landcare community, I believe a national review is required to examine what support services, structures and representation are needed.

In this 25th year of Landcare, there has been much reflection about what Landcare has achieved, where we are today and what is needed to ensure the health of the movement into the future. Like many of us in the

Landcare community, I have been involved since the beginning, practising Landcare on my property, forming and leading local groups and, in 2011, taking up the role of Chair of Landcare NSW.

There is no question in my mind that Landcare is Australia's most successful natural resources program. It has transformed our landscape and fundamentally changed the way we think about and use our natural resources. It is also cost-effective, with every Government dollar invested in Landcare leveraging 2 to 5 times that amount through contributions towards labour, equipment, voluntary expertise, and often additional donations from landholders and businesses.

Landcare has been replicated in more than 25 countries and has survived for a quarter of a century. That in itself is proof that Landcare is an effective model but there is also a strong body of evidence that Landcare works. While its benefits in sustainable agriculture and conservation are well known, Landcare is also part of the social fabric of local communities, sitting alongside the Rural Fire Service, SES and Surf Lifesaving as an iconic and trusted volunteer organisation and Australian institution.

We have a positive story to tell and we need to tell it loudly because, despite our achievements, the future health of Landcare is uncertain. We are a volunteer movement and our work benefits the whole community. This is why all major policies of the State and Federal Governments refer to the importance of engaging the community in natural resource management. In order to effectively carry out our work we need recognition and support from all levels of Government – not only funding to undertake projects but funding for the core ongoing infrastructure that is necessary to support a volunteer movement.

As Chair I feel privileged to work alongside such a committed and talented group of people. I am confident that we will work through the challenges to ensure that Landcare is a thriving, growing movement for the next 25 years. I thank the staff and volunteer Council of Landcare NSW, and the many individuals and organisations who have offered their support, advice and services over the past 12 months.



Robert Dulhunty
Chair, Landcare NSW