



Many Hands, One Voice
Wanda Wanda One Voice

Sustaining Landcare

Landcare Community feedback

April-May 2016 consultation

1. Executive Summary

The Government's policy to fund Local Landcare Coordinators and require the design of a new funding model for the future of Landcare support has stimulated Landcare members to think about how the movement operates and how it may need to change to adapt and thrive into the future. The Sustaining Landcare consultation process was the catalyst for much discussion throughout the Landcare community. A total of 40 written submissions were received and Landcare NSW councillors advised the issue has been discussed in local meetings, during informal conversations among Landcarers and via email and online debates. This report provides a summary of feedback including quotes from submissions (*in italics*).

The strongest theme throughout the submissions is the intrinsic value of Landcare as an effective way to involve the community in the management of natural resources. This is raised by a cross-section of the Landcare community, from landholders working with Landcare in an agricultural setting to coastal dwellers involved in urban and bushland Landcare. Landcare's contribution to preserving natural assets, improving sustainable agriculture and supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities is emphasised. The contribution of volunteers, the ability to operate cost-effectively by leveraging additional resources, the statewide coverage and applicability in all settings, is seen as a distinctive benefit of Landcare.

The grassroots volunteer community is our greatest strength.

Support structures – for example Local Coordinators and Landcare organisations – are identified as crucial to Landcare's ability to operate. The need for strong and professional Landcare organisations is viewed as necessary, with Landcare NSW recognised as playing an important role building the capacity and growth of Landcare. While reservations are expressed about fees for active volunteers, the concept of a paid membership system for Landcare NSW – with different categories of members and fees – is supported.

I think you need to look at the value of the sense of belonging to Landcare.

The question of funding generated much debate. A dominant theme is that the primary funding source for Landcare should be government. This is a strong view held by many, with some suggesting the withdrawal of government funds would result in some volunteers withdrawing their services.

The community approach must be carefully nurtured by funding bodies.

The concept of 'interdependence' is raised as a way to conceptualise the government/Landcare relationship. The Federal, State and Local Government are all viewed as having a role to play in Landcare support. The current NSW Biodiversity reforms are viewed as an opportunity to assist in resolving the question of Landcare funding.

They are responsible for our actions as transient users of the land, and they can't diminish their responsibility.

There is support for a 'Landcare Trust' and recognition that Landcare needs a new a model that draws funds from a range of sources including donations, membership fees, philanthropy, social enterprises and fundraising. A positive benefit of this approach is the support it enables for Landcare to be fully independent. A number of submissions raise doubts about Landcare's ability to raise sufficient funds and concerns about the implications of partnering with corporations that may not be aligned with Landcare's values.

2. Introduction

The Sustaining Landcare project involves research and communication with various stakeholders to determine the best model. Landcare community consultation will occur regularly throughout the project. This report refers to the initial consultative process with the Landcare community during April-May 2016.

3. Consultation Purpose

The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that the Landcare community:

- is involved in the Sustaining Landcare discussions
- has a sense of ownership of Sustaining Landcare
- supports the goals of Sustaining Landcare
- is educated and informed about the progress of Sustaining Landcare.

Key audiences

- Landcare NSW Councillors
 - Primary responsibility for leading discussion at the local level
- Sustaining Landcare email list
 - broader group of Landcare 'leaders'
- Local Landcare Coordinators and Regional Landcare Facilitators
- General Landcare community
 - provide ideas and find information on Landcare NSW's website

4. Consultation Process

The initial consultation process was developed to inform Landcare and invite their input to the draft model for the Sustaining Landcare 'Future Fund' or 'Landcare Trust'.

Consultation was directed through Landcare NSW Councillors and Landcare community leaders via the Sustaining Landcare email list. A separate message was emailed to the 66 new Local Landcare Coordinators encouraging them to involve their host organisations in the discussion. These emails were supported by posts to Facebook and the Landcare NSW website *News* section.

Each of these key leadership groups was emailed key materials and asked to talk to people locally and feedback comments and ideas to sustaininglandcare@landcarensw.org.au.

Consultation Period

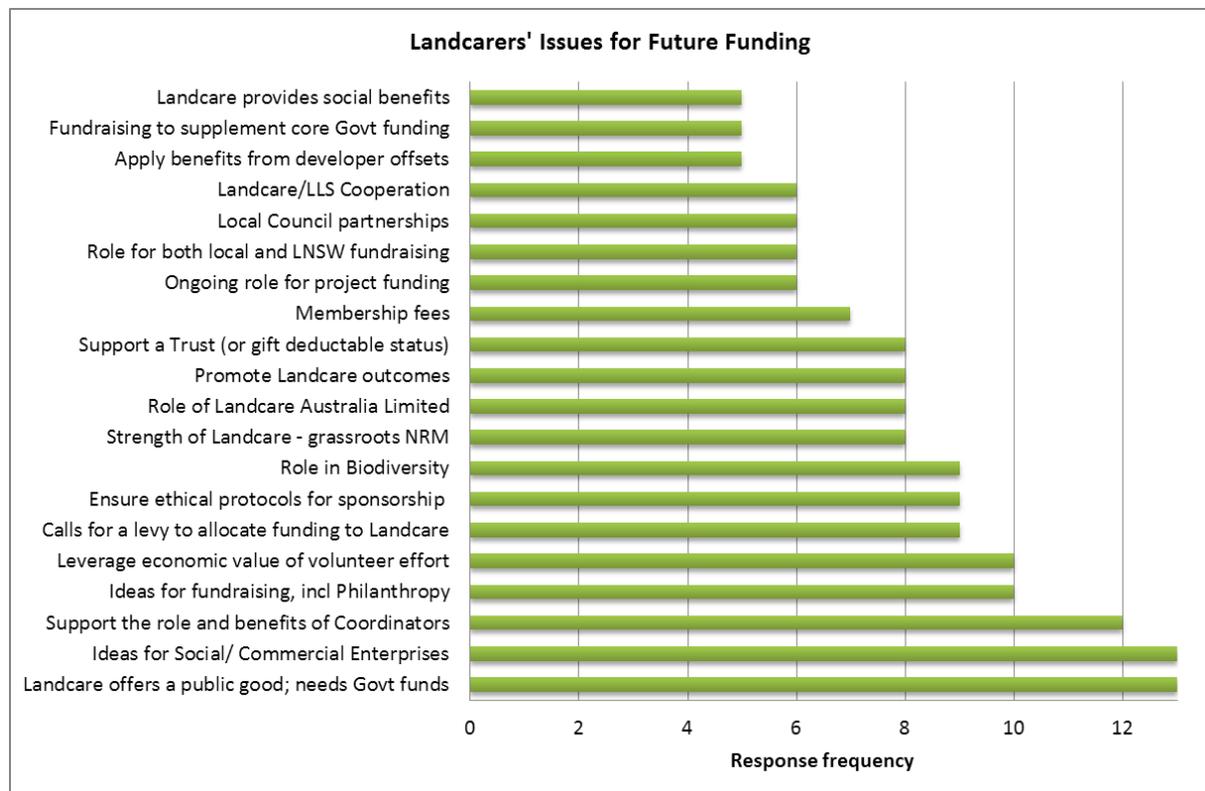
Materials were distributed on 13 April 2016, and comments were due by 4 May 2016.

Materials were provided on the Landcare NSW website for use by Landcare groups

- *Information Sheet*
- *Discussion Guide*
- *FAQ* (Frequently Asked Questions)
- Newsletter text for use by Landcare groups.

5. Responses

A total of 40 responses were received by the due date and in the week following. These included a range of Landcare NSW Councillors, Landcare Groups, Local Landcare Coordinators and Landcare volunteers. The range of issues to be considered in future funding models is reflected below.



6. Key Themes

- The value of Landcare and the economic contribution of volunteers
- The Role of Local Coordinators and Landcare Support
- The Concept of Sustaining Landcare
- The need for Landcare to generate funds from diverse sources, including: membership, fundraising (including philanthropy), sponsorship, social and commercial enterprises.
- The role of Federal, State and Local governments to provide funds and strengthen the Landcare/community partnership.

The Value of Landcare and the Economic Contribution of Volunteers

The contribution Landcare makes in the form of landholders and citizens volunteering their time and resources to protect, repair and restore the environment was a universal theme.

Examples included:

- Landholders voluntarily take action to protect vegetation, creeks or endangered species through measures including pest and weed eradication, fencing, adopting new practices, working with neighbours, learning, working collaboratively, sharing information, and providing peer to peer support
- Citizens participate voluntarily in Landcare committees and organisations
- Community members undertake on ground projects across a range of land tenure
- Landcare groups provide information and advice to inform government policy and decision making
- High recognition and public confidence in the Landcare brand and caring hands logo
- Landcare groups partner with others to achieve shared goals in natural resource management
- Landcare leverages additional resources to apply to projects and bringing in funds to small country towns
- Landcare contributes to social capital and provides a range of health benefits for participants
- Landcare volunteers carry out work more cost effectively than government agencies
- Landcare positively influences attitudes and behaviours, norms and culture.

Landcare was described as a cost effective method of land management delivering additional social, economic and environmental benefits.

Government programs have been the catalyst for major community investment in natural resource management with Landcare groups investing in the order of 2.6 community dollars for each government dollar invested – other estimates place the leverage at higher levels.

The success of Landcare tapping in at the community level was illustrated by one long term participant explaining what drew them to Landcare in the first place.

I was speaking at an event in a professional capacity...and a Landcare Coordinator said to me, would I be interested in starting up a Rivercare group...

Submissions stressed the importance of quantifying and valuing volunteer contributions. One stated volunteers' hours should be accurately counted and 'banked' as equity in the proposed Landcare Trust to be matched by other contributions. There was considerable discussion around the need for data to allow the impact of Landcarers to be properly measured and reported, for example: in improved productivity, environment, social capital, community capacity, volunteer multiplier effect. The opportunity cost of *not* investing in Landcare should also be considered.

Landholders, when they work together with grassroots groups and networks...design programs that are community and family friendly. Farmers enjoy the comradery of working together and sharing information, and the funds available for revegetation and rehabilitation can be applied more flexibly, more efficiently and more cohesively.

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The community approach must be carefully nurtured by funding bodies.

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Landcare has been a provider of social, environmental and agricultural services since the late 1980s. It boasts large networks of groups and individuals that have adopted a cooperative approach to undertaking works on ground and sharing their knowledge.

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If you give the community \$100 to run something they will and they will leverage volunteer hours and donations. If the government runs it at the same price it won't be as successful, and will not bring the leverage that only a committed community can access.

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Landcare can deliver projects more efficiently, effectively and equitably than can government departments and Landcare participation builds community capacity.

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Community Landcare with its group approach and local ownership of problems and solutions can provide an effective delivery vehicle. The work of Landcare groups on public land and on other public assets such as stream and river banks produces significant biodiversity and resource condition benefits and reduces the need for government agencies to undertake such work.

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The grassroots volunteer community is our greatest strength.

~

Landcare has a good start with a high (Coca Cola) level of recognition in the broader community of its brand and the caring hands logo.

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Landcare has been successful in engaging natural resource managers, recognising that owners and managers of private land manage some 60 percent of Australia's land area and a major proportion of its water resources. This contributes to conservation and protection of natural resources and biodiversity on private land to the benefit of the whole community.

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The Landcare movement has been highly effective in stimulating adoption of better farming practices, resulting in resource condition improvements at the farm and local level which have created significant public natural resources and environmental benefits. In this way Landcare has been filling the gap left by reductions in government investment in agricultural extension services.

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I think you need to look at the value of the sense of belonging to Landcare.

The Role of Local Coordinators and Landcare Support

Many submissions raised the need for Landcare to have access to organisational infrastructure and support including Local Coordinators.

The recent injection of new funding for Coordinators was welcomed;. A number of submissions stated more funds are needed so these positions could be full time where the location or situation required.

Submissions flagged the need for a balance in funding between on ground projects and coordination/support. One submission argued that during tight financial times it is more important

to keep coordinators in place to maintain the Landcare infrastructure because it is difficult and expensive to restart a dormant Landcare community.

Landcare was created because of issues that were shared across a community or landscape, ie erosion, soil acidity, salinity. These shared issues have changed now. Do we (Landcare) know what they are? Wherever there has been little to no support from a Coordinator, the answer is probably 'no'. Landcare needs more investment in the form of funds and staff to develop an understanding of the issues. 'If you build it they will come.'

~

There will always be times when funds for on ground works are hard to come by. During these times groups can scale back works but still remain active. In my mind, continuity and resilience of groups (regardless of the scale of works) is a far better solution than boom and bust on ground cycle with little coordination and support. If Coordinators have to resurrect and establish new groups every five years due to gaps in continuity of employment or networks' lack of resources this is clearly not cost effective.

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Three things are required for a thriving Landcare community: a knowledgeable and capable Coordinator who understands the needs of members; sufficient incentives and funding for on ground projects; landholder, rural and urban support. This is not a part time task. Coordinator roles need to be full time. [Name] and [Name] are great examples of what can be achieved on a full time basis.

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Funding the Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative at present levels is just a dribble that will not be sustainable into the future, the positions barely have enough funding to make time to fulfil their reporting requirements.

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Somehow we've got to convince the Government (all levels) that Landcare provides a valuable service, if they want volunteers to do the graft at a grass roots level, they need to pay for someone to fill in the risk assessments, coordinate the group, provide support to a committee who is often not elected on their skills base, but simply for their enthusiasm, and be the central point of contact within a certain area. Capacity building roles are fine in theory, but you're still relying on volunteers, who have other commitments, are aging and whilst many are committed, in the end, they're just volunteering out of the goodness of their heart.

The Concept of Sustaining Landcare

A significant number of submissions stated federal and state government should be the primary funding source for Landcare. Submissions argued Landcare is a proven model delivering major benefits and the costs of not supporting it will be far greater in the long term. There is recognition of the need and value of generating new sources of funds, and support for a 'Landcare Trust', with some expressing misgivings about the likely success of generating alternative funding sources.

Our own funding stream is crucial. If government pays the bills, we do what they say. We should be aiming to minimise government control.

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The concept that there is no longer any spare or available monies to indulge Landcare is off target. Environmental amenity is expensive, as is functional farmland and waterways.

Lowering the government ... support [will] cost ratepayers/governments. Landcare is a proven, cost effective alternative, this is the 'sustainable funding model'.

Submissions offered various ratios of funding – with a mix of state, federal, membership, philanthropic, grants, fee for service.

[In our discussions] there was strong support for the idea of Landcare becoming more self-funding to allow the Landcare movement to be more self-reliant and independent.

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I believe if we, with LNSW leadership, are going down this path, we need to be clear we are entering a competitive marketplace we have never been in before.

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A Landcare Trust will be needed, accepting voluntary pledges and donations from individuals (city and country), firms, organisations, etc.

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I suggest a Landcare Trust – 'adding value to sustainable agriculture; adding value to natural resource management; adding value to rural communities'.

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Landcare systematically undervalues itself, it always accepts the bare minimum gratefully. This should not continue, Landcare can make more out of a dollar contribution than any other organisation...but it can't be expected to take on government extension roles without remuneration.

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Love your suggestion for a Trust.

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A Landcare Trust will have to campaign for funds professionally.

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We strongly support your intention to continue to work with state and federal governments and explore avenues to generate additional funding sources to support Landcare.

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We can bit by bit claw a few more dollars from non-government sources, but let's be realistic about that. Other than that I guess we could all start knitting booties and weaving weed baskets to sell at markets? I make a good banana cake and tasty guacamole, too!

Some stated that sustaining Landcare is not just about money but about how the Landcare movement grows and develops in order to maintain relevance and value in a changing environment. For example, some submissions raised the need to 'cut the red tape of Landcare' and stated the model needed to continue to adapt, noting that farmers are time poor and groups need to re-evaluate how people participate.

The point was raised that Landcare NSW and the Landcare networks need to continue to build their capacity and professionalism, without jeopardising their volunteer ethic.

To maintain a professional organisation into the future adequate funds [are needed] for training, good business management systems, security of job tenure, standard contractual arrangements.

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Sustaining Landcare is as much about succession planning, renewal and engagement of younger people as much as it is about funds. It is as much about the maintenance and

renewal of the vitality and resilience of local groups and networks as it is about the funding of Local Coordinators.

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Landcare has had its run in our area, with seven groups now down to none. There are many reasons, such as the old CMA attitude, the 9 year dry period, etc. However there are still some individuals doing some great work and have an understanding of the needs of the environment.

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Are we truly innovative or comfortable and complacent in our model of what we do, limited by our willingness to explore change, merely rearranging the deck chairs?

Membership

Landcare NSW has flagged membership as a way to both generate revenue and, importantly, accurately aggregate the number of individual members of the State body. This is critical for the legitimacy and success of Landcare to continue to build a large and effective Landcare movement.

Various views were conveyed on the subject of membership. While some supported local families and/or individuals paying a fee to belong to their local Landcare group others opposed the imposition of fees on active volunteers, arguing this may turn people away from Landcare.

There was considerable support for Landcare NSW to charge a membership fee, with various views offered on how this could be achieved, such as regional Landcare organisations paying fees to LNSW on behalf of their groups or group members. That is, the amount paid would vary depending on the contributing organisation.

Submissions also recognised the potential for donations from within Landcare group membership and an untapped area of supporters or friends of Landcare who could become financial supporters and take up some form of membership.

Some raised the issue of the cost of administration of a membership system.

Yes, we could ask for contributions, with different tiers of membership/ sponsorship/ Friends of...

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...ensure that groups/networks are at least signed up to Landcare NSW and that members are signed up to Landcare networks and groups so that there are more members and the organisation is community strong.

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[Landcare NSW] needs signed up members who pay a fee, people who say: Landcare is important, I am willing to pay, people who have a sense of 'we belong to Landcare'.

~

Each group would need to pay membership fees to Landcare NSW to secure the services of their local coordinators. While the management of the local coordinator is still the regional network's responsibility the membership covers larger employment issues, insurance, training, connectivity to government and staff support.

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I don't think a family levy would work. I have enough difficulty getting the annual subs from Landcare groups so to ask individual families, who are loaded down with all of their other

costs of living, would I believe produce a negative response from all but the most dedicated Landcarers.

~

If we are going to charge more for membership, there are a few questions that we will need to ask ourselves first: What extra will we offer? What will this achieve? Will we isolate people who cannot afford the higher price? You don't need to be a member to get public funds so why would people pay? It is important to remember that we have trouble gaining memberships at \$15 - \$25. Increasing a fee won't fix an issue - a lot more work needs to happen first to get people interested and involved in Landcare.

~

I have concerns about a subscription model as more wealthy areas may be advantaged whilst areas that are populated by 'battlers' – for example small farmers and low income families – may find this difficult.

Funding Sources

Respondents were open to generating new funding sources, with many ideas presented. One submission suggested Landcare reach out to high profile leaders, thinkers and philanthropists from all sectors for ideas and assistance to help transition to a new funding model. Former recipients of Landcare awards were viewed as a source of ideas and support.

While a range of ideas to generate funds were presented, one submission stated strongly there should be no fee for service or commercial activities undertaken.

Ideas included:

Commercialisation/social enterprise

- Establish Landcare as a cooperative
- Charge for advice and consultancy services drawing on Landcare's expertise
- Generate funds via insurance negotiation, project management, training, conference organisation, feedback/focus groups for government agencies
- Develop a system of food production that is 'Landcare certified' with Landcare receiving a percentage – use to bridge city/country divide
- Partner to establish accommodation in national parks with benefits for government, business and Landcare
- Establish social enterprises such as WiFi in rural areas, solar pumping stations
- Create opportunity for statewide marketing of relevant products through Landcare network
- Advertising on Landcare NSW website
- Create online business and sell products, equipment and services used by Landcare groups eg. seeds, tools, apparel, books etc.

Fundraising, Sponsorship, Philanthropy

- Crowdfunding
- High net worth individuals through Friends of Landcare, or Landcare Benefactors
- Landcare Week, Biodiversity Days, Big Sausage Sizzle, State Landcare Day on which all groups organise fundraising events eg local car sales; paintball events
- Bequests

- Workplace giving
- Sponsor a patch (ie revegetated area), sponsor a tree planting, naming rights
- Raffles
- Partner with corporates to contribute % of sales to Landcare, eg petrol, supermarkets, nurseries
- Cold calling to seek donations

Landcare NSW and possibly National Landcare are best placed to approach and seek partnerships from big corporates. The sheer size and distribution of Landcare NSW's regional networks and groups I think would be very appealing to some big players...what some organisations have achieved with corporates is truly amazing and well within the reach of LNSW.

~

Various members...have been involved in fundraising for both projects and administration, by seeking donations for group survival from absentee owners (people who find it difficult to contribute in person), from committed activists for particular projects or new initiatives, from fundraising/entertainment events and as contributions to particular local projects.

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We are aware that fundraising is a very competitive business and it would be a major shift for the Landcare movement and its institutions to enter this field in competition with organisations such as lifesavers, guide dogs or WWF with their collection boxes, call centres, TV advertising and so on.

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In general you can expect most Landcare groups and networks to have well-tested all possible avenues for raising funds or enlisting other forms of support.

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Realistically, most corporations aren't going to sling significant dollars to a local Landcare group on a sustaining basis...a few grand here or there perhaps.

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We're tree huggers, not financiers. We're all great people whose speciality is environmental work, not large scale funding. Perhaps Landcare NSW is looking at engaging specialists in financing, now would be the time, with the next two years ahead to achieve it.

~

Sponsorship and philanthropy are very valid, although sometimes difficult and often unreliable options.

~

The expectation that corporates, philanthropic organisations etc will engage in long term commitment to fund Landcare is optimistic and unlikely.

The question of Landcare Australia Limited's fundraising role was raised. Some respondents raised questions about the ownership and use of the 'caring hands' Landcare logo. Others questioned to what extent LAL could help resolve the funding challenge in NSW.

There will need to be a resolution of the issue that exists between Landcare Australia Limited (the custodians of the Landcare 'hands' brand, which works with corporate sponsors) and the National Landcare Network (a coordinating network that includes representation from Landcare NSW). LAL, which does some good things, currently manages itself and is responsible to itself.

~

Landcare needs to consolidate the brand and develop a close working relationship with Landcare Australia Limited, secure the branding and corporate funding knowledge into a sustainable future for Landcare.

~

We need to ensure that NSW projects get a fair share of the funds.

A number of submissions expressed reservations about the concept of fundraising.

...there are not a lot of philanthropic opportunities out there, and certainly not many that will continue beyond a short timeframe. Of note is the fact that the Catchment Boards and authorities all had staff employed to explore this avenue...and I at least never saw a single outcome – not sure why we could do better.

Some submissions stated that groups who devoted time to fundraising would wish to retain those funds at the local level and not necessary see them directed to a state Trust.

We believe there is potential to raise funds for Sustaining Landcare from our members and 'friends'. This would not come naturally to our membership and some members expressed concern that we would be asking our local membership for funds that would not be used on local projects. This would be a hard sell and it was considered the request would have to be accompanied by clear objectives and strategies so our members and 'friends' would be able to understand the need to raise funds for maintaining/sustaining Landcare.

However there was recognition that fundraising could occur at many levels and the local networks could help identify and liaise with potential major donors.

Landcarers at the grassroots level may be more prepared than we think to accept membership fees, raise funds at the local level, create categories of membership that focus on financial contributions and fundraising.

~

We believe that there is an opportunity to raise funds from local landowners and businesses but this would be an even harder sell. It was suggested this will need seed funding to be already in place from Government and possibly Landcare Australia [Limited] and for the contribution from local sources to be targeted to meet any shortfall in this funding.

A large number of submissions raised strong concerns about Landcare partnering with corporations and what conditions this may involve. The need for consideration of guidelines and protocols was a strong theme, with a number of submissions preferring not to go down this path given the risk to Landcare's independence: a core value and strength of the movement. This is already an issue for Landcare at the local level with groups deciding protocols for accepting sponsorship for local businesses.

...large companies with a commitment to the environment, provided that they can make a contribution without any strings attached. Landcare must remain independent.

~

I would rather Landcare remain independent and broke, rather than be beholden to the donated dollar.

~

Mining companies would probably be on the nose for most Landcarers and too disparate from our Landcare ethics and values.

The Role of State, Federal and Local Government

There was a strongly stated view in many submissions that governments should continue to play a key role in ensuring Landcare funding is consistent and reliable, particularly state and federal government. A number believe the totality of Landcare support should be government-funded, arguing that Landcare delivers significant value to the whole community and therefore the whole community should contribute to the costs of Landcare.

My concern is that if the Coalition Government withdraws its support and tells Landcare volunteers that by 2019 they have to raise their own money and go it alone, a number of volunteers would also down tools and walk away.

~

Good NRM and sustainable farming practices benefit all Australians and as such should be funded by all Australians.

Some submissions raised the role of local councils, with some saying they already contribute through their support of Bushcare in more populated areas and others expressing a view that local councils could and should more actively support Landcare in all areas.

There is a view that the Federal Government should focus on supporting Landcare as a more effective and durable strategy than programs such as green army and tree planting – and they should play the lead role in Landcare support and funding given Landcare is a proven model that helps them deliver their environmental and agricultural policy objectives.

Some submissions suggested funding could come from a wider range of portfolios including mental health and drought funding.

It is our firm belief that the strength of Landcare over many years has been its partnership with government – and Landcare works best in partnership with government because the benefits flow not only to landholders but also to the community in general.

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Landcare is a good and appropriate investment for governments – a model for interdependence rather than independence or dependence. Our concern is that the benefits of the relationship seem to have been forgotten in recent years and that the concern of governments has been mainly to find ways of reducing expenditure.

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It's all of our land and we're all in this land together. It's all of our future.

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The funding for Landcare should be contributed by the State Government or the Federal Government. It is a cause that is of the utmost importance to the people of Australia and they should all be involved in a sustainable future for our land.

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The prime benefits of Landcare on ground activity accrue to the community in general, and the community should contribute through the tax system.

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The Federal National Landcare Program should support operational requirements of Landcare, including funding for the Landcare peak bodies nationally and in states and territories.

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Feed income [generated by Landcare] into a Trust for investment. Trust investment return distributed. Trust investment reserve boosted by government yearly by % based on CPI to retain real value.

A number of submissions suggested funding of Landcare through a levy, with a wide range of options suggested including many suggesting levies be imposed on those whose activities have led to the need for Landcare.

Would it be possible for State Governments to assign an environmental levy to specific business activities and that pooled funding re-allocated across the State to fund Landcare coordinator positions?

~

My view is that the environment isn't owned (solely) by landholders, it is owned by the State and Federal Governments on behalf of the community as a whole. Serious rates of extinction would draw the attention of the global community and both State and Federal Governments would need to respond. They are responsible for our actions as transient users of the land, and they can't diminish their responsibility.

The current NSW biodiversity reforms were viewed as an opportunity. One submission noted that the reach and influence of Landcare across private land was underestimated by Government and the biodiversity reforms did not recognise the capacity for Landcare to play a key role in delivering the objectives of the reform. The reform process was viewed as relying on active community involvement to succeed. It was seen that the reforms might provide Landcare with a potential funding stream given the significant funds flowing into the new Biodiversity Conservation Trust from developer offsets.

There is a general lack of understanding [in agriculture] about a range of issues which are non-commercial, eg local threatened species, flora and fauna, but there is an awareness of what the law requires. That is, people abide by the letter of the law, not the spirit of the law...the way out? If we want Landcare to be reinstated to its past position there will be need to be significant funding for community groups [and] for community projects.

~

[The Biodiversity Act] will shape the future of our landscapes, for better or for worse. Landcarers, who have already done some great work in their landscapes, need to be in a position to influence regional policy and outcomes. Community Landcare is more efficient, effective and equitable in NRM management but there are some things that only [government] can do. What is needed is a balance between the two approaches.

~

Many landholders are interested in private land conservation/sustainable land management but are very wary of going down the formal covenanting route.

Landcare NSW Inc

24 May 2016

www.landcarensw.org.au