



Communications TOOLKIT *for Landcare networks*

WHO SHOULD USE THE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT?

This Toolkit is designed for all Landcare NSW networks to provide information on both internal and external communication activities. If you are involved in Landcare in any capacity, from a committee member to a Local Landcare Coordinator, this kit is for you.

The following kit contains information and guidance surrounding communication skills, tips and techniques to further enhance the reach of Landcare through our various networks and beyond. As a Landcare member and representative it is important to ensure that all messaging and representation of our organisation is consistent to best and accurately reflect Landcare.

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WHY COMMUNICATE?

MAKE YOUR LOCAL LANDCARE VOICE HEARD

Traditionally Landcarers have been known as the quiet achievers, however in today's fast-paced world where everyone is scrambling for the public's attention, it's time for these achievements to be heard – loudly! Whether you are a volunteer committee member or a Local Landcare Coordinator you have a role to play in telling the Landcare story. Communicating your efforts is important for a number of reasons, in particular to:

- Raise awareness and generate grassroots volunteer support for Landcare
- Keep the Landcare legacy alive among new generations
- Support the *Sustaining Landcare* initiative to secure sustainable funding for Landcare support beyond 2019.

The more the public is aware of the great work being done by Landcare and its importance to the future of Australia's environment and agricultural sector, the greater the chance of impressing upon government, corporate and philanthropic decision makers to recognise the need to provide a sustainable funding supply to Landcare. Raising awareness of Landcare's results also has an important flow-on effect in sparking interest and greater engagement from potential volunteers or local partners.

If the public believes in you they will support you, but to achieve that, they have to know what it is you are doing and why you deserve their support.

PLAN, PLAN, PLAN...

Preparation is the key. It enables you to be confident in what you want to say, which in turn enables you to stay in control of the message that you want to deliver regardless of who you are delivering it to.

KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVES – WHY YOU WANT TO BE HEARD

Setting objectives gives you a roadmap for action, for example, to:

- Raise awareness of Landcare's invaluable work
- Ensure Landcare is top of mind when people think about sustainability

**KNOW YOUR
AUDIENCE – WHO
DO YOU WANT TO
TELL**

Who do you want talk to about your Landcare work? Audiences will vary depending on what it is you want to tell them, for example, lobbying local MPs for a particular project would require a different approach to when you are encouraging farmers/landholders to be involved in an event. Your key audiences could include:

- Farmers
- Local businesses
- Local MPs
- Local Government
- Local community groups with an interest in sustainability, agriculture and / or the environment
- General public – for attracting new volunteers and supporters
- Media

**GENERAL KEY
MESSAGES**

Preparing key messages will help to ensure Landcare at a state level and locally is portrayed positively, accurately and consistently. They should be regularly incorporated into communication materials. Some tips for preparing key messages include:

- Take time to think about what you want to say
- Messages should be truthful and written with audience in mind, ie not inward-looking
- Capable of being re-used
- Able to meet the needs of a variety of media and channels (eg social media)
- Capable of being used consistently by a variety of representatives, including volunteers
- Positive and supported by facts or evidence
- Written to include acknowledge key funders and supporters of Landcare NSW
- Use simple, layman’s language
- Be concise and clear
- Don’t use acronyms

**LOCAL LANDCARE
COORDINATOR
INITIATIVE KEY
MESSAGES**

Local Landcare Coordinators are encouraged to become familiar with an overarching set of messages explaining who they are and what they do at a macro level. Coordinators can then easily drill down into what they are doing at a local level and how that grass roots work supports the macro messages.

**OVERARCHING
MESSAGES**

The Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative was launched in 2015 and employs 66 part-time coordinators across NSW to help build and support local Landcare and community networks. It is managed by Landcare NSW and Local Land Services and supported by a \$15 million funding commitment over four years (2015-2019) from the NSW Government.

The initiative is designed to support the State’s network of 60,000 hard-working volunteers in local communities who manage and restore the natural environment, improve the sustainability of agricultural production and build the resilience of communities.

The Local Coordinators will create a ‘community of practice’ across the state to make Landcare and environmental volunteer groups stronger. This will involve developing a consistent approach to community capacity building and a central resource for collecting and collating information.

**LOCAL MESSAGES
– EXAMPLES**

I’m working with Landcare volunteers in my region to source funding for a regeneration project that will save local farmers thousands of dollars in lost productivity.

OR

The Landcare Group in my region needs new volunteers, so we’re working to raise awareness of the contribution Landcare volunteers make to creating a sustainable and productive future, and how involvement in Landcare gives individuals new skills, new confidence and new friends.

HOW TO BE HEARD

There are numerous ways, or channels, to communicate your key messages to your key audiences, including the following:

MEDIA Establishing a good working relationship with your local newspaper, radio and TV (where relevant) journalists is key to assisting in raising the profile of Landcare NSW in your area. Local journalists are time-poor and hungry for good local stories, so if you can provide them with compelling, local ideas supported by a media release, photos, case studies and any other relevant materials they are usually very welcoming and engaging. The following mediums offer a range of opportunities:

- Newspapers – stories, photos, columns, editorials, letters to the Editor, classified ads where budget allows
- Radio – community service announcements, interviews, ads where budget allows
- TV – interviews, images of Landcare volunteers at work

SOCIAL MEDIA In today's online world, social media is key to spreading the word about Landcare. The risk is that because it is an interactive medium, it can attract negative comments, so be prepared to monitor and respond in line with protocols. Some tips for using social media are:

- If you have social media accounts, 'like' @LandcareNSW on Twitter and follow on Facebook and LinkedIn
- Share Landcare NSW social media posts, tag Landcare NSW in your posts
- Consider a database of key social media influencers to follow, tag, share and start interacting with them
- Post to your social media platforms about the great work you are doing, making sure you tag Landcare NSW, use the hashtag #LandcareNSW

NEWSLETTERS

- Start your own newsletter and develop a distribution database of local contacts. An email newsletter is probably the most cost-effective and environmentally-friendly method
- Submit content to newsletters of local councils, MPs, community groups, schools, utilities eg local Water Authority newsletter

EVENTS – YOUR OWN AND OTHERS

- Invite representatives from your local media, council, MPs, community groups to attend a program you are supporting or facilitating
- Identify relevant local events to attend for networking or potentially as a speaker
- Take part in community events, field days with a stand if appropriate and resources allow (consider partnering with other regions at larger events)

BROCHURES/FLYERS

- Easy to produce and print on home computer, using green recycled paper
- Establish relationship with local Australia Post outlets to support mail drops on rural runs
- Build relationships with retail outlets like local agricultural merchandise businesses or rural services and ask them to distribute in their customer mail-outs
- Place in local agricultural merchandise businesses, councils, libraries, visitor centres

WINDOW DISPLAYS

- Approach your local council to use empty shop windows to feature displays of your local Landcare group's activities, this could include a photo essay or other appealing visual
- In lieu of empty shop windows, approach local businesses to rent window space for a display

DEVELOPING A MEDIA RELEASE

A media release is a tool for announcing 'news' via the media. It needs to cut-through the hundreds of media releases journalists receive every day. It should contain a punchy headline and lead paragraph, concise key messages including acknowledgement of those supporting a particular Landcare initiative, quotes to verify statements, imagery / case studies to bring the story to life and contact information if there's a specific call to action, and a media contact for the journalist to follow up with questions if needed.

A template media release is included on page 9, showing the 'inverted pyramid' media release structure as a guideline for developing a media release. Keep it short, with just the bare essentials plus a few quotes from the spokesperson.

WHAT MAKES NEWS

- **Currency / NOW factor**
 - Alignment with topical trends / issues
 - Announcing new local Landcare programs
- **The 'st' factor:**
 - Biggest (Landcare project)
 - Smallest (carbon footprint)
 - First (program of its type, tree to be planted)
 - Last (tree to be planted)
 - Longest, shortest etc
- **Novelty / celebrity:**
 - High profile advocates / celebrities
- **Human interest:**
 - The stories behind local Landcarers, farmer success stories
- **Proximity / relevance:**
 - Local Landcarers launch new program to help farmers tackle wild dogs
- **Conflict:**
 - Hopefully won't happen!

DISTRIBUTING YOUR MEDIA RELEASE

Identify your local journalists and their contact details, call first to explain and then email or email and then call to follow up.

To extend the reach of your message post it on social media and send it to others in the community who might be interested, such as local MPs, local Councils, farming body representatives, local community groups with a vested interest.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

A media release is an invitation for a media interview. The key to a good interview is preparation, as this helps you to stay in control of the message you want to deliver, regardless of the questions the journalist might ask. Journalists often have their own agenda, or idea for how the story should be written, so could ask unexpected questions. Here are some tips for handling an interview:

- Ask for questions in advance
- Know who will be interviewing you
- Prepare key messages
- Practice – perhaps run through the questions with a colleague

Techniques for staying in control:

- Bridging – this is a great technique for staying ‘on-message’, such as if you’re asked a question that’s not specific to your media release. For example, your media release is announcing a new local program, but the journalist asks why the NSW Government won’t provide more funding to Landcare. By using the bridging technique, you can confidently answer along the lines of: ‘I’m not in a position to comment on that issue, but what I can talk about is the great work we’re doing here, which demonstrates the need for continued funding for Landcare NSW’.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Remember nothing is really ‘off the record’, so don’t say anything you are not prepared to be quoted on.

Never say “No comment” - better to explain why you can’t answer the question, otherwise you risk coming across as being defensive and having something to hide.

Listen carefully to questions... and how they are expressed. Don’t be afraid to seek clarification if you need to. Do say that you don’t have that information and offer to get back to the journalist - **But make sure you do it... and within deadline.**

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

A great way to build the relationship with the journalist is to ensure he or she is happy with what they have from the interview. Reiterate or add any of the key messages or important facts, offer to confirm facts, spelling, figures etc if required, confirm your availability for follow-up questions and be proactive in offering to provide further information on topics in which the journalist seemed interested. Confirm the deadline if you need to get back to the journalist with more information and make sure you meet the deadline.

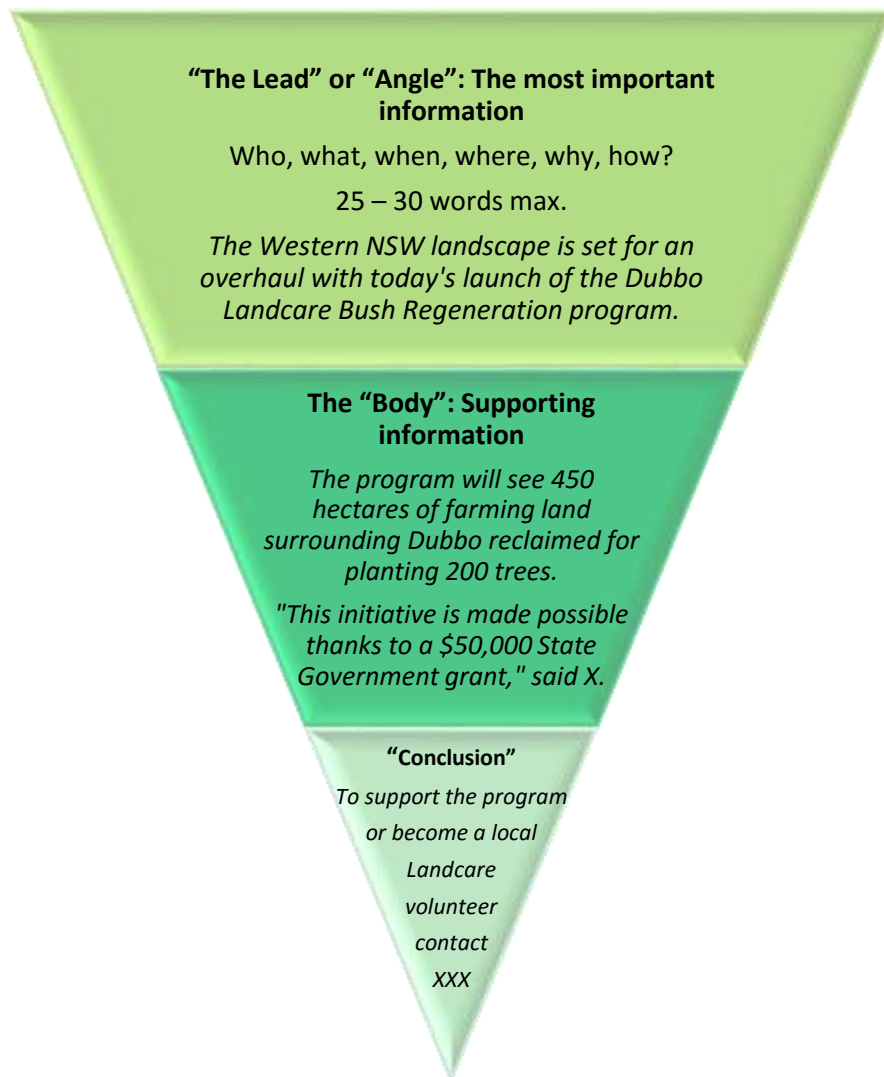
Insert your organisational name and address and logo

Insert date

SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

HEADLINE FOR ARTICLE: DUBBO LANDCARE LAUNCHES WESTERN NSW'S FIRST BUSH REGENERATION PROGRAM



ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT: Mary Smith, Landcare NSW, 0455 555 555, mobile, email address

IMAGE: Caption: Bob Smith, volunteer with the Dubbo Landcare NSW group with one of the trees to be planted.

TIPS ON HOW TO TAKE A GOOD PHOTO

Photos are crucial to sharing our Landcare successes. A picture is worth a thousand words. We've put together a couple of tips to help you take good photographs.

WHAT TO USE If you have a decent camera, it's worth using it to take top quality photos. However, don't be afraid to use your smart phone's camera. They come in handy and will most likely be with you anyway – and they take decent photos. Take some time to experiment with the camera and learn about the settings and functions available to get the best quality pictures. Sometimes editing apps can be helpful - SnapSeed for example is free and can edit pictures at the touch of your finger.

TAKE TIME IN PREPARING THE SHOT Always ask yourself: how can I make this an interesting and engaging photograph? If you're taking people, notice the backdrop. Ask people to move to a better position to make the photo more interesting and make sure there's no 'Exit' or 'Toilet' sign or the like sticking out of someone's head. Make sure people are close together – even though they might feel like they are encroaching on personal space, the tighter the photo the better the outcome. Get up close and personal – distant shots of people are usually not very interesting.

Take time to set up the photo, and the people in it, rather than rushing it. Always take a number of photos so you can choose the best one – different angles, settings, facial expressions. After you have taken some, check that you got a good one before letting the group disperse.

TAKE CARE WHEN YOU ZOOM Get up close to the thing you're photographing. If you zoom in too close you may reduce the quality of the photo.

HOLD IT STEADY A blurry picture is not 'shareable'. As above, take your time preparing and taking photos.

BE CREATIVE It can work to have different perspectives of the same image when sharing a photo – take a couple from different perspectives then you've got the choice of the best one. Try a different angle or a different look – maybe a black and white photo.



WHAT IS STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS?

Stakeholder relations is another word for networking. It is about how host organisations work with leaders, decision makers and influencers in your local community – to generate support for the work you do. Stakeholder relations is all about managing relationships with key individuals or organisations who can influence what you do and how successful you are in doing it.

This might be representatives from Government departments such as or the Department of Primary Industries, the local Mayor, local councillors, head of the local business chamber, it would certainly include the local Member of Parliament and other community leaders.

As Local Landcare Coordinators or voluntary committee members, you are also community leaders. Landcarers tend to be very modest and focused on getting on with the job, but don't underestimate yourselves. The more you can engage with other leaders in your community, the more likely you are to win support for the work you do.

As you lift the profile of your organisation, including the people who lead your organisation, you will get more inquiries, more interest, a bigger network to draw upon. As Landcare grows in stature and credibility, it is more likely to be able to have influence.

One of the most important stakeholders is your local Member of Parliament, whose job it is to raise issues on your behalf in the Parliament and to Executive Government.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH YOUR LOCAL MEMBER

MAKE IT LOCAL When writing to a Member of Parliament, include your address and contact details. This is important because their role as an MP is to answer queries from constituents and support the local community. Explain how they can be helpful to Landcare. Ask for a meeting or invite them to an event. Give them a warm welcome, take a photo, share it on Facebook or invite the local media representative to come and write a story. The key is to get to know your Local Member from both the State and Federal Parliament.

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR PURPOSE In order to receive a considered response to your letter or email, write a considered letter. Are you writing to introduce your group and form a relationship, seek their support for a local initiative, or ask them to support a broader statewide or national Landcare goal? There are many ways an MP can help – they are well informed and connected.

- BE CLEAR ABOUT ACTION** In your communication, whether by email or in person, it's important to be clear how the MP can help you; are you seeking a policy change? Funding? Is it to raise an issue with their Parliamentary colleagues or Ministers? Be clear if you are simply conveying a view, or also wish to talk to the MP or invite them to attend an event or meeting. Keep your letter as succinct as possible and address only the key issues, perhaps giving one or two very relevant examples.
- "3 P'S"** In letters, emails and meetings be passionate, persistent and polite.
- WHEN MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBER** Do your research about who they are, which political party, State or Federal Government, level of knowledge and interest in the issue. Have your key messages in mind – they will usually have limited time and remember they have to be across a huge range of issues so don't expect them to be experts in your field! Be specific about what you are seeking. Talk about the local issues. Seek to build an ongoing relationship. Ask them to help connect you with others in the community.

NSW PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF LANDCARE

Invite your Local Member to join the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Landcare (PFL) so they can show their support and represent their local Landcare community in Parliament. Many MPs are already members of PFL in which case you can encourage their continued involvement and engage them in the activities of Landcare in their electorate.

- WHAT IS THE NSW PFL** The NSW Parliamentary Friends of Landcare (PFL) was formed in 2015 after all political parties issued policies in support of Landcare prior to the 2015 State Election. There are 37 members and the Executive includes all political parties. The group is formally constituted under the standing orders of the NSW Parliament. Its members include Members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.
- HOW WAS IT ESTABLISHED** The release of detailed, funded Landcare policies by all political parties prior to the 2015 State Election demonstrated the cross-party support for Landcare in the NSW Parliament. After the election, MPs asked how they could continue their relationship with Landcare. The PFL was formed as a result.
- IS LANDCARE A POLITICAL ORGANISATION?** Landcare is not a partisan organization. Landcare has never sided with any political party. However Landcare is interested in politics. We live in a democracy and that means we need to engage in public debate if we want to influence what our elected representatives are deciding on our behalf. Members of Parliament are interested in what Landcare is doing and in how they can support our work.

WHERE DOES

The purpose of the PFL is to promote and support the work of Landcare across NSW in managing and restoring our environment, and improving the sustainability of our agricultural activities. The activities of the PFL include:

PFL FIT IN?

- Hearing from representatives of Landcare about issues affecting the movement
- Discussing policy and legislative ideas to support Landcare
- Promoting the work of Landcare within parliament and the community
- Hosting events involving Landcare, which may include fundraising for Landcare

WHAT IS THE

The existence of this group is hugely significant. It gives us a way to engage with the NSW Parliament and to send a message through from rural, regional and coastal communities across the State.

SIGNIFICANCE OF

THIS GROUP?

We encourage everyone to form a relationship with your local Member of Parliament. If you already have this relationship, we encourage you to keep it alive.

Some ideas

- Learn about the State and Federal Parliament and who represents your area
- Write to MPs about your group and the role of the Local Coordinator program
- Ask for a meeting so you can brief them in person
- Invite them to become a member of your Landcare group
- Invite them to a field day or working day
- Organise a launch, an event to promote your program in the local community – take photos and invite the media.

This communication kit was developed with resourcing from the Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative.



The Local Landcare Coordinators Initiative is funded by the NSW Government, and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.



DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of June 2016. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Landcare NSW or the user's independent advisor.



Landcare in a Box: an initiative of the National Landcare Network.

