

# Landcare NSW Inc

## Quarterly Regional Report Summary

### August 2017



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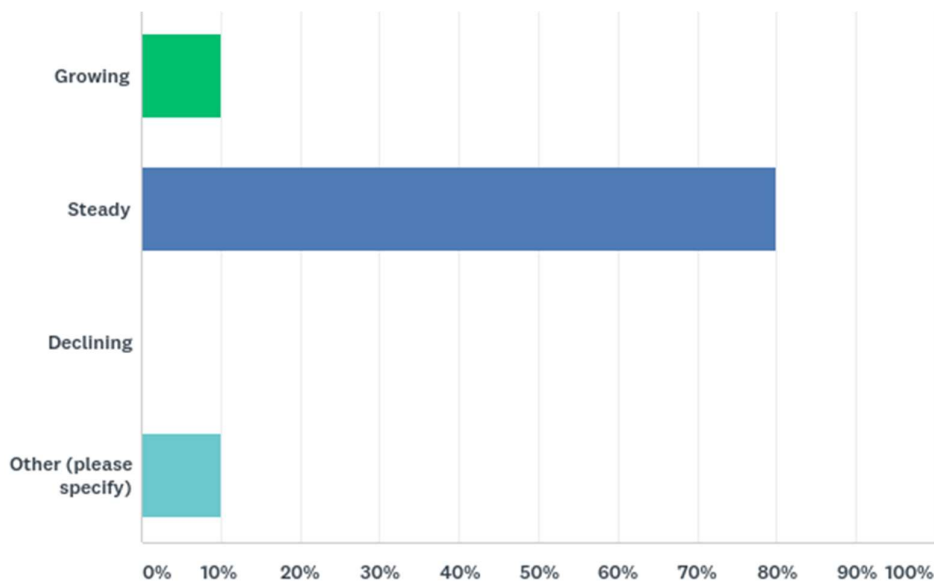


## Background

Landcare NSW regularly asks for feedback from our Councillors using Survey Monkey to allow us useful analysis tools for their responses. This document summarises the current position of Landcare across NSW as at August 2017. The purpose of analysing these trends is to provide feedback to the Regional Landcare bodies to assist in their planning and understanding of the state-wide picture of Landcare across NSW. This information is also used by Landcare NSW in our reporting, promotion and representational efforts.

## LANDCARE HEALTH CHECK

During August 2017, responses around the activity of Landcare showed 80% of Landcare regions recording 'steady' and 10% as 'growing' in terms of their activity. In comparison to the response from twelve months ago (Aug 2016) where 40% responded that they were 'growing' and 40% as 'steady', but almost 20% were struggling. No region reported a decline in activity in August 2017, however one region indicated a decline was likely given the imminent finish of two major federally funded on ground projects.



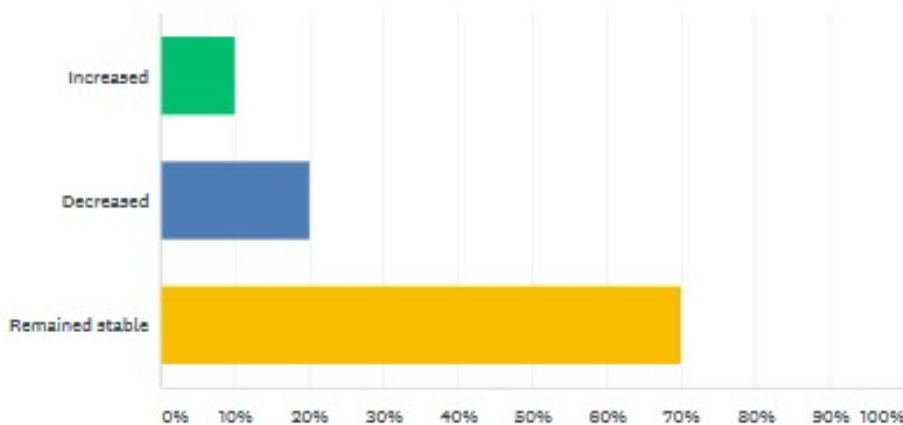
**TREND:** The response indicates that Landcare activity continues to show **stability**. However, there is a comment by one respondent that perhaps as regions face the completion of the current round of on-ground projects this may result in a decline in activity

## **PARTNERSHIPS:**

### **Local Land Services**

Council representatives are asked each quarter a series of questions designed to examine the state of relationships with their Local Land Services region.

**Has the level of financial or staff support from LLS for group /network operations in your region changed since you last reported?**



Whilst in most regions support remained stable, there were two regions that reported a decrease.

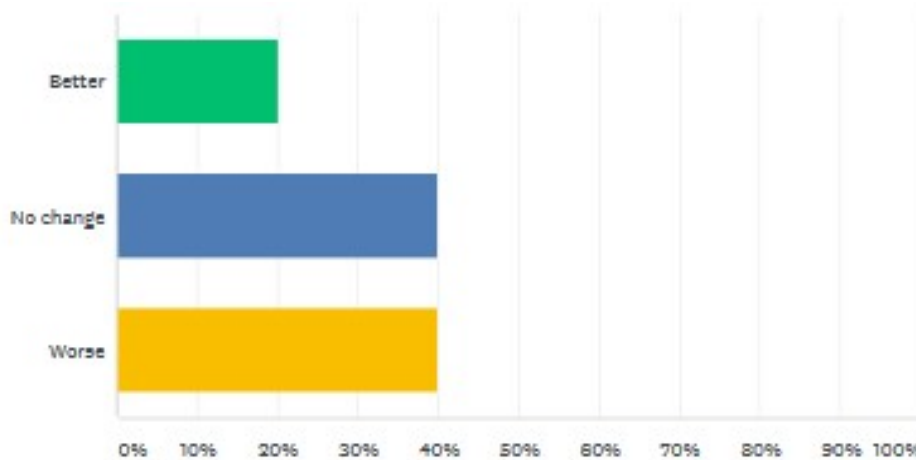
When asked how support had changed responses included;

- RLF will in future be managed by LLS.
- RLF role has changed from 2 part time job sharing to one part time only.
- Internal pressures within LLS coupled with the appointment of a new Chair and GM have meant that staff focus has turned inwards.
- New Chair has publicly stated he wants to grow the relationship between the LLS Board, our regional Landcare and LCAG<sup>1</sup>s. The overall impact would be that we see our region as an example for other Landcare networks across NSW.

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<sup>1</sup> Local Community Advisory Group

**Overall is the relationship/support to Landcare from Local Land Services better or worse than 12 months ago?**



Whilst 20% indicated that the relationship was generally better, and 40% indicated that there was no change in the relationship, it is noteworthy that 40% of respondents indicated that they believed the relationship was worse than 12 months ago.

**In terms of support for Landcare in your region what's working well and what's not working well? Why?**

Responses were varied – with many indicating that uncertainty and reduced funding had impacted on the culture of partnership. Long standing partnerships and general support for Landcare were highlights of the feedback. Future funding, and communication were highlighted as areas that need improving.

**What is ONE key item that could be supported by Landcare NSW or a Federal or State Program that is most important to your region?**

Responses fell to three main themes:

**Maintaining or Supporting Partnership & Collaboration**

- Continuing to engage all of LLS and other key partners in maintaining sound relationships with Landcare Groups and bodies for collaborations and encouraging them not to undermine the model by competing directly and shifting resources internally away from partner work to broad scale, open call, wasteful and disreputable regional projects. We are facing a reversal of 5 or more years of work, if NLP2 competition divides our partnerships and results in a swing too far towards economic rationalist modelling and throws the baby out with the socially responsible and highly efficacious partnership model to build capacity and deliver on ground works through community based NFP groups
- The Landcare people out here are fabulous, we just don't seem to function well on collaboration – we have been unable therefore to apply for grants such as 20Million trees

### **Support from RLFS and Local Coordinators**

- The RLF program fully connected to supporting the Landcare networks.
- Under RLF [support & direction] fully funded coordinator positions
- Continued funding of the RLF and coordinator positions
- Increasing funding for coordinators from 2.25EFT to 3.5EFT within the Western Region.
- Supporting new RLFs into the role [ie state level support]
- Funding to regional Landcare organisation to ensure they can support the Landcare Coordinator in the region, some of whose host organisations are finding it hard to find committee members due to the level of commitment required. We believe that finding steering committee members [non-governance roles] is easier, as the level of commitment is smaller for a volunteer. This model must be supported by regional [Landcare] manager and a strong regional [Landcare]organisation, that can provide governance and oversight

### **On-ground Grants**

- One challenge in our region is the lack of grants and funding opportunities currently available that are applicable to activities landholders have identified as their priority
- Funding for soil erosion control and water quality projects

## **FUNDING SOURCES:**

### **Environmental Trust**

Councillors were asked to consider the recent (last 3 years) history of Environmental Trust funding in their regions. Even though Environmental Trust has been established since 1998, it was encouraging to see the Landcare groups are utilising the opportunity to gain funding for quality projects through the Trust.

The most popular Environmental Trust funding streams for Landcare groups included;

- Bush Connect (longer term bush regeneration projects) (5 regions successful in last 3 years)
- Restoration and Rehabilitation (6 regions successful in last 3 years)
- Education (3 regions successful in last 3 years)

When asked about the processes of applying for and reporting against the Environmental Trust projects, the responses all reflected the rigorous processes engendered by the Environmental Trust, however the response to this was highly varied – some viewing the rigor as professional and reflective of the Trust’s high standards, some declaring the processes highly laborious and onerous. Many reporting that the resourcing for the level of reporting required is insufficient, some going as far as to say that this will likely prevent them from applying for future rounds of Environmental Trust funding.

### **DPI – Habitat Action Grants**

Interestingly, over half of our regions had not heard of these grants, so it was valuable for Scott Nichols of DPI – Fisheries, to give a presentation to the Landcare NSW Council on the available grants, their purpose

and criteria. Three Landcare regions have groups that applied and have been successful with Habitat Action Grant funding in the past, they found the process straight forward and worthwhile for the funding available, they felt the only challenge with the grants were to include a recreational fishing club or fisher support for the project.

### Other Funding

Other funding identified that our Landcare regions are utilising to support their activities included;

- Local Land Services partnerships and small grants
- NLP Sustainable Agriculture Small Grants programme
- EPA – high profile environmental degradation case fines
- DPI CASP Regional Arts Funding

These are varied sources, highlighting that Landcare groups access a diverse range of funding sources for their projects. Landcare NSW continues to look for both Government and corporate/philanthropic sources of funds for Landcare groups which are promoted weekly on our social media and monthly through our e-Bulletin. Landcare NSW is also working to develop greater sources of non-Government income to secure sources of funding for well into the future.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

Landcare NSW is committed to improving our communication both to the broader Landcare community in NSW and beyond that, enabling Landcare groups to “tell their story” to the broader NSW general public.

It was encouraging to see **that 60% of Landcare networks already have and are using their Communications Plan** for their region. This is a critical step in continuing to be a united voice on Landcare in NSW and spreading the word on the good work of Landcare as widely as possible.

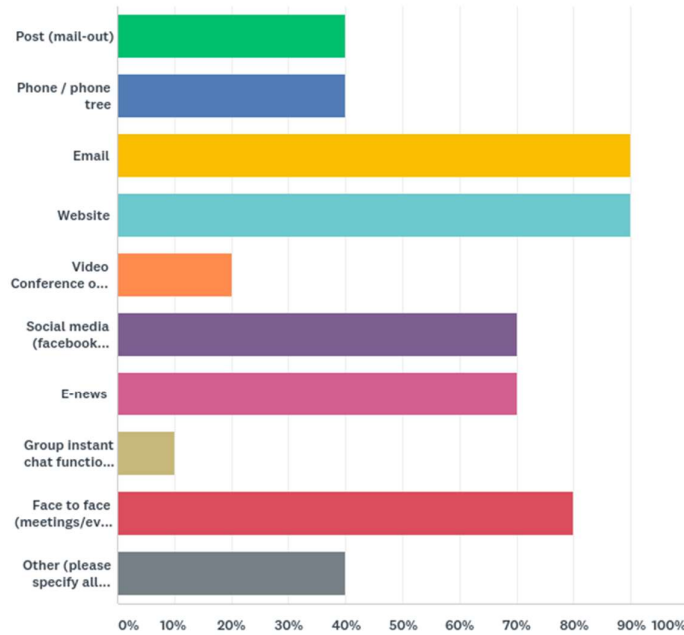
There is still some work to do though, with 3 regions keen for assistance with a communications plan that will help them in promoting Landcare more broadly in their area.

The range of ways in which our regional networks are communicating is highly diverse, the below charts indicate. For internal communications to the Landcare community, networks are using mainly email and website communications, followed closely by face to face meetings, then social media and e-news sources. However, all tools appear to be used in some form.

For external communication to the broader public about Landcare in NSW, networks are using mainly their website and face to face communication (perhaps surprisingly); followed by electronic means including social media, e-news and email out – suggesting that most groups have networks of followers or supporters to forward this information to.

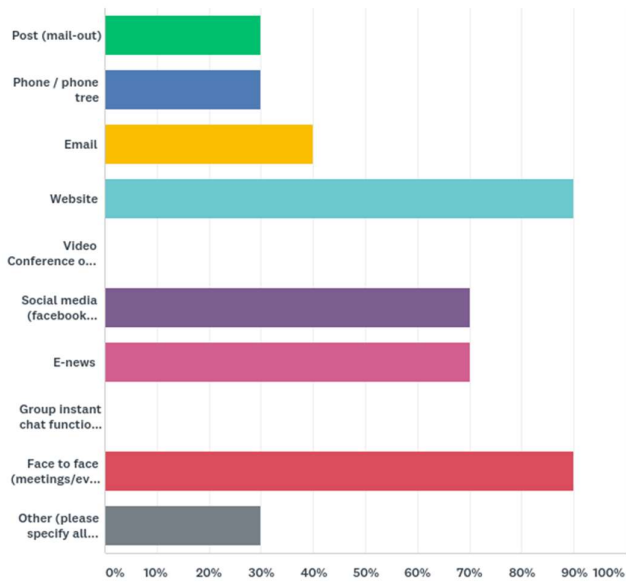
Q23 What are the most common methods of communication your region uses to communicate WITHIN your Landcare community? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



Q24 What are the most common methods of communication your region uses to communicate OUTSIDE your Landcare community, ie. to general public, stakeholders etc? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



In terms of Landcare NSW current support for assisting with regional scale communications, regional networks were asked about their use of the **Landcare NSW Communications Toolkit**. The response was divided with half of the groups finding it of little value and half using it regularly.

Regional networks were also asked about their use of the **Landcare NSW facebook page**, a significant 90% are following the page, with 20% of those actively interacting with the page to share their own content. It will be important to continue to build this engagement percentage.

When asked what else Landcare NSW could do at a regional scale to assist in communication about Landcare, some key suggestions included;

- Pre-recorded web training module on communication out to the general community
- Coordinator training in social media use (could also be a pre-recorded communications module)
- Communications tips for within a network (could also be a pre-recorded communications module)

These items will be considered by the communications subcommittee as future member services to be included on the Landcare NSW website.

## **REGIONAL ENDORSEMENT PROCESS:**

Landcare NSW is looking to improve their documentation and guidance around the regional endorsement process for Landcare NSW Councillors that represent their regions. The response indicates that there is generally a good understanding of the regional endorsement process with most current Councillors, and that **most regions are using some form of official process** and documenting (minutes) their selection of their regional representative.

Most regions felt that **approximately 2 months from the AGM was ideal time** to undertake their endorsement process. Some however are working with quarterly meetings and suggested that at least 3 months would be necessary. This year we will be launching our endorsement process 8 weeks prior to AGM, however next year we will endeavour to extend that to 12 weeks prior.

All respondents felt that some sort of **online endorsement form** would be preferable to paper based forms.