

Landcare NSW Inc

Quarterly Regional Report Summary

February 2018



Prepared by
 Sonia Williams
 State Landcare Facilitator, Landcare NSW

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 February 2018. 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 November 2017, responses around the activity of Landcare showed 33% of Landcare regions recording 'growing' and 67% 'steady' and none declining. One region commented that there was lots of activity, but this was very uncoordinated. This correlates with the current status of the region which is rebuilding its support for Landcare after decades of withdrawal of support at the district level.

TREND: The response indicates that Landcare activity has had a period of **stability** from 2017 to 2018.

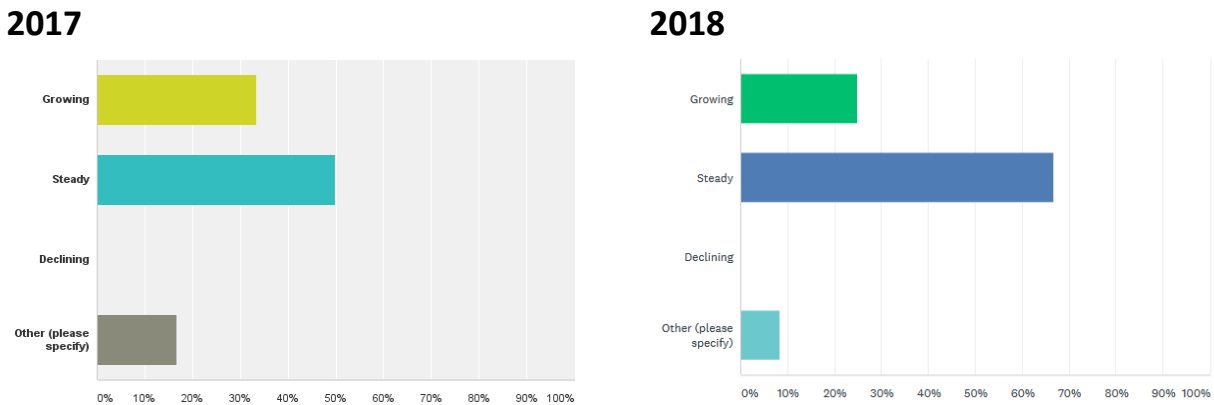


Figure 1. Survey responses from February 2017 and 2018 to question regarding health of Landcare in NSW regions.

The Landcare NSW Council Forums and regional reporting are supported through the following programs



Issues

When asked what Issues are Landcare regions facing

- **Funding & Resources** (lack of access to sufficient resources) was a key issue
- The changes to the RLF project to the **RALF** was a major concern
- The change in **relationships** with **LLS** (as a result of the NLP2 process) featured significantly
- The impact of legislation (**Biodiversity Conservation Act**) and or changes in other Acts



TREND: It is significant that Regions are recognising the biggest issues in their region are not the biophysical challenges listed previously, but rather the support and resourcing to deal with those issues; and the need to understand and influence the partnerships and legislative process that impact on their ability to respond to those issues

When asked what are some solutions to these issues, Landcare regions indicated:

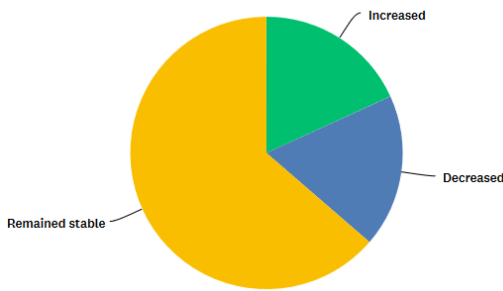
- *Base funding and regional level funding to support network to develop large scale projects which include the administration of the network in order to be able to build partnerships*
- *Make the National Landcare Program more about enabling Landcare.*
- *Better engagement or fold*
- *Consistency of messages. Attendance of teleconferences*
- *Gain Federal support for Landcare in NSW*
- *Maybe a small grants scheme at group or regional level. Hard with less federal government support.*
- *A dedicated resource to build membership and relationships. Easiest done when have regional projects to show benefits of being involved at regional level.*
- *There needs to be ongoing commitment by government to base level funding of CCS/LLCI and networks need to be able to demonstrate that such funding is effective because it enables leveraging of additional funds*
- *Working on it*
- *Mindset change, adaptation pathways capacity development*
- *Long term commitment by government to provide base level coordinator support that is embedded in the community*

PARTNERSHIPS:

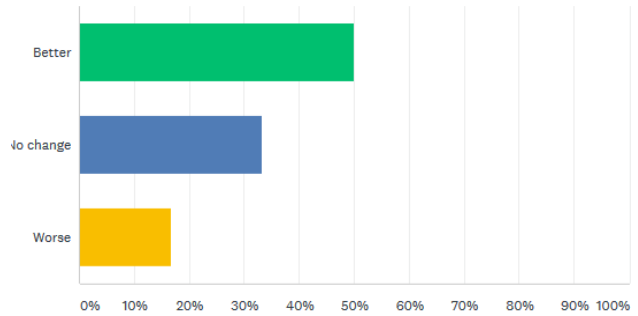
Local Land Services

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?



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



Whilst support in most regions support remained stable, there were two regions that reported a decrease, while two reported an increase. When asked how support had changed responses included;

- *LLS team is now in place and has been involving HRLN in planning activities for future funding.*
- *Financial support will not change until July 2018. Senior staff are not as accessible already.*
- *Our RLF has now an acting role as well as her own. She still maintains good communications with us.*
- *We are still in negotiation for moneys in the next NLP program.*
- *NLP 2 has allowed the LLS to work with the Landcare Networks to apply as a partner in NLP 2. So this will give core funding for prescribed LLS projects as developed with Landcare networks.*
- *Positive experiences with new staff should greatly improve outcomes in the future.*
- *Relationships with staff from across the region have improved.*

TREND: The changes resulting from the NLP2 program dominated the partnership space; and there was seen to be variability across regions as to the approaches undertaken by Local Land Services, indicating cultural differences, rather than solely program guidelines, as being a driving factor.

50% indicated that the relationship was generally better, 33% indicated that there was no change in the relationship, and 17% indicated that the relationship was worse than the previous reporting period. Of concern is that previously strong relationships in some regions suffered significantly during this quarter. An examination of these regions indicated changes in key LLS staffing or a change in Board composition, which could possibly equate to a different understanding of the Landcare and the subsequent value placed on the Landcare network in their region, as a probable factor in the changed relationship.

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

Landcare and LLS relationship / NLP2 development

- *Our regional manager is fantastic and we are blessed to have someone with such skills and patience working with us.*
- *Our LLS are theoretically supportive, but not necessarily cognisant of what the Landcare network needs are in terms of financial survival - in order to be there to "partner" with them in the future. They don't seem to see that as anything to do with them*
- *The conduit of info between our LLS and Landcare is working well. Excellent working relationship. Have been involved in NLP 2 applications for regional funding. Confident that Landcare will partner with our LLS in delivering community based outcomes for NLP2*
- *On a regional basis and at network level we had developed a good working relationship with staff at all levels. LLS staff now are less available to work in partnership on projects or CCB events. Technical assistance is very difficult to find within LLS.*
- *Loss of key staff from LLS has meant that staff are not as available as they were previously to engage in project work. The CCS is currently working well with all reporting up to date and the networks receiving good feedback. The Partnership Implementation Group was working very well until recently. Most of the changes can be attributed to the appointment of new key LLS staff. Working well = very supportive RLF and LLS staff are great sounding boards. Not working well = NLP2 uncertainty, LLCI beyond June 2019 contingency planning, financial model innovation.*
- *Partnership with LLS. General Manager, Ops Manager (new position) & Chair of LLS Board are all sympathetic to Landcare and openly communicate this throughout the organisation.*

Landcare Network Operation and capacity

- *Far and away the best thing going in terms of support for Landcare is the Landcare Coordinator Initiative. This provides for staff time to be available to support group activities and to address enquiries.*
- *Partnership between groups across the region is working well in terms of attendance of field days and working together. Using each other's resources or speakers. We still need to bring more promotion to the region as a Central West regional Landcare group - but this is improving.*
- *Some groups are tackling strategic planning and reflecting on what they do well. Some groups are developing contingency plans in case of a lag in the roll-out of NLP2 funding.*
- *LLCI is working well and provided the ability of networks to continue to employ a coordinator, However the success only brings greater demand which part time coordinators cannot service. It really is a catch 22.*

Landcare Project Funding

- *None of the groups in my region are applying for any Environmental Trust funding, because if the reporting requirements being so big. This is a pity, because if group projects could be supported by a funding system to support prescribed group projects, this this would allow Landcare to grow in the region.*
- *LLS provides grant funding rounds to our region. We have good opportunities to discuss, get support and feedback for proposed projects. There is now a commitment for our regional Landcare network to be included on the panel to allocate these grants. We have also input into the criteria for allocating grants.*

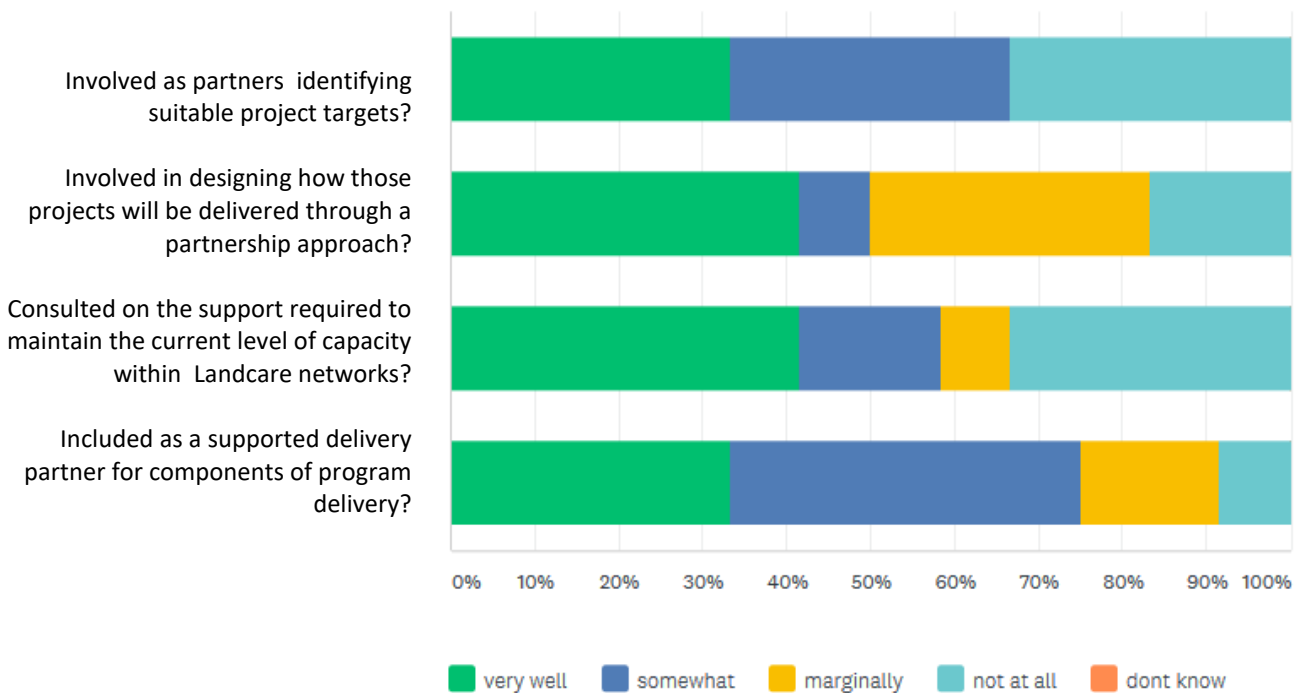
NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAM 2:

The NLP2 is a significant source of support for Community Landcare. Regions were asked a number of questions to understand the process utilised in developing the Regional Land Partnership Bid in their regions.

Q Does your region have a written Partnership MOU or similar with Local Land Services at the regional scale? If yes has this been of benefit in the preparation of the NLP2 Regional Partnerships bid?

Six of the eleven regions indicated that they had a formal arrangement. Two thirds of those with a formal partnership arrangement indicated that this was of little use in their discussions with their Local Land Services re the NLP2 bid.

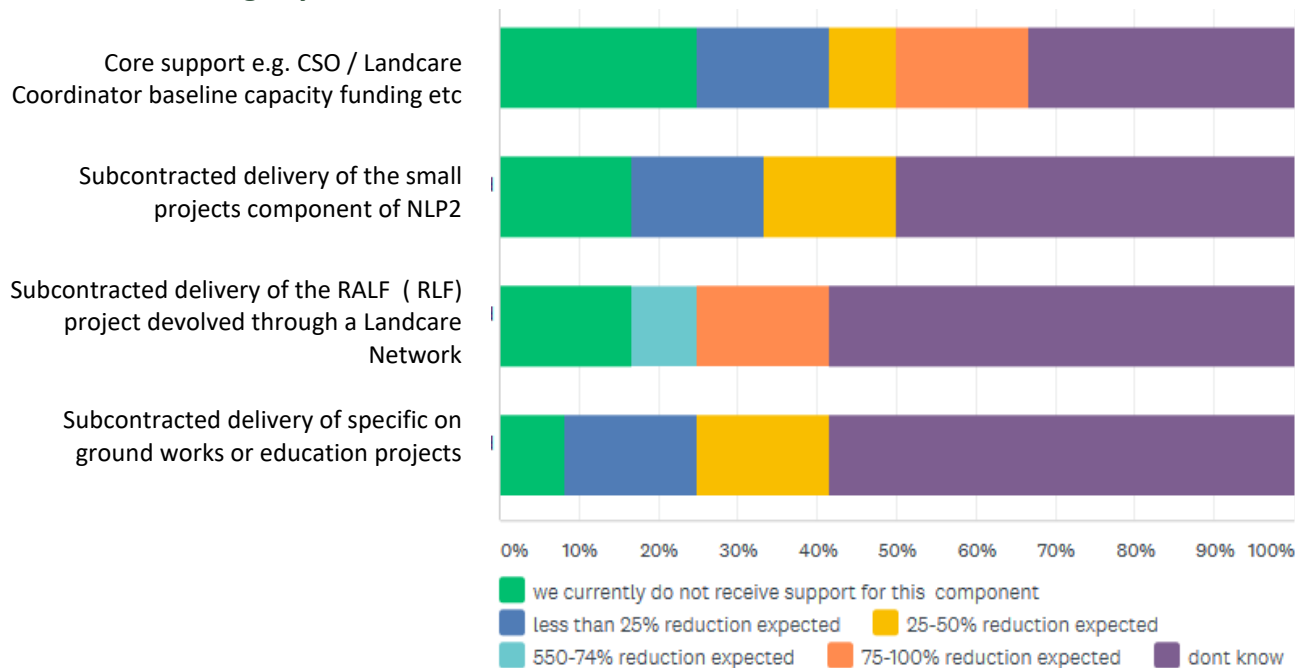
Q The NLP2 does not provide as much flexibility for LLS to support Landcare as the previous program did - rather its focus is on the delivery of Federally identified targets. Nonetheless there is an expectation that the Landcare community will be supported to be involved in the design and delivery of those projects. Against this background please provide a response for how well you feel Landcare in your region has been:



Responses from regions indicated that 33% of regions felt that their LLS had involved them in all aspects of the design and delivery very well. Around 45% of regions indicated that they were not involved at all, or only marginally included, in the design and delivery of the NLP2 bid for their region.

The results indicated that Landcare was engaged more in the aspects that involved identifying project targets and being identified as a partner for program specific delivery. However this consultation did not extend to the same level in identifying the type of support required for Landcare to play a role within the delivery timeframe of the NLP2 funding program, nor consulted in how the projects would be delivered with a partnership approach.

Q. The NPL2 program has around a 20% reduction in funding compared to NPL1. Are you able to quantify the likely impact on the levels of financial support currently received by the Landcare networks in your region, from the Regional Delivery component of NLP (i.e. delivered via LLS) for each of the following key areas :



For most regions the overwhelming indication was lack of certainty about what would occur in relation to levels of support from NLP2. It is of concern that where a reduction was identified that some regions expected a **significant** reduction (greater than 50%) in some or all aspects of support.

The RLF (RALF) was the program area indicated by many regions as the one under which they would see the greatest reduction in current support for their Landcare community . Given the RLFs integral role to the success of the LLCI, this is an area that should receive attention from the Joint Management Committee to mitigate this risk; through interactions with regional LLS, or through the securing of additional resources to fund regional scale positions to provide these REGIONAL Landcare support roles.

Landcare regions were also asked

1. How satisfied are you with the level of input your Landcare networks have had in the design of the RALF project for your region?
2. Do you feel the work of the current RLF program will be built upon by the proposed design of the RALF for your region?
3. How satisfied are you that the RALF project design for your region will incorporate the opportunity to value add to its outputs/outcomes through connection and support of the LLCI program?

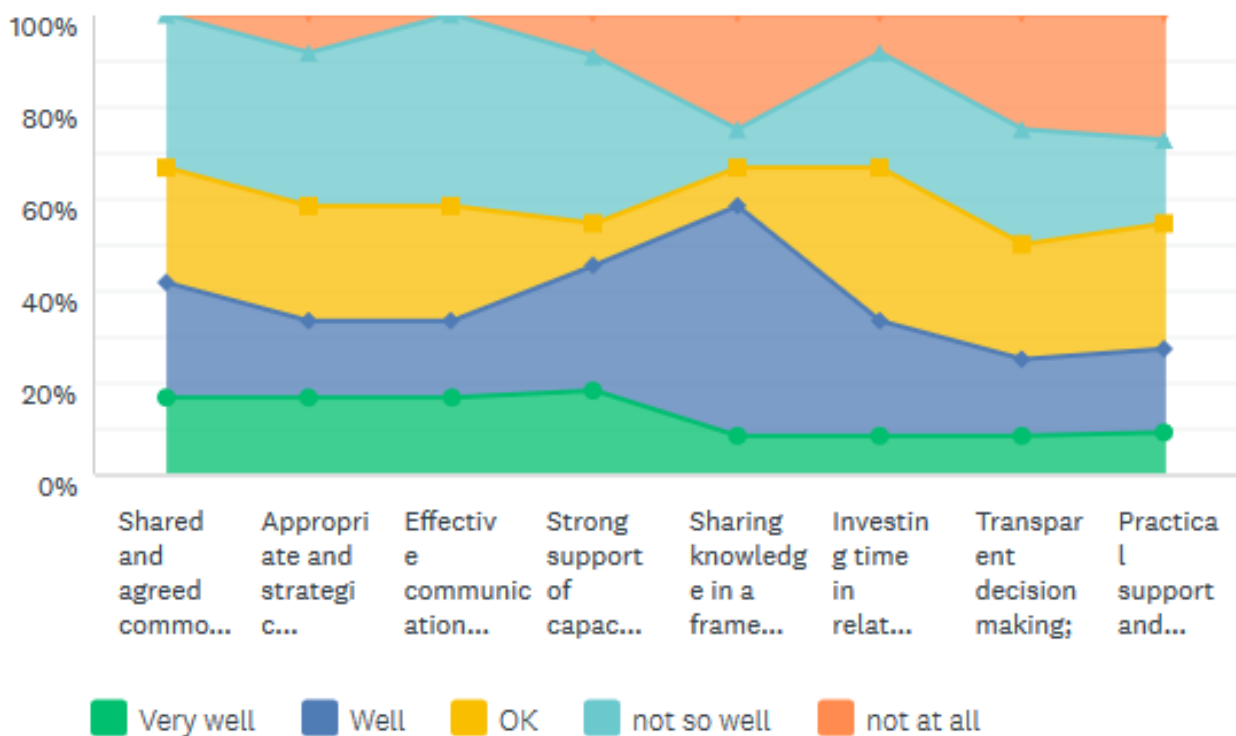
The results varied significantly between regions, indicating again the variable approach and understanding of the role of the RLF, both within Local Land Services and across Landcare regions. For those regions with a long established RLF position that has been subcontracted to the regional Landcare network, the levels of dissatisfaction with involvement in design were greatest.

One region commented ***“under the design proposed by the LLS, the RLF will revert to being a 1:1 agricultural extension officer rather than being the support for the distributed network which currently offers great value to the LLS in delivering their agricultural extension material and programs right across the region”.***

Q In November last year Landcare NSW and Local Land Services circulated “A Statement of the Partnership in Approach to National Landcare Program Phase 2”, outlining expectations for the development of the NLP2 bid. Respondents were asked to rate how well they believed both Landcare and LLS applied the following stated partnership criteria (which were drawn from the state-wide MOU) to their region:

- Shared and agreed common goals
- Appropriate and strategic collaboration
- Effective communication between parties
- Strong support of capacity and leadership within community groups
- Sharing knowledge in a framework of trust
- Investing time in relationships
- Transparent decision making
- Practical support and capacity being provided for leaders, drivers and staff

TREND: The results indicate that there is clear room for improvement, particularly in the areas of transparent decision making; and practical support and capacity being provided for leaders, drivers and staff



Q. When asked if there were any additional comments, issues or lessons to share in relation to the Landcare LLS partnership the following were provided

- We probably started the collaborative process on NLP2 a little late - although hard over Christmas and January holidays to find a date to meet that was mutually convenient.
- Discussions relating to NLP2 were very productive.
- We have seen how quickly attitude change through changes in senior staff can alter relationships and support. In our case in a less than positive way.
- Open & honest communication. Leave your ego at the door.

Feedback to be provided to the Federal Government on NLP2

Respondents were asked to provide three comments (positive or negative) that Landcare NSW and Local Land Services could provide back to the Australian Government on how the NLP2 Regional Partnership delivery is likely to impact on the capacity and involvement of Landcare in your region? Comments varied and are grouped under several themes; the design and constraints of the program, the impact on the ability of Local Land Service to operate, the manner in which each Local Land Services handled their approach to the regional bid, and the likely impact these factors would have on the Landcare community.

Federal Program Matters – including limitations on program design

- *Given that 'Landcare' is in the name of the program, how little of the available funds that will flow to groups through Landcare networks is disappointing. This has caused cynicism and disappointment in the past. Even less funding overall will mean less for Landcare so I expect the disappointment and cynicism to be ongoing*
- *Time frame was a massive issue. Time of year and turn-around time. Timeframes and timing appalling*
- *The timing of the bid and the submission timeframes have not nurtured innovation*
- *Reduced on-ground projects as the objectives are quite specific*
- *The tight focus on specific projects means that it is not a regional delivery model at all, some networks will be involved but the majority won't*
- *Reduced funding leaves people scrambling for funds to cover off on basics*
- *[Will allow for] Increased on farm planning and environmental works*
- *LLS and Landcare work well together in Greater Sydney - we appreciate the agricultural focus however it would be good to see more focus on urban and peri-urban areas*
- *Lack of integration of community with NRMO goals and projects*
- *There is no mechanism for Landcare to have input to the program about known local issues*
- *We will be unable to provide the same level of service and project opportunities for our region*
- *Our coordinators & groups know the grass root issues however will not be able to feed these up if they are not there*

Local Land Services

- *Variation in process - we have had to deal with four different LLS and this has been different in each*
- *A real positive is the regional delivery component which may be seen as a possible benchmark*
- *The ability for LLS to deliver & support will be further diminished by a further 20% reduction in funding*
- *Lack of communication*
- *The lack of a truly shared vision and working in partnership is somewhat apparent in this approach with LLS and the different approaches across the LLS units*
- *The lack of capacity in NSW Regional NRM bodies (LLSs) to deliver a program in a consistent way across the state will be an ongoing problem. Some regions will have genuine, productive partnerships and other areas will not. Past experience proves this*
- *Working in with the LLS plans has been challenging in terms of recognising what funds can be used to achieve particular goals*
- *If there is project funding available for Landcare in our region to work with the aspirations of our community, through NLP2 this will be greeted warmly*

Landcare

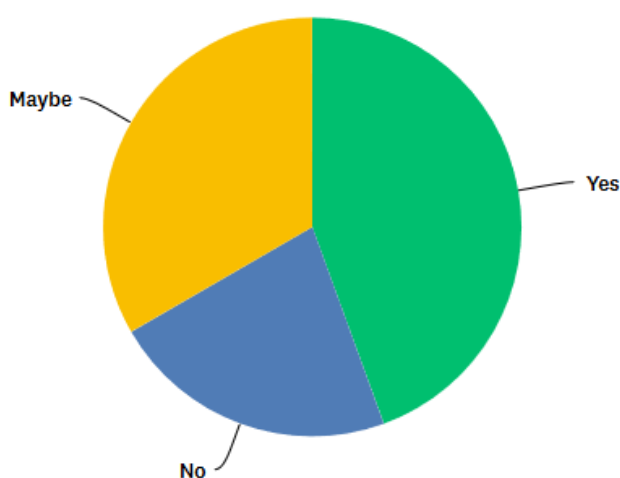
- *Withdrawal of CCS support means there will be no funding for community engagement at the local level;*
- *Some level of employment for Landcare staff may come from successful NLP 2 application*
- *The lack of certainty has fractured the momentum gained over the past 2 to 3 years*
- *Less community engagement & support will reduce ability to roll out govt initiatives at ground level*
- *Some networks may not be able to carry on without base support*
- *Lack of time to develop EOs with good consultation from stakeholders Time consuming for an organisation that doesn't have paid staff to spend days and days working*
- *Some Landcare Groups will be unable to access small grants which keep the groups going. Some small community groups may become inactive or close*
- *The lack of flexibility may not allow community groups do their best work, because of lack of support for some of these projects*

Landcare Partnerships and Aboriginal Engagement

The 2015 and 2017 Musters identified Aboriginal Landcare as a priority focus area for Landcare NSW. Landcare NSW has hosted a working group from the Muster, and is liaising with the Local Land Services Aboriginal Engagement Program to understand current opportunities to progress improved partnerships and support for Aboriginal Landcare.

Landcare NSW through the regional report sought input from the regions as to any current programs and opportunities that exist in your region, and to examine ways the partnership could be enhanced.

Is there an existing partnership between the networks and LLCs with local Aboriginal communities/people in your regions. Is this effective?



80% of regions indicated at least one existing partnership between Landcare and Aboriginal communities/people in their region.

When asked if they considered these partnerships effective 45% indicated that the partnership was effective, 22% considered it was not effective and 33% percent thought that perhaps it was effective.

When asked if there are there any good examples of integrating Indigenous and mainstream approaches for undertaking Landcare projects in your region 50% indicated in the affirmative, 10% indicated in the negative and 40% indicated they did not know

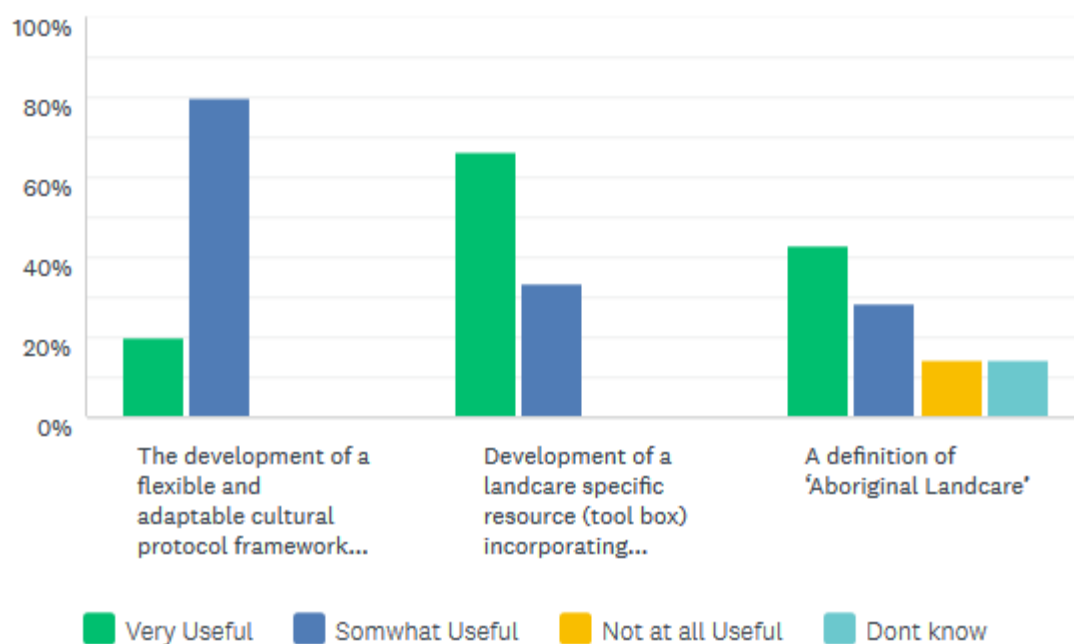
A number of examples were provided with contact leads so as to follow up with Landcare groups and with Aboriginal groups/people (with their consent) to ensure that in designing support mechanisms to increase and enhance partnerships state-wide Landcare NSW could learn from the lessons and experiences of others.

Supporting Tools and Processes

Landcare NSW hosted a follow up workshop to the NSW Muster for those who indicated they had an interest in furthering the Aboriginal Landcare. The following three items were considered as possible support mechanisms to that could be used at the regional and local level to enhance the partnership.

1. The development of a flexible and adaptable cultural protocol framework that can be adopted by LNSW and adapted to specific activities in each Landcare region.
2. Development of a Landcare specific resource (tool box) incorporating Aboriginal values and cultural guidelines for site protection and due diligence.
3. A definition of 'Aboriginal Landcare'.

Landcare NSW sought input via the regional report to indicate how useful the regional representatives thought the above three items would be to assist in building and supporting Aboriginal Landcare in their region.



The following comments were provided

- *Given the diversity of Aboriginal people and communities and the varying nature of their organisations, not sure a 'one size fit all' approach would work. General guidelines may be useful however.*
- *I don't think we should be defining what aboriginal Landcare is - its whatever aboriginal communities want it to be.*
- *Please note that these would all be useful –[the respondent indicated that there were unable to tick very useful for all boxes].*
- *Building and supporting Aboriginal Landcare in our region is very important, is a priority on our strategic plans and the work above needs to be done. Real and authentic cultural awareness needs to be raised within Landcare networks and communities.*
- *Creating a document "Aboriginal Landcare" would be fantastic, followed then by a protocol followed by a toolkit - these would be significant activities and well received on the North Coast*
- *As a region we have received some very useful cultural training and we are currently working on strengthening links. I feel that this face to face training is always going to be more successful than guidelines and protocols.*
- *The issues are around trust, integrity, genuineness and acceptance and embracement of difference and commonality. They come from inside, and difficult to "learn" by the time we are adults. I don't see these things come out of training or toolboxes. Any framework, toolbox protocols etc we would see as a waste of time. Awareness, openness, sensitivity etc are better tools in our experience.*