

Landcare NSW Inc Drought Communique

20 August 2018

Prepared by Leigh McLaughlin
Policy and Partnerships, Landcare NSW



Communique to Landcare NSW Councillors

The Landcare community is responding actively to the drought. Regional responses vary according to need and capacity but include participation in drought-related forums, events and activities in partnership with Local Land Services, other agencies and community groups. Landcare groups are providing support, information and referral to landholders with the assistance of Local Landcare Coordinators and other professional Landcare staff. In smaller communities which do not have any government staff, Landcare is the key point of contact. Within their available resources Landcare groups are doing what they can to assist, in some cases pushing other Landcare work to the background to focus on the immediate issues.

Landcare NSW CEO Dr Adrian Zammit met with the State Drought Coordinator, Pip Job, on 15 August to hear her views and to offer the support and assistance of the Landcare community. This followed the lengthy discussion about the drought at the 14 August Landcare NSW Council meeting.

The message conveyed to Pip was that Landcare offers a supported network of groups, volunteers and professional staff who are skilled in land management and well-connected in their communities. Landcare has a role in the immediate response to the drought, in recovery and in preparation for future droughts. Landcare's assistance ranges from technical advice to social support to rallying communities. As a former CEO of Little River Landcare and former Executive of Landcare NSW, Pip is well-versed in the capabilities of Landcare.

The point was also made that NLP2 (the National Landcare Program) had resulted in greatly reduced support for Landcare in many areas and that this has a major impact on capacity.

Pip advised her role was to support a whole-of-government approach to the drought in NSW. This includes coordinating the Government's response, overcoming barriers faced by farmers and resolving issues and problems. She advised the impact of the drought varies between regions and the length and intensity of the drought is not yet known, ie the situation could worsen which will place even greater demand on farmers, businesses and community groups such as Landcare.

Pip appreciated the offer of assistance from Landcare and offered to facilitate a statewide webinar to brief the Landcare community on the support available through the Rural Assistance Authority and other agencies. This webinar will provide an update on the Government's effort to coordinate the many drought appeals and ensure assistance is equitably and efficiently distributed. Landcare NSW will be taking up this invitation and further information will be provided by State Landcare Coordinator Natasha English on the date and arrangements.

Landcare NSW will also distribute information to the Landcare community on NSW Government drought measures, along with details of the Rural Resilience Officers who are the point of contact for the Rural Support Networks that are being formed around the State.

Further, Landcare NSW will place drought on the agenda of the September LLS/LNSW Joint Management Committee to coordinate a government/Landcare response.

At the August meeting Councillors offered a number of suggestions for how Landcare could further assist in the drought should resources become available. These ideas will be summarised into a *Landcare NSW Drought Response Paper* and be provided to the Government and other partners.

Landcare's response to the drought will be the focus of our next edition of *The Advocate*. We will seek opportunities to contribute to the public debate. For further information on Landcare's response to the Drought please keep an eye out for further advice from Landcare NSW.

Further information: Natasha English (nenglish@landcarensw.org.au)