



National Landcare's Written Submission to Prime Minister's Drought Summit – October 26th 2018

Supplement to Summit paper presented by Sandy MacKenzie – National Landcare Members Council Delegate from Victoria.

1. Who is Landcare?

Landcare is more than 5600 Landcare and other “care” groups, estimated to include more than 250,000 community LANDCARE volunteers embedded in communities urban and rural, big and small across all states and territories of Australia. (As a comparison, surf lifesaving has 168000 members)

For example the community landcare movement in Victoria now covers 82% of all private land and 32% public land which equates to 65% of the state.

In Queensland there are 397 groups of which 90 are West of the divide within the worst of the current drought affected areas.

And in NSW there are 3000 groups and 60,000 people who make up the landcare movement in that state.

2. What does Landcare do?

Landcare is about building resilient, healthy productive landscapes **and at the same time resilient, healthy and engaged communities. The two go hand in hand**

This resilience is important in “good times and in bad times”!

In the case of drought for example, resilient landscapes means that land, soil and water resources are able to recover! Resilient communities are able to deal with the here and now issues of a drought, social, economic and environmental, and help in the recovery.

But building resilience in landscapes and communities to withstand climatic shocks like drought takes time, it doesn't just happen overnight.

There is now an accumulation of data not only about what our embedded and resilient landcare communities are doing in the current drought situation across eastern Australia, but also what we have been doing over the last 30 years to build strong and resilient farming systems, to help ensure Australia's food security credentials.

Our prepared presentation by NLN Members Council representative, Sandy MacKenzie describes the Little River Landcare story in NSW and also the response from the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network to the Black Saturday disaster in Victoria, starting the next day which included organising fodder, agistment and free transport for livestock as well as a



clean-up of buildings and wire and restoration of fences, and being entrusted by the Victorian Black Saturday Appeal with near \$1m, incl \$490,000 from Grocon, to effect relief and recovery measures.

Landcare has long been advocating for incorporating, planting trees, sound grazing management, groundcover and pasture budgeting, stocking rates and drought triggers, off stream watering and good water quality that are part of good land management relevant to drought, into farming systems, as an integrated way of enhancing the microclimate, increasing biodiversity across the landscape and adding value to farm production.

There is also now abundant evidence to link increased tree cover to decreasing surface temperature and increasing air moisture, helping to mitigate the impacts of dry climatic conditions.

In a recent article in *The Conversation*, entitled “We must look past short term drought solutions and improve the land itself” (October 24 2018) , David Lindenmayer Professor, The Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University and Michelle Young Director, Sustainable Farms, Australian National University cite research which has found that “helping farmers improve the rivers, dams, native vegetation and trees on their land increases productivity, the resilience of the land to drought, and through this the health and well-being of farmers.”

They continue....”Well-supported and resourced organisations like Landcare groups are pivotal to supporting effective land management, which improves degraded land and helps farmland (and farmer) through tough times.”

Individual farmers who are part of the Landcare movement are applying practices learned through Landcare and, demonstrating and promoting the results.

For example, two Landcare NSW Council members, Louise Turner from Western NSW near White Cliffs and Martin Royds from Braidwood, have recently been reported in the media for the work they are doing on their properties:

<https://www.theherald.com.au/news/national/5596719/plans-on-nsw-wetlands-return-amiddrought/>

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-a-farmer-went-from-the-moron-approach-to-a-farm-full-ofwater-20180817-p4zy23>

3. Landcare is all about adding value.

The reason why community landcare has been successful is because it focuses on building relationships and partnerships . Between individuals in a community, with local government, schools, universities, industry and philanthropic organisations to name a few.

This means that landcare provides a cost effective way of implementing programs to achieve, environmental, social and economic outcomes.....



There is now credible evidence which calculates that when community landcare is involved at least \$4 is added to the value of a project for every dollar invested and in some cases this leverage factor can be over 7 to 1 when community plan and implement local programs.

These figure though do not include the \$ benefits to the government that accrue when healthy resilient community groups like landcare are established, in terms of physical and mental health and ability to respond to emergency situations.

4. Support for Landcare

Planting trees or perennial crops today will not ease the drought tomorrow!

That is why the work of the volunteer Landcare community over the last 30+ years is so valuable today and why it is important to invest in the underpinning supportive infrastructure it needs.

Established resilient landscapes and communities just doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to build community infrastructure and relationships and it takes resources to keep them healthy.

But over the last 10 years Landcare has been subject to significant budget cuts and the very fabric of landcare is under threat. It needs resources.

Resources such as paid coordinators and/or facilitators for landcare groups, resources for communication, administration and training, and funding for the important on ground works that is needed to build resilient landscapes across Australia.

To build a healthy and productive landscape, a landscape which will withstand the shocks of drought, flood and fire, the land needs people, and people need communities – landcare communities.

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