

Landcare NSW Inc

Quarterly Regional Report Summary

August 2018



Many Hands, One Voice
 Wiranā Wiranāni Ōna Kōwhiri

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Background

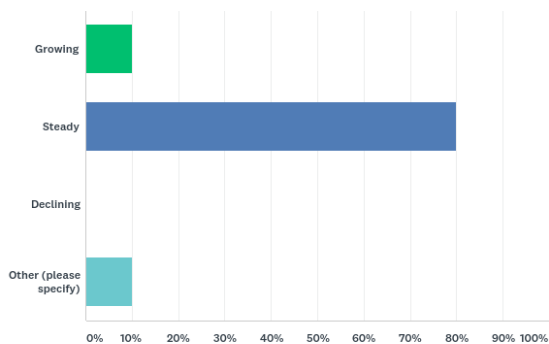
Landcare NSW regularly asks for feedback from our Councillors. For this report we used the Form Assembly survey which allowed Councillors to share the form amongst other networks in their region by downloading and saving the survey. Responses have been collated and analysed in some instances. This document summarises the current position of Landcare across NSW as at August 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

As of August 2018, responses around the activity of Landcare showed 9% of Landcare regions recorded 'growing' and 82% 'steady' and 9% declining, with no particular qualifications on their response. *During August 2017, responses around the activity of Landcare showed 80% of Landcare regions recording 'steady' and 27% as 'growing' in terms of their activity. No region reported a decline in activity in August 2017.*

TREND: The response indicates that although Landcare activity has had a period of stability from 2017 to 2018, the noted decline in groups may well be a reflection of the recent reduction in funding but this is not qualified.

2017



2018

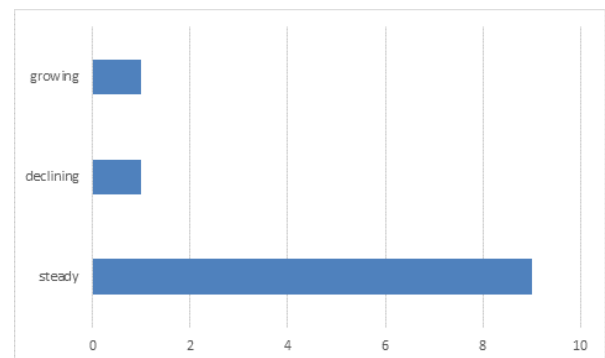


Figure 1. Survey responses from August 2017 and August 2018 to question regarding health of Landcare in NSW regions.

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



Strengths:

When asked “what are the greatest strengths Landcare has” in their regions:

- We’ve been well supported and partnered strongly with LLS in the past which has us in a cooperative space. Good LLCis who are currently holding regional capacity together. Despite all the challenges there remains a spirit of collaboration however the capacity to collaborate is the challenge (Murray Region)
- Funding for workshops and field days as well as administrative duties associated with the network has been received the next two years. AS well there is a component of NLP2 funding for network administration and funding of feidl days for the next 4 years and specific funding for education activities associated with the Regent Honey Eater and swift parrot and plant identification for the bird habitat (Hunter Region)
- At this point in time, our greatest strength is resilience and the fact that our partnership with LLS has a really strong foundation. Both organisations are determined in the face of financial adversity and just ‘carry on’ with limited means until such times as our thinking outside the square delivers some financial gain (Western Landcare)
- The volunteers who deliver consistently and promote Landcare and the communication that is occurring between groups and networks increasing
- Strong experienced Landcare Groups with a track record of project delivery
- Dedicated volunteers working across the region
- Diversity in programs and being part of skilled community of practice at all levels
- Groups and structure of organisation to work outside normal boundaries and find new opportunities



Issues:

When asked what Issues are Landcare regions facing

- Drought has now moved into the number one slot of concern across NSW.
- The absence of LLS capacity funding, huge loss of capacity overall under NLP2. Also impacts ability of LLS to cross border collaborate confining activities. General uncertainty wearing down volunteers
- Lack of definition in what local Landcare's role might be in responding to the drought
- Regional partnership



TREND: It would seem that the uncertainty of funding has escalated into the reality of running operations with vastly reduced budgets going forward. Coupled with drought, it is interesting to note the tenacity of most mixed in with feelings of despondency but continuing regardless. In some regions LLS has provided transitional funding to networks or support where possible considering their programs are also impacted.

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

- *Business planning is in the process at present and we have private sector interest*
- *Networks are making plans and strategies. Having more social events celebrating the positive when they are facing uncertainty*
- *LLS needs to determine if it is one organisation or eleven*
- *Just keep on working at it and building across the region projects which bring in more partners*
- *Government commitment/continue baseline support – allows time to negotiate and develop projects. Regional network support to continue to develop across district projects and share ideas about what projects are working locally in each district*
- *Realistic investment in Landcare by governments. They need to understand that you can't do Landcare to people or for people. Somehow need to create the realisation that enabled Landcare groups creates the context for improved outcomes and you can't achieve the same thing hiring the lowest bidder to just go out and distribute information to people. All the value is being placed on the information, not the method and certainly not the outcome*
- *perhaps encouraging farmers with their drought experiences to form Landcare groups to explore better farm management strategies and at a broader level to identify land which is marginal and should not be farmed (Goyder line in South Australia). Stockign rates on Leasehold lands in the western division of the state*
- *After the NLP1 project was completed, we have lost a regional focus. Being part of a coordinated, regional project with each member contributing equally from their own area would make a huge difference.*
- *Riverina Landcare Strategic Planning process has provided a pathway for regional alignment and development of shared goals to bring people together to start to collaborate. The key to capitalising on this "solution opportunity" is having the resources to implement the outcomes (which have come from "grass roots" landcarers).*

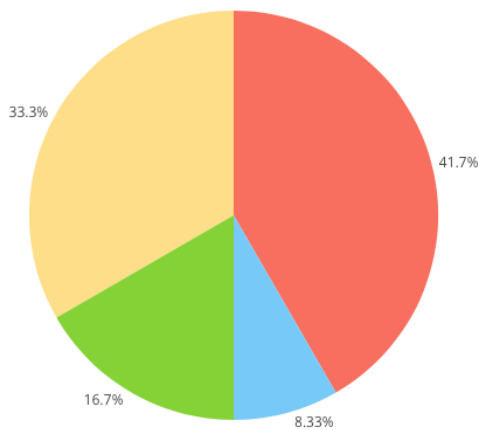
PARTNERSHIPS: Local Land Services

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?

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Landcare - LLS Partnership11. Has the level of financial or staff support from LLS for group/network...

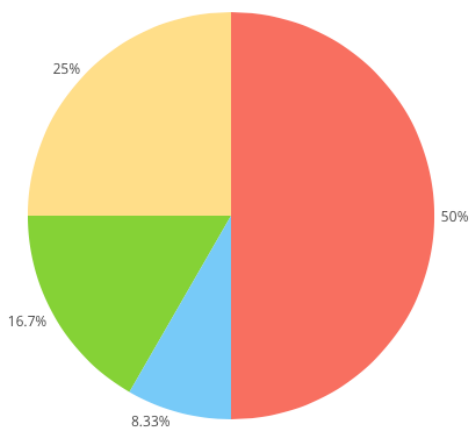


CHOICE	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Decreased	5	41.7%
Remained stable	4	33.3%
(no answer)	2	16.7%
Increased	1	8.33%
Other (please specify)	0	0%

Overall, is the relationship/support to Landcare from LLS better or worse than 12 months ago?

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13. Overall, is the relationship/support to Landcare from LLS better or worse than 12 months ago?



CHOICE	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
No change	6	50%
Better	3	25%
(no answer)	2	16.7%
Worse	1	8.33%

When asked how support or relationships had changed, responses included;

- *There have been opportunities for conversations that have resulted in positive outcomes*
- *LLS capacity support funding has stopped. Communities team likely to reduce or disappear. NRM and Ag teams both reeling and likely to face cuts. They will need to focus internally and manage their own staff capacity and service issues before they can think about partnering with Landcare*
- *Each network has a Pest Animal Coordinator role funded by LLS for our region 1 day per week. This is a huge boost and we will be able to provide on the ground support to more members through this initiative. We have also received some further Community of Support funding for this financial year*
- *Cross border LLS collaboration/cooperation is under pressure*
- *Consistency in LLS staffing has meant that good working relationships are being forged*
- *We now have \$0 for our network core services and 39% of partnership projects funded. Basically taking on projects to maintain a sound relationship with our LLS, however this includes scraps for our fee for service. Undertaking these projects and maintaining this support will allow us an input into projects for future NLP2 funding*
- *Regional delivery of drought workshops disappointing. Only engaging two groups in the region to deliver in all areas.*
- *Two local groups had 1 day per week support from LLS - this has been withdrawn, as part of LLS cost savings, noting that LLS received a 40% cut in NLP2 funding. This means that these two groups which have been very active are now not supported with a local coordinator. MLI has no capacity to provide coverage of this local coordination gap as our LLCs are already stretched.*
- *Working well with LLS in a decreased funding environment*

OBSERVATIONS: There is an apparent mixed response to the situation nearly half of the regions reporting a decrease in financial and resourcing support. Where LLS staff have remained the same, a legacy of good working relationships has continued and allowed the collaborative discussions to unfold despite the reduction in funding. Where LLS staff have changed, communications have broken down, there is no link left within LLS and therefore limited ability or incentive to respect existing partnerships.

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

Landcare and LLS relationship

- *Increased opportunities to partner on projects with Landcare and the LLS. Regional delivery.*
- *Overall support still sound. Financial support deteriorated.*
- *Vanessa Keyzer is always open and accessible and so makes working with GSLLS quite easy.*
- *The coordinators are providing a level of support that the groups have not had for quite a while.*
- *Project grants through NSW Government*
- *Well: LLCI's, that's about it. Without LLCI's any attempt to co-ordinate across the region would not be possible. Not well: Near complete absence of understanding about what might lay ahead. LLS don't have any information or security to enable them to have meaningful conversations with partners about the future. Groups don't have strong enough capacity to partner in meaningful ways without opportunities to chase. big black hole where the opportunities should be.*
- *Working well - local landcare coordinators.*
- *Communication and coordination is not working as well as it was in light of transfer of RLF to LLS from MLI. The uncertainty around the timing of the transfer of the role (and of the nature of the role of RALF) has made it very difficult for MLI to plan. The weekly newsletter and radio program run by the RLFs has languished since the RLF change as MLI is not really resourced sufficiently to take over this role without the RLF funding.*

Regional Landcare Facilitator to Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator

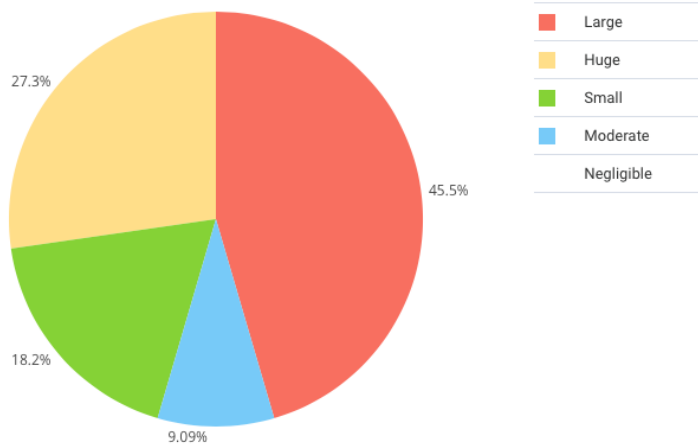
The RLF Program is complete and the new RALF Program is rolling out. In building on the recent RLF workshop in celebrating and acknowledging the legacy of these roles we asked the following questions

Thinking about the relationship between the groups/networks in your region and the RLF since 2014, what difference did the RLF role make to them?

Responses as follows

- *Much more connected to each other and with partners, strong regional identity and collaboration. Regional contact who has a grasp of the bigger picture to refer to particularly in relation to LLS issues.*
- *The RLFs that have been appointed for the our Region have been employed by the LLS and not necessarily been well inducted into the role regarding their Regional obligations and their workplans have also been poor and not well discussed with the Regional network.*
- *Having close working relationship has helped with gaining funding for specific projects and flexibility within the management of those projects. Support is always available as needed. RLF also undertakes a survey of all Landcare / Bushcare groups every 2 years and organises an annual conference. On the negative side it has been a bit confusing when explaining the role of GSLN.*
- *Been critical for bringing the districts together at a regional level (and also cross regional level with CW) to share ideas and develop project ideas etc 2. RLF has been an advocate for Landcare activities*
- *The RLF is that central hub in an increasing working space when we went from CMA to LLS boundaries. The number of networks increased enormously and the RLF has kept all networks well informed and supported. Now, since the LLCI, networks have that communication more formalised. What was called networking is now a Regional Community of Practice. The investment in to this process is definitely paying off in the South East.
Allowed broader regional collaboration and several joint projects to emerge - networking!*
- *The role over the past 4 years has been a chequered one with the role being a LLS role rather than a Landcare support role even though there were some areas of support and encouragement. The officer involved was away for some of the time and then the position was vacant and only filled in Oct 2017 and changing to RALF from June 2018.*
- *The RLF role has been an essential component of our region's Landcare activities. It has enabled regional-scale collaboration, supported the development of strategic landscape scale projects, built a strong culture and a productive work team within the Landcare Networks. Reducing isolation of the staff in these community groups and helping develop a professional culture has boosted the impact of the individual networks, and improves the work conditions for staff. This also supports volunteers to learn, understand and develop their own skills and practices, helping them to understand the substantial impact of their important work with Landcare. By working cross-regionally (both whole and sub region activities), we are beginning to see Landcarers working beyond their local boundaries, and extending their area of influence. The management of the relationship with LLS has been (until very recently) very successful, and has gradually improved the collaboration between LLS staff and Landcare groups. The annual training and information sharing, the grants and the advocacy are just some of the benefits of the RLF.*
- *RLF provided support directly to groups initially, - when LLCs came along the RLF provided support to LLCs to support local groups. They also had an important regional role in linking landcare stakeholders across the region, through the "collectives" of land managers they developed. They provided communication channels and linking to knowledge and events across the region. The RLF weekly radio and newsletter was utilised across the region and very much appreciated by the landcare community.*
- *The RLF we had in the last 12 months has been excellent, but unfortunately she has left the position for personal reasons*

Which of the following categories best describes the effect of support given by the RLF in your region since 2014?



- 0% indicated that the effect was negligible
- 18% indicated that the effect was small
- 9% indicated that the effect was moderate
- 45% indicated that the effect was large
- 27% indicated that the effect was huge

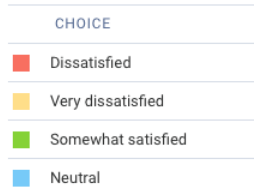
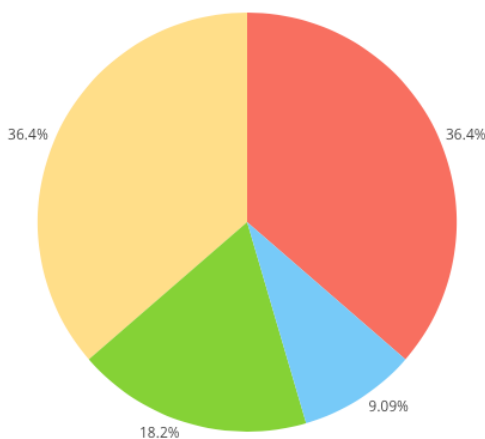
(note equals more than 100% as some regions supplied a regional response and encouraged their groups to respond)

Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative and the RLF - How has the Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative changed the relationship of your group/network to the RLF?

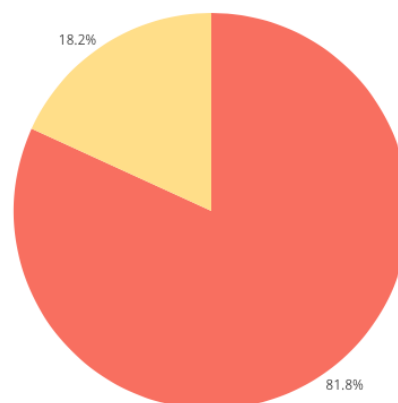
- 82% Connecting across the region
- 82% Collaboration/connecting with others
- 73% Training
- 64% Leadership/mentoring
- 64% Communication
- 36% Governance/administration
- 27% Strategic Planning
- 27% Budget/financial support
- 18% Community engagement

Landcare and the RALF

How satisfied are you with the level of input your Landcare networks have had in the design of the RALF project for your region?



To your knowledge, have any of the networks in your region been asked to be part of a Steering Committee or other dynamic to provide input into the new RALF position?



Considering the change in the role from a RLF to a RALF, what do you see as the main impact in your region?

Comments:

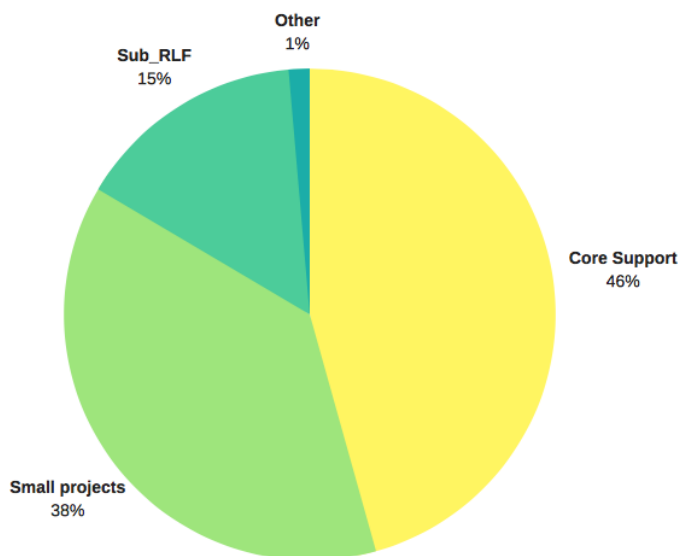
- *Given the deliberate name change, the focus of the RALF will presumably be on delivering on sustainable agriculture outcomes, particularly in relation to priority projects, rather than on supporting Landcare activities more broadly. The position will also be housed within LLS rather than with NCRLN.*

The loss of a regional coordination role on the north coast will be of severe detriment to Landcare activities. Without regional coordination, cross-regional partnerships will suffer. Landcare activities will become less strategic, our network will become less connected, and our relationship with government will devolve to individual connections to groups. Increased pressure will be placed on the volunteer committee members of NCRLN. Because of this increased pressure, recruitment to the committee will be even more difficult, potentially jeopardising the future of the network, which has previously been held up as a successful model of Landcare partnerships. All our networks agree, a regional coordination role is essential to continue the inspired and successful forward movement of Landcare on the north coast.
- *The position is still hosted by the LLS and is underfunded*
- *No one knows what changes are planned to make comment*
- *Other regional support groups, eg NSW Farmers, ACV, Greening Australia and Farming systems groups being invited to Landcare focused and organised activities*
- *No real impact perceived*
- *Maybe less time of the RALF to work with Landcare directly-shared out among other production type groups. Maybe less work on environmental issues*
- *They are very different roles. RLF was a high level role connecting groups to each other and with opportunities. RLF was supportive and enabling, provided leadership, created and supported independence and enabled a truly collaborative approach. RLF enabled Landcare to be somewhat independent of LLS and bring its own perspectives, opinions and priorities to partnerships not just be a tack on to achieve someone elses goal.*
- *RALF looks like it will be project focused and really about what the LLS needs to achieve through groups rather than the other way around. NLP2 investment seems to be very directive. I can see how RALF will be any different. Huge loss for Murray as our RLF has been external to LLS and will now be internalised.*
- *There has been no input into the design of the RALF position in the Hunter and as yet it is to early to say what the impact might be.*
- *The RLF became the RALF in July so there has been some positive interaction with the officer but no input into what the RALF role might entail.*
- *We don't know as we don't yet know what the new role is.*

KEY OBSERVATION: It would appear that there has been a definite lack of communication between Landcare NSW and Local Land Services around the new role. Despite the workshop that celebrated and acknowledged the success of these regional positions and their critical link between LLS and Landcare in an attempt to inform the new positions, the focus has changed and the connection to Landcare is virtually gone in many areas. Most telling is the description of the recently advertised positions between NSW and Victorian position which highlights the collaborative arrangement whereas in NSW the focus is core LLS delivery and Federal Government activities. The irony is that much of Landcare activity will be key focus for successful delivery of the RALF Program.

NLP1 and NLP2 Funding Landscape

The NLP2 program has around a 20% reduction in funding compared to NLP1. Are you able to quantify the overall amount in your region that is no longer available from the Regional Delivery component of NLP1 (that was delivered via LLS) for any of the following key areas:



The graph here only includes figures that were provided and is a compilation of the total amount that has finished as of June 2018. It does not factor in any transitional funding nor does it include areas where funding arrangements are continuing in a satisfactory way. Rather it is to demonstrate the significant amount that has finished across many regions.

NLP2 - we had previously asked whether your region had been involved with the NLP2 bids, we would now like to understand whether you are aware of any groups in your region that will receive funding under the NLP2?

54.5% of respondents (6 of 11) indicated they were aware of groups within their region that would receive funding under NLP2 bids; 45.5% (5 of 11) indicated they did not know if groups would receive funding under NLP2 .

Of those groups receiving funding respondents indicated that
18% indicated they would receive funding under Smart Farms
18 % indicated that funding would come via Regional Land Partnerships
18% provided no comment and
46% did not provide an answer.

OBSERVATIONS: The funding cuts across at least 6 of the 11 regions are significant in terms of what has been lost in core support, RLF resourcing and targeted projects. At least 4 regions have lost almost half or more of what they had under various programs and now have the LLCI funding only. This is already having severe implications for all the groundwork achieved under the LLCI and the relationship with Local Land Services. As always in times of funding uncertainty, the best of Landcare prevails regardless because we are champions of a critical cause. The reality of the funding landscape is now being used to inform our business case and demonstrate to government the situation for most of NSW.

Landcare Support Program Design

In thinking about the design of the new Landcare Support Program, what do you consider are the essential components for a successfully operational Landcare program?

- 100% of respondents that see Landcare Coordinators at the network level as essential
- 82% of respondents that see Regional Landcare Facilitators as essential
- 82% of respondents that see Regional Community of Practice support as essential
- 73% of respondents that see Maintenance of the Gateway website as the means to "telling our story" as essential
- 73% of respondents that see the Statewide Biennial Conference/Muster as essential
- 64% of respondents that see tailored workshops for networks as essential
- 55% of respondents that see Statewide Community of Practice events (Stockton/webinar) as essential

Considering your response to the previous question, what other new aspects or ideas do you feel should be considered for a successful Landcare Program? Comments provided included:

- *Funding to support a regional executive officer which manages local coordinators to achieve professional and strategically aligned outcomes is essential in the Murrumbidgee/ Riverina. This approach allows fostering of landcare in areas where there are no groups to employ the local coordinators and support of "small I" landcare and those who do not want formal groups. It also facilitates organizational efficiencies - providing a critical mass in terms of resources and infrastructure, and seeking of investment, as well as a professional level of staff support, mentoring and sharing of knowledge.*
- *Regional or State promotion on television etc. Operational budget. Some networks currently have a small operational budget because they get free office space provided by Council but other networks rely on additional funding to deliver workshops etc. Consideration of the working conditions of coordinators. Standards vary widely. Management training for network committee volunteers who now have to manage staff. A less-confusing and simpler reporting structure, with dates for reporting set and clearly made available in a calendar format.*
- *Reporting - statistical as well as case studies.; Support from Landcare NSW staff and Council.*
- *Stop focussing on what we don't have and make what we do have shine through!*
- *Good communications between all levels - State - regional - local*
- *Business model incubator/spark tank.*
- *Environmental economic accounting with a social impact metric.*
- *Stronger linkages and interactive support (including funding) between LNSW and the regions.*
- *A regional network should have the funding to allow the development of the CEO role, especially when networks appear to be receiving significant funding. (Eg in the Hunter, 6 years ago funding was very limited (perhaps \$20,000 to 40,000 per year) but for the period ahead the network appears to be in the position of managing funding approaching \$300,000 or more, For a volunteer group this is a quantum leap in corporate responsibility and the governance issues that flow from this.*
- *Need to stop limiting your thinking to Network level. Not all regions have formalised networks. We need to be thinking at a district level as well. I think district connections are something we need to spend more time on. I think they will be more likely to be meaningfully sustained where a network might not.*

OBSERVATIONS: A compelling argument is emerging to include Regional Landcare Positions into the next support program, those that will deliver specifically on more than just federal government initiatives. That we are able to support a diverse array of community as evidenced already by the number of unique partnerships that have emerged over the last 3 years. That there is a very strong need to professionalise the coordinator role and acknowledge the enormous skill base that we have. That we are only starting to build the ability to demonstrate our worth in a way that is compelling and can't be ignored.