



Landcare capacity in NSW diminished by National Landcare Program focus and delivery 2018-2023

This document provides information on how community Landcare has been affected by reduced funding under the Federal Government's National Landcare Program. The National Landcare Program (NLP) is the central plank of the Australian Government's commitment to natural resource management (NRM). The first phase (concluding June 2018) provided the main funding source for investment in Landcare at the local scale via regional delivery. The roll-out of the National Landcare Program Phase Two (July 2018-2023) commenced in late 2017, with a range of competitive grant programs.

In this second phase, the NLP has 20% less funding than was previously available and a specific focus on sustainable agriculture and specific projects eg Barrier Reef, with a move away from direct Community Capacity Support which the volunteer Landcare community has traditionally relied upon. Under NLP2 the Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator position (RALF), has replaced the Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) role in most areas. The RLF was a critical component in delivering components of the NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative (LLCI), in particular the regional community of practice. The new RALF role is a move away from supporting Landcare networks. It is designed to deliver specific sustainable agriculture outputs under the Regional Land Partnerships Program with a national focus, *'RALFs will take a nation, rather than state based focus on developing and implementing solutions to sustainable agricultural challenges'* (RALF Introductory Pack).

The 20% cut to the NLP, its changed priorities, together with approximately 40% cuts to the NSW Government's Catchment Action program, have had flow-on effects to regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) body, ie Local Land Services, and, more severely, to the NSW community Landcare movement.

The infographics presented below represent two financial years, 2017 and 2018. They include only the funding from the National Landcare Program (federally funded) and the NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative (state funded). The Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative (LLCI) that began in 2016, was intended to supplement the existing support from the Federal Government's National Landcare Program delivered via the regional Local Land Services. It was not designed to replace federal funding and it was stipulated to be in addition to existing State Government funding for Landcare provided through LLS. The Landcare Baseline Study by the NSW Natural Resources Commission explains this further. <https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/publications>

The bar graph and percentages below each pie chart represent the reduction in the operational amounts available between 2017 and 2018. Figures for 2017 include the National Landcare Program 1 funding in the form of provision for small contracted projects (different names in different areas) 'core support' funding, Regional Landcare Facilitator positions and the Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative funding that is the State Government investment that was introduced to supplement the NLP. 2018 figures show that in most cases the only 'core support' funding remaining is that which is

provided by the LLCI, except where Local Land Services have provided transitional funds or there has been continued support from the NLP2 as in the Northern Tablelands example. These figures do not include other current sources of funding support for Landcare across NSW.

The term 'core support' refers to wages, on costs, administration and management overheads for a Landcare organisation that employs a paid Local Coordinator. These positions are fundamental to the effective operation of the 3,000 plus volunteer Landcare groups operating in New South Wales. Prior to the LLCI, these positions were funded by a mixture of State and Federal funds channelled through Local Land Services. In some regions the regional LLS body has provided transitional funding for Landcare positions and activities to continue.

The information that follows demonstrates the loss of core operational funds for Landcare. What is not covered by the graphs is how these core funds have allowed networks to leverage other funding to multiply the benefits of these investments which means the loss of these funds is even greater than indicated. To understand how this 'core support' provides substantial community benefit, Landcare NSW commissioned a report on the economic value of Landcare. It was estimated that the net value was conservatively estimated at \$500 million per year in NSW. <http://landcare.nsw.gov.au/economic-value-of-landcare-estimated-at-500-million-pa/>.

The reduction in available funds has translated to around 60 to 90% less resourcing for a majority of Landcare Networks in NSW which directly impacts the communities, farmers and extensive network of volunteer groups they support. Beginning June 2018, at least 6 regions have restructured their operations and strategic business priorities and have reduced hours for paid staff.

The success of Landcare in NSW in securing funding under the current round of NLP2 (National Landcare Program 2) has been minimal. Of the 11 Local Land Services regions, only a few Landcare groups have been successful in Smart Farm applications and only two regions report receiving dedicated project support via the Regional Land Partnership bids that will be delivered by Local Land Services.

The 'core support' that remains is the Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative program funding. In some regions, LLCI funding provides less than .3 FTE for a Landcare Coordinator position. These positions build the labour, skill base and capacity of the volunteer movement. Almost all Landcare organisations that employ a coordinator are governed by a committee of volunteers.

A Landcare Coordinator's role is limited by the amount of paid hours available, and often relies on other support staff that manage governance, finances and administration. As an example, although the LLCI supports 70 part-time coordinators, many of these positions were supplemented in hours or through extra staffing by an estimated total of 41 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) from other sources of funding (including the NLP 1 programs) across the state. The value of these coordinator roles to community cohesion, action and change on the ground has been documented in numerous studies and in the LLCI Progress Report April 2018 <https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/local-landcare-coordinator-initiative/llci-progress-report-april-2018/>

In some regions, transitional funding has been provided for core support (see infographics) but in reality, this is a temporary fix. In at least six regions, covering substantial areas of NSW and equally dense populations, there are large shortfalls in operating budgets for Landcare district and local networks. This is directly impacting on the resourcing, capacity of these organisations, the morale and commitment of volunteers and the aspirations of groups in challenging climatic conditions.

Current funding for NRM activities in NSW is insufficient. The new procurement model of awarding grant funding in NLP is very consuming on the resources of those organisations it is designed to help, protect and achieve better outcomes for. Landcare across NSW, at all levels, is pursuing other forms of funding, but without foundational support from all levels of government, volunteer activity, projects, partnerships and improved on ground outcomes will recede and diminish.

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Note: This document was developed by Landcare NSW in Dec 2018 based on estimates and information provided by Landcare regions most affected by changes in NLP funding. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of the information provided.

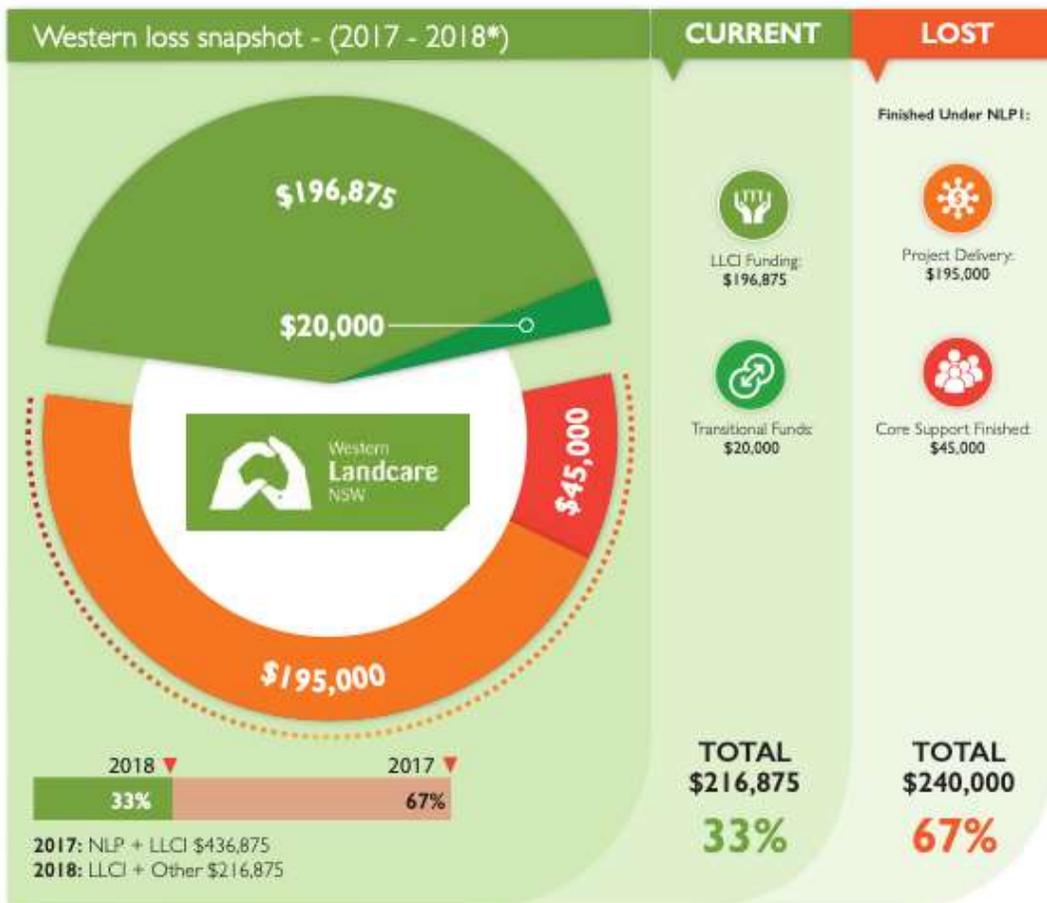
Western

The following shows only NLP/NLP2 and LLCI funding for two financial years.

Western Landcare

The Western Region covers 230,000 square kilometres and is one of the most diverse rangeland areas of Australia.

There are 28 Landcare, producer and pest management groups in the region that operate under the umbrella of the Western Landcare in NSW. With 2000 members. Predominant land uses include grazing, dryland cropping, irrigated cotton production, mining, tourism and natural conservation. Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Wilcannia, Menindee and Broken Hill are the major service towns. There are 3 part-time coordinators employed (2.0 EFT) under the LLCI.



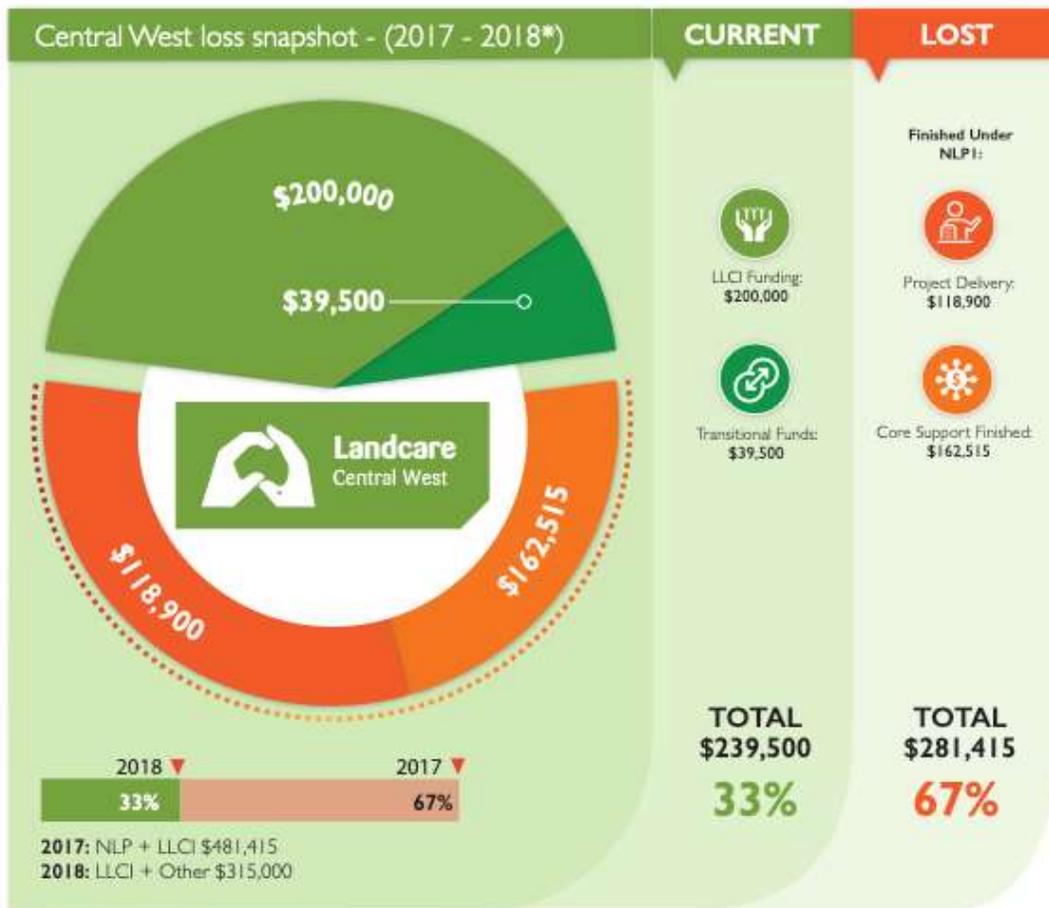
* Financial years 2017 and 2018

Central West

The following shows only NLP/NLP2 and LLCI funding for two financial years.

Central West

The Central West NRM Working Group is a network of **approximately 30 Landcare, Environment and Producer groups** located in Central Western NSW, **94,000km²** covering the area of Parkes Shire, Forbes Shire, Dubbo Regional Council, Lachlan Shire, Cabonne Shire, Warrumbungle Shire and Narromine Shire. The changes in to the RALF role has meant **previous training** and exposure to opportunities are **now limited due to limited budgets** and the inclusion of Agriculture to the portfolio. Now that **network support is limited** and the **future of the LLCI is not yet clear**, the **region may struggle** to attract the same level of capacity and professional staff.



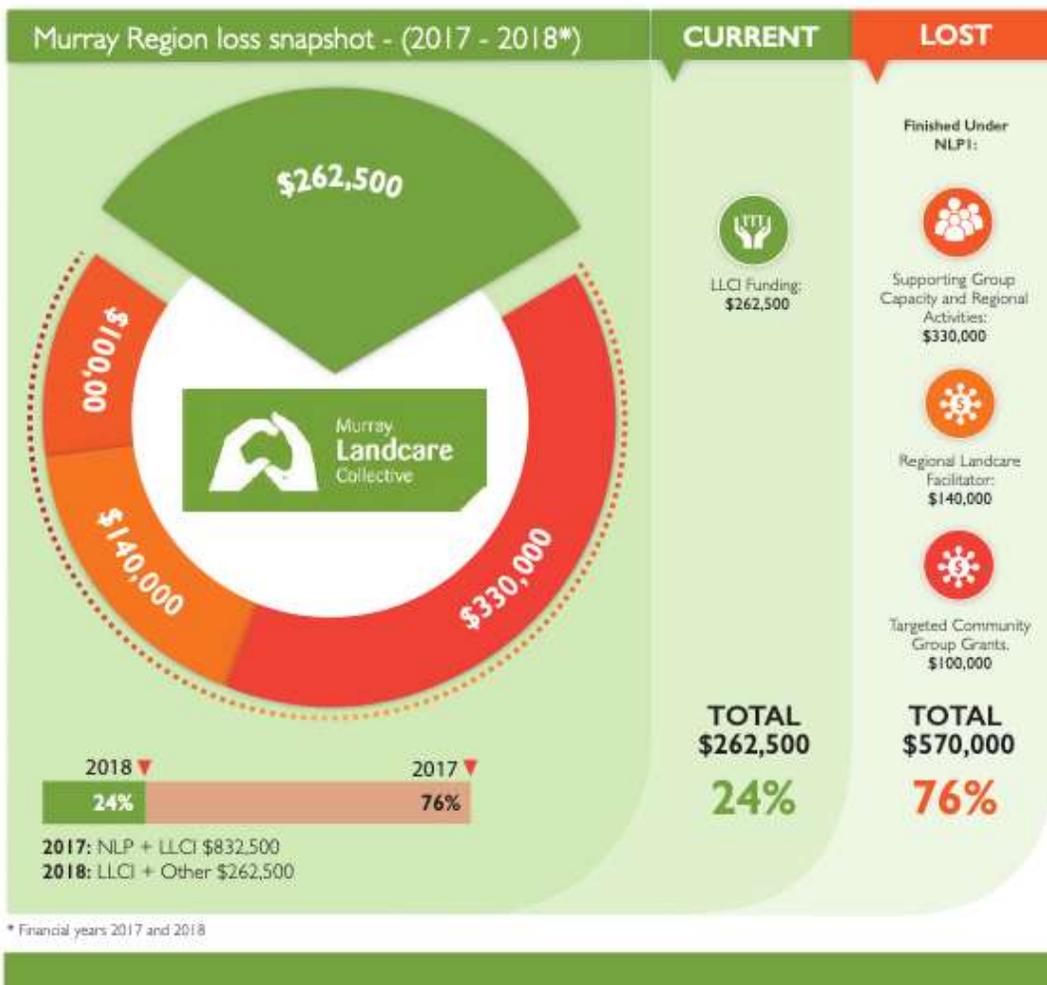
* Financial years 2017 and 2018

Murray Region

The following shows only NLP/NLP2 and LLCI funding for two financial years.

Murray Regional Landcare Collective

In the Murray region, the Landcare Collective is made up of **65 groups** with **over 2000 members** focusing on a diverse range of topics from threatened species, revegetation and habitat conservation, soil management, farming best practices and resilient rural communities. An estimated **29 (mostly part time) paid Landcare staff** support collective groups, **only 6** of which are **partially funded by the LLCI**. With the **loss of capacity funding**, groups were **heavily reliant** on good results through **NLP2 project bids** to maintain momentum. This has **not been the case** and coupled with the **loss of the Regional Landcare Facilitator position**, previously run from within the Murray LC Collective there is a **noted decline in staff and capacity** to deliver activities across the region.

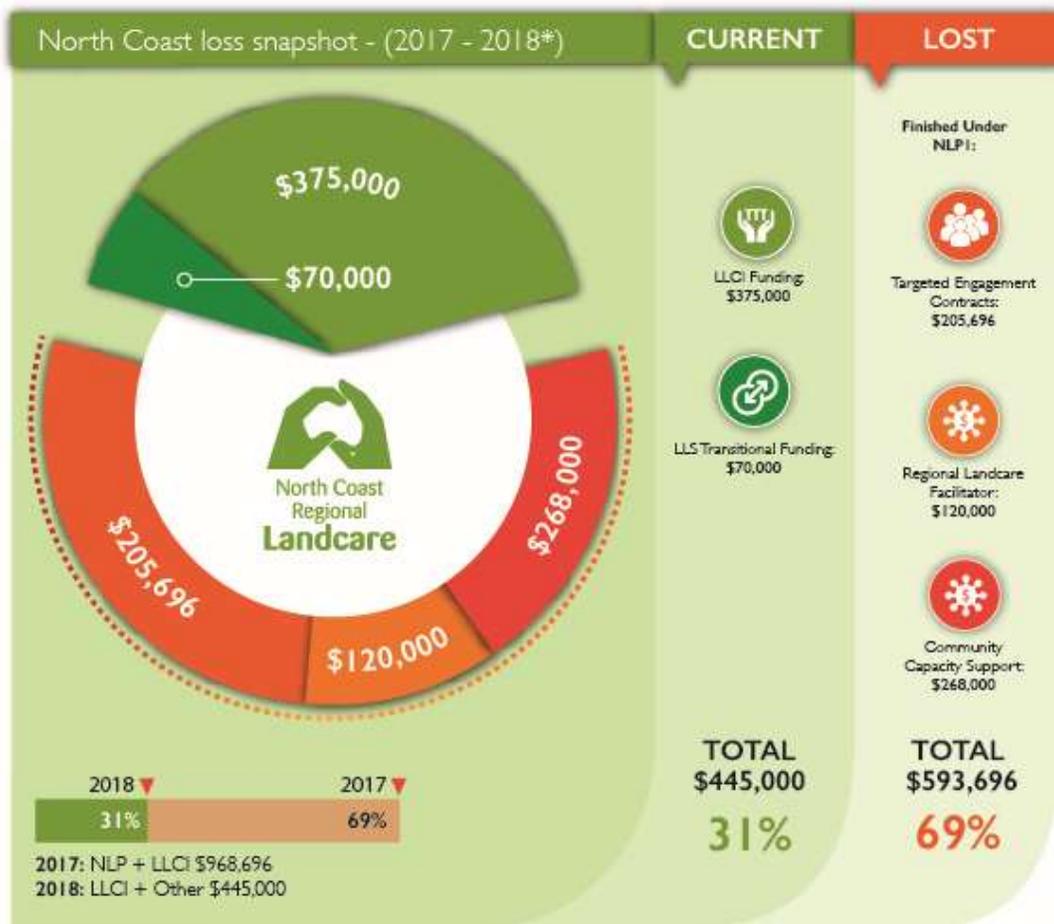


North Coast

The following shows only NLP/NLP2 and LLCI funding for two financial years.

North Coast Regional Landcare Network

The network includes 11 member Landcare Networks covering 3,205,100 hectares of land with a population of over 500,000. There are 305 member groups and 5,028 individual members. In total the networks have partnered with over 100 organisations and have a combined mailing list of 4,418 recipients. Currently there are 17 part-time coordinators employed (5.95 EFT) funded under a combination of grants including the LLCI.



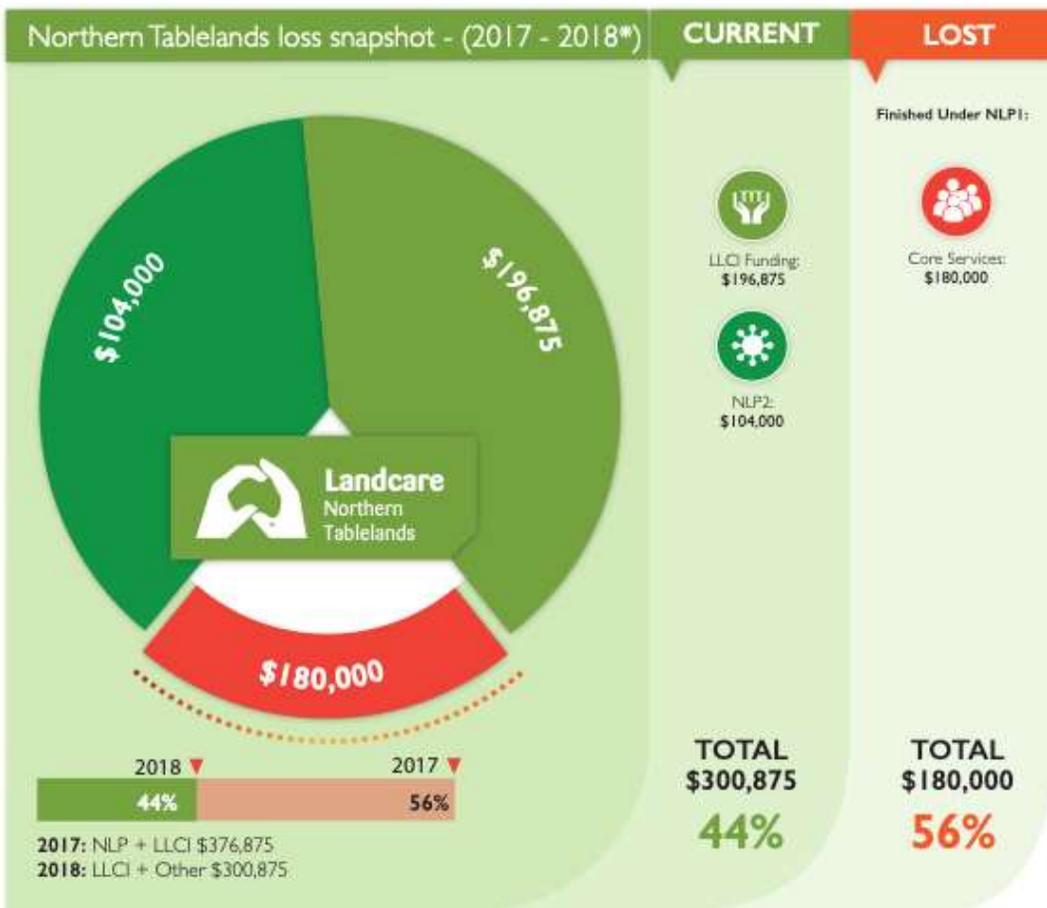
* Financial years 2017 and 2018

Northern Tablelands

The following shows only NLP/NLP2 and LLCI funding for two financial years.

Northern Tablelands

The Northern Tablelands area reflected here is supported by four established Landcare Networks covering an area of 3,330,000 hectares of land with a population of approximately 62,300. These networks support 60 member groups and a membership of 1,635 individuals. In total the networks have partnered with over 121 organisations and have a combined mailing list of 2,775 recipients. Currently there are 4 part-time coordinators (2.25 EFT) funded by the LLCI.



* Financial years 2017 and 2018

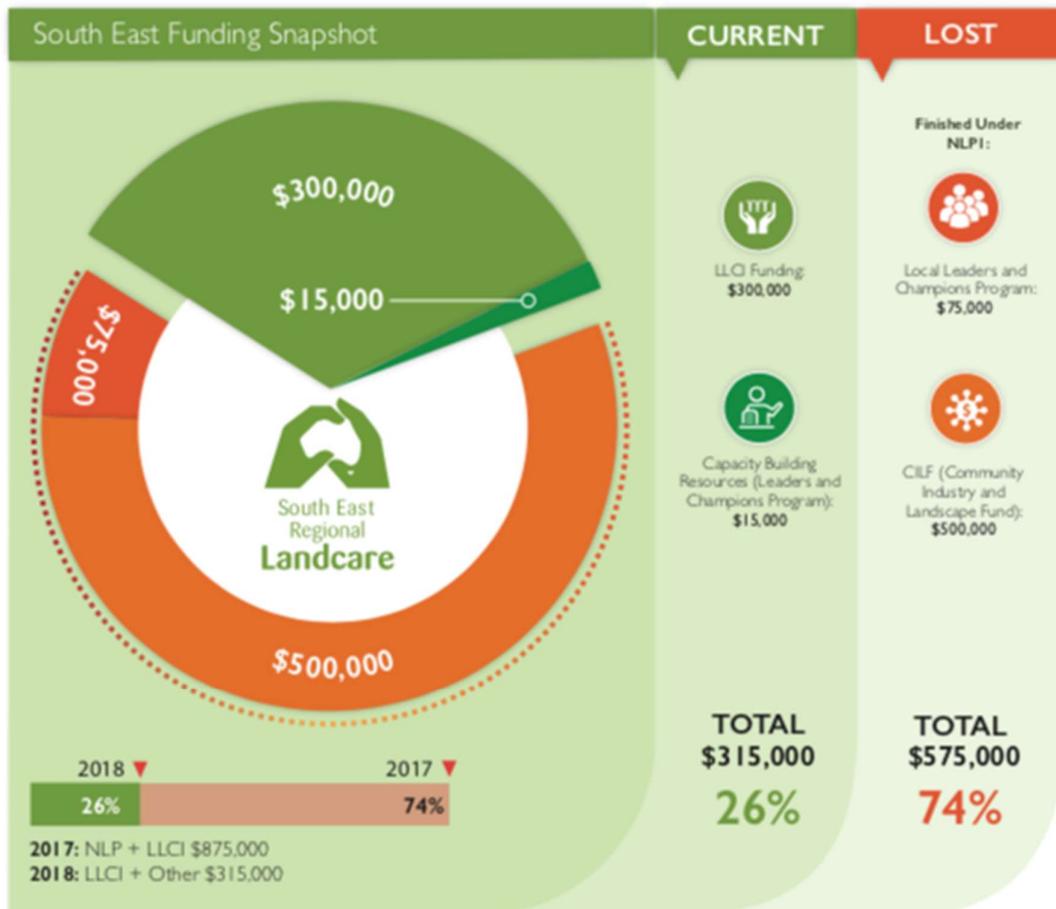
South East

The following shows only NLP/NLP2 and LLCI funding for two financial years.

South East Region

The South East Local Land Services Region is home to **15 Landcare district** areas with over **315 groups** and **3000 members**. The **Landcare districts cover the entire South East region** and include: Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla, Far South Coast, Snowy River Interstate, Upper Snowy, Upper Shoalhaven, Upper Murrumbidgee, Yass Area, Goulburn, Gunning, Upper Lachlan, Boorowa, Hovells Creek and Wingecarribee.

31 part time staff have been working to support groups, networks and projects over the period 2015-18, with **8** of these funded through the LCCI. The Community, Industry and Landscapes Fund (CILF) invested approximately **\$500,000** per year in **part time coordinators** and **project officers for community and industry groups** in the region including Landcare networks, Monaro Farming Systems, Tablelands Farming Systems, the Far South Coast Farmers Network, and the Capital Region Small Farms Network. Funding was sought through NLP2 to continue this program. In addition to the coordination and capacity building support listed below, CILF provided groups and networks funding for on-ground projects.



These figures are for the South East Local Land Services region, which encompasses the South East Landcare network area, plus small parts of other regional network areas.