

Landcare NSW Inc.

Quarterly Regional Report Summary

May 2019

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Disclaimer: The information and subsequent recommendations contained within this report have been informed by information made available to Landcare NSW at the time of preparation and is assumed to be accurate.

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Contents

Contents	3
Background	4
Landcare Health Check.....	4
Strengths	5
Issues.....	6
Partnerships	8
Local Land Services	8
Youth Engagement Survey	10
New NSW Landcare Coordinator Program	11
NSW Landcare Muster 2019	13

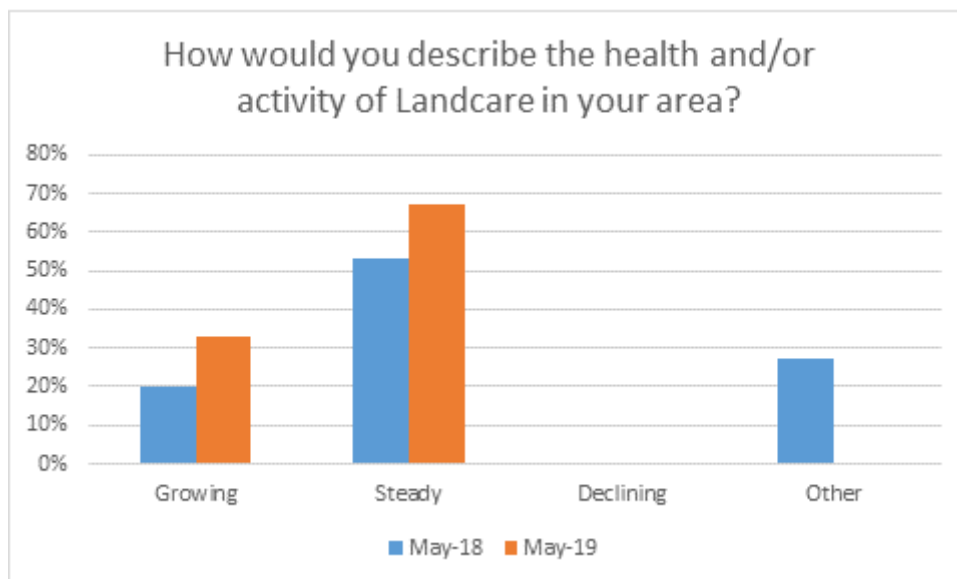
Background

Landcare NSW regularly asks for feedback from our Councillors. We currently use the Form Assembly survey which allows 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 at May 2019. We are aware that the information contained here includes only the known information the individual person submitting a response was able to collate from their networks at this particular time and does not necessarily reflect the entire Landcare situation in a region. However, the information is of immense value in guiding future actions. 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. It is encouraging to see regional council representatives sharing the survey form with networks to form a wider feedback mechanism.

In addition to the regular questions on Landcare Health and Partnerships, this survey included additional sections on Youth Engagement, the New NSW Landcare Coordinator Program and the NSW Landcare Muster 2019. A total of nine responses were submitted to this survey prior to the NSW Landcare Council meeting on 14 May 2019.

Landcare Health Check

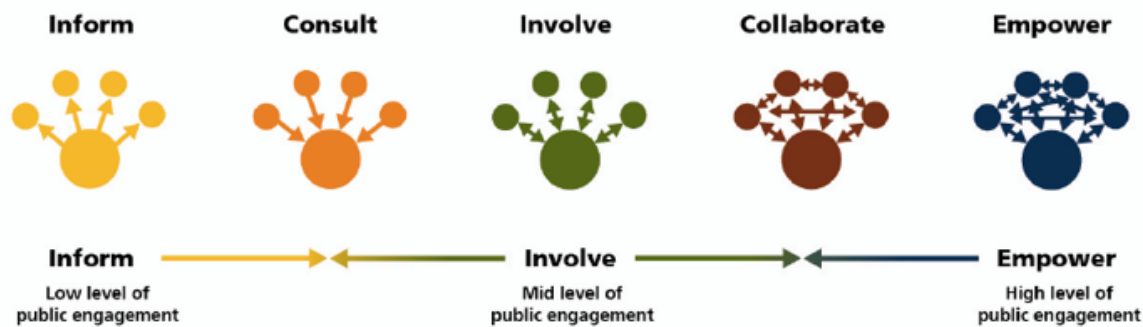
As of May 2019, responses around the activity of Landcare showed 33% of Landcare regions recorded 'growth', with the remaining 67% as 'steady' and 0% in 'decline'. This is consistent with responses from the previous reporting period in February 2018 (27% recorded 'growth', 55% 'steady') and similar to 12 months ago in May 2018.



TREND: Landcare activity has been stable in the 12 month period between May 2018 and 2019.

Strengths

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



<https://www.bangthetable.com/blog/what-is-community-engagement/>

Mid Coast to Tops: Having great community connection and support. The Landcare shopfront is a bonus as new landholders continually come in for trees, weed identification or advice in general.

Western Landcare: Our staff are our greatest strength. They are resilient, energetic and adapt to change really well. Considering we have three new coordinators, WLNSW has not really skipped a beat in how we run and what we achieve.

Greater Sydney: Having some wonderful LLCs to follow up on funding opportunities and activities

Lachlandcare: Strong growing local Landcare groups receiving funding support for local projects

Central Tablelands Landcare Collective: An understanding of local communities and our values

New England North West: Networks that work well together.

South East: Expertise of seeds officer and coordinator

Riverina/Murrumbidgee Landcare: Passionate, committed volunteers, new Committee members and a new EO have reignited the energy within MLI. We have a strong regional identity.

Youth Engagement Representative: Enthusiasm and passion from young people already into the environment, sustainability.

Issues

Landcare regions are currently facing the following issues:

Environmental issues

- Drought:
 - Drought conditions and financial pressures landholders are facing coming into winter.
 - Drought management and water allocations are continuing to stress local farmers across the Murrumbidgee catchment. Feed costs and supply shortages are causing concerns
 - Loss of ground cover including established tree cover across the region in the second year of a major drought has exceeded 20% in some parts. Soil loss has depleted quality too
 - Drought - even though there has been some relief throughout the region, it doesn't rain money. There are lots of families and businesses still doing it tough.
 - Drought
 - Managing livestock water and pastures in drought. Many producers in our area have dry dams, very little available water. Winter pasture is poor due to lack of rain and planted winter pasture is slow growing.
- Vertebrate Pests/Weeds:
 - Vertebrate pest management - in particular dogs and pigs.
 - Wild Dogs
 - Wild dogs - it is the time of year dogs are starting to be on the move. HLLS and landcare are working together to hold group meetings and have a strategic approach.
 - Managing weeds - a lot of interest in biological controls. Holding a workshop later this month.

Funding/Social

- Project Funding:
 - Accessing funds for on-ground works
 - Grant funding
 - Financial resilience of MLI continues to be a major challenge with increasing dependence on NSW State funding. New members and a new committee are focused on increasing finance and other capital sources.
 - Failed applications NLP2 grants.
 - No funding through LLS
 - Finding new funding opportunities in a very competitive world
- LLCI Funding:
 - Coordination support
 - Funding for coordinator
 - LLCI - next instalment. Trying to work out what to do with what we indicatively have to do it with.
- Social:
 - Growing youth engagement
 - Commitment to events! Everyone is time (and poor)....
 - Aging volunteers in many groups
 - Education. Break down the barriers of fears and anxieties.

When asked about the biggest problem/challenge faced, Landcare regions indicated:

Funding:

- The financial viability of MLI is limited by funding sources being concentrated with NSW Government. Whether by design or otherwise, being a de facto extension of government leads to a risk of rejection by core grassroots members and a sense that we are only functioning as a government arm and constrained. Short planning cycles together with single donor dominance mean that staff becomes demotivated and communities underserved.

- Funding our current staff levels into the future. We are funded 2.25 EFT and are currently running 3.25 EFT. To maintain and increase our membership in the Western Region (approx 42% of NSW), we need to keep current levels. We have grown from 8 member groups to 28 member groups over the past 3 yrs. Initially these groups mainly represented Rangecare, however we now boast Urban Landcare, Peri-urban Landcare, Pest management and other community groups as well. 100% are incorporated and around 98% have Insurance and are members of LNSW. Considering the vast array of issues and member backgrounds as well as the distances on dirt roads travelled and our great relationship with LLS, it is imperative that we keep 3.25 EFT.
- Lack of funding from federal government through NLP2. Massive amount of time applying for funds in the competitive rounds and having little chance of funding. Next to no on ground works funding

Other:

- Volunteer burn-out
- Breaking down the fears and barriers for young people. We need to expand more beyond the keen beans who already do bush regeneration and have a degree. This is diverse and for everyone, etc.
- All committee are busy in their own right and having sufficient time for GSLN.
- Reporting is a challenge. Managing many projects at once on a 1.5 day per week is challenging. Manning Landcare reports for Midcoast2tops, there is two projects LLCI and Partnership project. Also MEPAAW, NSW Environmental Trust, Tursa (WFD team), Department of Fisheries.

In response to these challenges, the following solutions were proposed by Landcare regions:

- We are targeting new members including cooperative, large agricultural groups and those currently underserved. We are open to fee for service models as well as private activities with large corporates to underwrite costs and grow our base.
- Awareness and Facebook. We need to sell Landcare as a valid, valuable use of volunteer time. And an empowering movement.
Mel has already made amazing headway with YPNs. I'm also talking to WSU and Macquarie about options re: experience. Bit by bit ..
- Pressure the State Government to make up the shortfall.
 - Transparently show what it is we do and how we have achieved
 - Give thought to finding alternative sources of funding
- A federal government which acknowledges massive reduction in funding and understanding how they are missing how the leverage of the volunteer networks and the benefits this brings to the community.
- Keep LLCs in place and add regional Landcare coordinator
- More resources for coordination.

TREND: Drought conditions and funding certainty are of significant concern to many regions. It is recognised that there is a need for funding in two different but complementary streams: project delivery and coordinator support. This is particularly relevant as resolution is being sought for the continued arrangements for Landcare coordinators in 2019-2023.

Partnerships

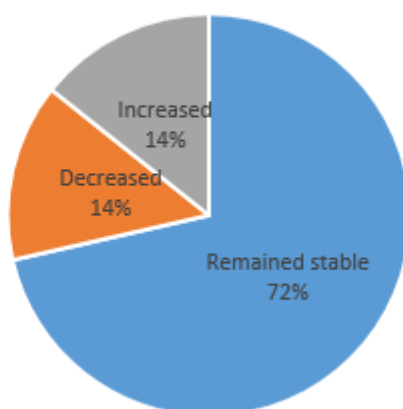
Local Land Services

Council representatives are asked each quarter a series of questions designed to examine the state of relationships with their Local Land Services region.

Landcare regions were asked whether there has been a change in the level of financial or staff support from LLS for group/network operations since February 2019.

The level of support provided to regions from LLS has remained stable for 72% of responding regions. This has increased from 37% in February 2019.

Has the level of financial or staff support from LLS
in your region changed since you last reported?

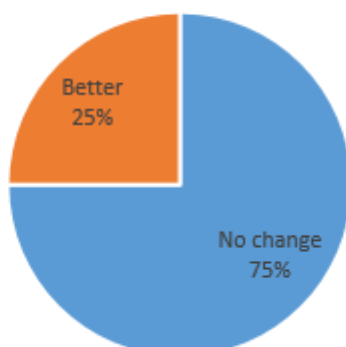


When asked to explain how support or relationships with LLS had changed since the February 2019 report, responses included:

Support has Increased	Support has been Stable	Support has Decreased
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Thanks to an MOU template from Les Pearson Hunter Landcare, MLi now have a signed agreement to co-operate closely with Riverina LLS. We are trying to design a number of approaches to delivery that will deliver mutual benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No change. Will now be negotiating new facilitator/regional coordinator role. Possibly not a lot of change.There is no funding for non-agricultural projectsLLS 'Partnership' funding for LLCi positions is continuing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial contribution has decreased but LLS staff continue to work closely with and support Landcare networks in our region.Waiting to see decision about pest engagement coordinator roles will continue past 30 June.

When asked whether the relationship/support to Landcare from LLS is better or worse than 12 months ago, Landcare regions responded:

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



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

- I presented to the Central Tablelands LLS Board last week, which is the 2nd time the Council member has been asked to present. Good dialogue with a desire to develop larger regional projects together to attract additional funding.
- LGA support is strong.
- Need new members and funding.
- A significant investment in reporting, management and governance systems has seen an upgrade of MLI processes and increased visibility of performance. Over 800 hours of voluntary investment has been made with cutting edge technology, transparent accounting and better project tracking. Local groups and LLCs are working through projects and have reasonable momentum at the moment. There is expected to be a refresh of LLCs in the next phase which will bring a mix of experience and new talent to the team.
- Our new EO is a former RLF so brings direct experience to the role. Coming from an irrigation property she also has helped to increase penetration into underserved irrigation communities.
- In-kind support of 40 000km travel and 3 x office space. Works well. Would not be able to run our positions without this support.
- 4 stable networks working well with LLS. Having the continued support of RLF has assisted networks. The partnership projects have a narrow focus, but are working well. Networks are continuing to attract small amounts of funding from local government, BCT etc. to continue some level of operation away from LLS.
- Grants with NLP2 have been an extreme disappointment to all the networks, with vast amounts of time putting in applications with little success.
- Even though Vanessa has been promoted she is still interested and contactable. Angela Maier has also asked to attend GSLN committee meeting to work on project with farmers and peri-urban dwellers - this is a positive connection.
- The Regional Landcare Facilitator is very supportive to Landcare and has been striving to connect LLS and Landcare in our region. In the past there was little to no relationship. There is a new LLS bio-security officer who is very keen to work with Landcare to create a strategic approach to feral animal control in our area. Meetings with community groups, Landcare and LLS have been set down for June.

Councillors added additional comments, issues and lessons as follows:

- We have had a significant amount of renewal after significant churn.
- Intrepid is great, but we need to stand on our own two feet in terms of youth engagement. Intrepid is just part of this puzzle.
- Connections to local offices is critical to a good relationship
- Regional Landcare groups will struggle without increased funding. Current pressures due to ongoing drought means that Landcare is a secondary or non-existent consideration for many. Some staff whilst passionate lack the technical skills necessary for growth and change. We welcome the opportunity that LLCI2 brings for further renewal and an improvement in skills.
- Survival of Landcare in its intended form will need new funding streams to thrive into the future.

TREND: Despite networks facing uncertainty, many have developed strength in pre-existing and new relationships. The partnership with LLS is highly valued by Landcare networks as the level of support delivered to Landcare by LLS has become stable across more regions since February 2019. Regions acknowledge the value that experienced individuals who are critical in the LLS/Landcare partnership, particularly RALFs, bring to Landcare group strength and effectiveness.

Youth Engagement Survey

Landcare NSW wants to better understand successes, barriers, learnings and issues relevant to the engagement of young people in Landcare. 87% of councillors responded that young people (under 35) do volunteer in their regions, however this is across a variety of interest groups including Landcare, school, sports and scouts.

The groups that young people (under 35) are volunteering with:

- School groups
- Sporting organisations
- Community garden
- Scouts
- Rural Fire Service
- Riding for the Disabled
- Landcare
- Bushcare
- Other community groups

Additional comments included:

- UNE Landcare had a planting day recently, with 300 attendees. I am not sure how they got so many there. Will have to do some homework on that one. A single group activity rather than attracting many new members.
- Intrepid volunteers generally volunteer with Bushcare groups doing special activities such as kayaking and clean-ups. Youth love doing nursery work (ours come from a wide area) and also volunteer with Bushcare groups in their local area.

Councillors have found that some young people volunteer for only 1-2 times while others stay committed for years.

Initiatives or activities that have successfully engaged with young people in the past:

- Green Day
- School holiday activities
- School visits
- Local shows and field day events
- We've targeted Stock Reserves adjacent to schools and helped connected classes to local nature - this has worked well
- WLNSW Youth Network - ran for 2 yrs. Encouraged young people to take up agriculture type activities and training through their schools.
- Southern New England Landcare have run Frog Dreaming for many years, a 2 day camp with many activities catering for older primary school students.
- Intrepid groups like different activities - they are not interested in doing the same thing each week or month. Regular groups need to learn to create and publicise more varied activities which include a skill that can be learnt e.g. bird watching, bat monitoring, kayaking, plant identification, water quality monitoring. These groups are great for getting volunteers for project work where we have across-the-region projects running.
- The children's water watch was a great program that got kids involved. (Monitoring water quality). Manning Landcare regularly holds educational opportunities/working bees for scouts cubs and home schooling groups (kids and carers from 5-17)

Learnings from initiatives or activities that have not gone to plan:

- Weekend youth camp & rural occupations
- University students aren't always available outside normal business hours as many study and work.
- WLNSW Youth Network - due to lack of funding we were unable to run for a third year. A number of students signed up to undertake agriculture services at school and are now thoroughly disappointed.
- Need to make sure someone is available to promote event and to lead event

TREND: The youth sector is critical to sustain Landcare into the future, however it is sometimes difficult to engage with young people due to other commitments. Landcare groups should be aware of the extent of commitments and time restraints when attempting to engage with young people. Ongoing programs and events that recur or have different focus activities are successful, however funding limitations can disengage motivated young people. Activities should be tailored to be accessible, relevant, stimulating, interactive well-promoted and well-coordinated.

New NSW Landcare Coordinator Program

As Landcare NSW considers the implementation of the new Local Landcare Coordinator Component of the NSW Landcare Program, regions were asked to consider how Regional Landcare Coordinators will fit and be utilised.

How the role of Regional Landcare Coordinator will 'look' to provide support to groups:

- This position will support the coordinators as well as working with the host organisation to do things better. In CT we also have strong support with RALF and distinction between the roles is needed but also they will work together closely
- More of the same - organisation of workshops, field days, bio blitz, etc.
- We have nearly 20% of the state so penetration in more remote areas has been challenging. The new RLC will work with novel and disparate groups to grow connections to the eastern groups in our

catchment. New producer groups and new stakeholders including Cotton and Irrigation groups will be targeted.

- As outlined in your document LLC12
- This will come together over the next few weeks, but because our LLS continued to support a RLF, preliminary discussions show little change in current arrangements, although with guidelines now being bought out.
- RLC would be integral part of GSLN, provide lead for engaging Councils and other partners and for developing detailed grant applications in advance of grants being advertised. At present as we don't have the resources many applications are developed on the run some forward planning would be fantastic. RLC would also be able to monitor and track projects and keep them on track - we have won a \$350K SOS grant to run over 7 years which will need considerable tracking and assistance. They can also monitor and ensure promotions and reporting of events both before and importantly after are done well. The RLC would be an important aid to our Chair and committee (potentially taking on a CEO-like role - yet to be discussed with GSLN committee - my thoughts only)
- We have an effective RLF performing a regional Landcare role. Not sure how another regional role will be useful. We need more coordinator resources.

Other considerations/ideas relevant to the planning for and hosting of a Regional Landcare Coordinator:

- Regional gathering planned
- Travel time and costs are high in our region as we are geographically long and thin. This means that face time is less frequent than other areas with lower sums available for non-administrative activities.
- We have the full support of our Regional LLS body and LLS Board. There are no other major stakeholders in the Region.
- Last round we had 6 part-time LLCs in Greater Sydney - 3 working with GSLN, Hawkesbury Landcare Network and Parramatta Council - which we (GSLN) worked closely with. The other 2 - working with farmers on Central Coast and OceanWatch were basically independent. The RLC will be able to work with all LLCs more cohesively. Vanessa from GSLLS met with all LLCs regularly however she is now in a different position and so RLC will be able to cover community of practice that was provided by Vanessa and work more closely with RLF / RALF and Vanessa to bring both organisations even closer together. We are also taking on StreamWatch and hopefully making a successful bid to host the next Landcare conference in 2021. The next 4 years are going to be very active building and developing the profile and abilities of Landcare in the region and therefore more high level support would be very beneficial.
- Not yet clear on the purpose of this role.....

TREND: Regions have considered the Regional Landcare Coordinator roles in the context of their individual needs and practicalities relating to area and travel. More clarity is needed to define this role and differentiate its purpose from RALFs.

NSW Landcare Muster 2019

Landcare NSW is currently designing the NSW Landcare Muster 2019 to be held in Broken Hill in October. In preparation for delivering topics of relevance, priority and interest, we asked councillors what should be included in 'You Asked We Delivered', based on topics that emerged from the previous Muster.

Topics	Responses
LLCI Beyond 2019 - Landcare Support Program policy position	6
LLS - Landcare Partnerships and Regional Landcare Facilitators	6
Landcare NSW Fundraising	6
NLP 2	4
National - LAL / NLN	4
Landcare NSW Communication Strategy	3
Landcare NSW Membership	3
Landcare NSW Representation Policy	3

Other: How to attract funds from non-traditional sources - innovative ideas for events or activities to raise funds; thinking outside the box.

TREND: It is clear that councillors want discussion around ongoing coordination support, the LLS partnership and Landcare NSW fundraising at the Muster. The timing of the 'You Asked We Delivered' session will provide valuable feedback as regions adjust to the new coordinator arrangements and utilisation of Regional Landcare Coordinators.