

March 2018

SUSTAINING LANDCARE - THE NEXT CHAPTER

An update from Landcare NSW

LANDCARE IS A VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT

Like all volunteer movements, it can't operate without paid, professional services to support the efforts of those volunteers.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES ENABLE LANDCARE VOLUNTEERS TO CARRY OUT THEIR VALUABLE WORK.

In 2014 Landcare NSW estimated \$30 million was needed over four years to fund core infrastructure costs, ie Local Coordinators and statewide services. The NSW Government provided \$15 million to the 2015-2019 NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative (LLCI), specifying this was in addition to funds already provided by Local Land Services for district and regional Landcare support functions. Some funds were earmarked to develop strategies to diversify revenue sources, thereby reducing reliance on Government over time. Landcarers welcomed the NSW Government's support.

The LLCI is delivered through an innovative partnership with Local Land Services, producing benefits such as:

- reinvigorating Landcare with old groups gaining new life and new groups forming
- leveraging investment as groups apply for more grants and deliver more projects
- supporting Local Land Services and other agencies to deliver programs and priorities.

Local Coordinators are employed by regional or district community Landcare organisations and work together as a statewide network. Landcare NSW and Local Land Services provide leadership; information; training; governance materials and services such as group insurance and the Gateway website to give groups a place to host their information and attract more volunteers. Landcare NSW is the point of contact for the NSW Government, providing a partner to build the community's capacity and motivation to engage in natural resource management.

With these structures in place, Landcarers can get on with the job at the local level. This a cost effective program with district Landcare organisations receiving a contribution of around \$50,000 to help fund a part time Local Coordinator.

CONFIRMING FUNDING FOR LANDCARE SUPPORT WILL ENABLE VOLUNTEERS TO GET ON WITH THE JOB.

With just over 12 months left in the current LLCI, Landcarers are asking the NSW Government to continue their support. Landcarers would like to see a commitment in the 2018 State Budget so they can plan for the future and ensure a seamless transition into the 2020 financial year.

The \$32.5 million identified as required for an effective Landcare Support Program covers the full cost – regardless of the source of revenue – of local and regional Landcare coordinators and statewide services provided by Local Land Services and Landcare NSW. It includes a previously unfunded element, that of an Aboriginal Landcare initiative, a matter the Landcare community has consistently identified as a high priority. The next phase of the Landcare support program will incorporate learnings from the formal evaluation that will be released in April 2018.

For the next four-year period, the actual amount required from the State Government Budget is reliant upon the level of co-investment from the partnership with Local Land Services and possibly other NSW Government agencies. Funding provided to the NSW Government from the Federal Government's revised National Landcare Program (NLP2) is a key consideration. Landcare NSW is also working to generate revenue through membership, donations and fee-for-service arrangements to contribute to the funds needed.

The constraints of all partners and governments are recognised, however a partially funded Landcare support program is unviable and will diminish the returns on investment achieved through the initial four year initiative. With ongoing core support, Landcare groups will be able to continue building partnerships and bringing funding opportunities to their regions. The statewide network of Local Landcare Coordinators, 3000 groups and 60,000 volunteers will continue to provide on ground capacity to support the Government to deliver its priorities under a local footprint.

The goodwill generated by this program has been immense in rural, regional and urban communities, not only in improving natural resource management but creating jobs and social capital. Maintaining momentum is important to build on what has been achieved and manage the next phase of growth as we move to get Landcare on a stable footing. The Landcare model is nearly 30 years old and is more relevant than ever given the huge environmental challenges we face and the limited public funds to tackle them.

For more information see: <http://landcarensw.org.au/partnerships/sustaining-landcare/>

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Many Hands, One Voice

The Landcare model is able to engage, support and motivate local communities to help the Government deal with high priority policy challenges such as:

- climate change
- pest animals and invasive species
- biodiversity conservation
- reducing litter
- supporting job growth especially in regional communities
- health and wellbeing issues such as lack of physical activity and isolation
- supporting farmers and their families
- building social capital

The Western region covers approximately 40% of the state. LLCI funding has ultimately led to:

- tripling our membership and a greater number of groups being formed.
- Over 28 million hectares in the Western region undertaking some form of sustainable agricultural management.
- Building on the Local Land Services ground baiting program, Landcare has worked with 13 groups consisting of 317 properties covering 9 million hectares to control wild dogs and foxes.

Western Landcare NSW



To date Tweed Landcare Inc. has secured four NSW Environmental Trust grants totaling \$549,250, to improve corridor connectivity and reduce the impacts of invasive species. This has been leveraged with \$110,00 in co-contributions and over \$5,000 in-kind contributions from our project partners.

Tweed Landcare Inc.

More than 10,000 Landcare volunteers are actively volunteering in the Greater Sydney area. The Government's funding has provided us with Local Coordinators who are finding new opportunities to build the Landcare community (including engaging more young people); create stronger connections between diverse volunteer groups and land owners; and initiate projects that are not bound by Council area boundaries and interests.

Greater Sydney Landcare Network



It is crucial for Landcare that this successful program maintains the success of reinvigorated community groups of volunteers it has created. We do not want to risk any loss of momentum which may be caused by funding uncertainty.

Tamworth Regional Landcare Association

Over the past year alone, Little River Landcare has influenced natural resource management in 64 farming enterprises which cover 62,507 hectares.

Little River Landcare Group



In the Illawarra we have over 100 Bushcare groups, 25 active Landcare groups, and over 100 landholders involved in small to large-scale conservation efforts stretched across the region.

Landcare Illawarra

The value of the LLCI support has provided the opportunity to re-engage Landcare and community volunteers across this region. Landcare activity, pre-existing groups, Lithgow Oberon Landcare Association, and new group interest to start-up in Landcare volunteering have been resuscitated and revitalized.

Lithgow Oberon Landcare Association



Since 2015 we have supported the establishment of 12 Intrepid Landcare youth-led networks, who have delivered over 75 projects, with over 120 core volunteers organising local action for Landcare.

Intrepid Landcare