

GUIDELINES ON REPRESENTATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT



Purpose

Landcare groups have requested information and advice regarding the following questions:

1. In what circumstances does Landcare adopt a public position on a policy issue?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of Landcare participants/volunteers regarding making representations to Members of Parliament?

Audience

- Landcare NSW (staff, councillors and member organisations)
- Host Organisations and Regional/Local Landcare Coordinators funded by the NSW Landcare Program
- NSW Landcare community.

Background

Landcare in NSW is a grassroots community movement that protects and restores natural resources through information sharing, changing practices and conducting on-ground work; we are a 'doing' organisation. Landcare in NSW has a longstanding tradition of bipartisanship. By creating a neutral space for competing interests, Landcare in NSW has united diverse groups and individuals to work on common goals. This quality goes back to the origins of Landcare in which conservationists and farmers decided to work in partnership in the interests of the environment.

Landcare NSW does not have the systems and processes to form positions on public policy issues. Landcare NSW has also always been apolitical. To take a position on a public policy issue may be divisive as the nature of Landcare is that every group reflects its local circumstances and priorities. Landcare in NSW is a broad church and on some issues it would be impossible to reach consensus. The trust and credibility Landcare enjoys in the community is key to its longevity and success.

Even though Landcare NSW does not enter public debate with set policy positions, Landcare individuals may share their own opinions, or local Landcare groups may decide to participate in local debates. The culture and traditions of the Landcare movement are sufficient to ensure participation in public debate is carried out respectfully and in such a way that protects the good reputation of Landcare in NSW. It is the responsibility of Landcarers in NSW to uphold this culture and maintain

the highest standards to safeguard and foster the high esteem which Landcare enjoys in the community and among decision makers.

Although Landcare NSW does not participate in policy debates, we do offer governments and other institutions advice, information and opinions based on the experience, skills and knowledge of the NSW Landcare community.

A core function of Landcare NSW as the peak body is to represent the interests of its members and the broader NSW Landcare community, for example, by educating state government representatives and Members of Parliament and seeking support and resources for Landcare groups to function and grow.

We are also responsible for educating decision makers about the role and importance of community-based natural resource management. Landcare NSW has several mechanisms to ensure advice or messages conveyed to government reflect the views of our members and the Landcare community.

It is relevant to note that the NSW Landcare Program (2019-2023) is the primary source of funding for the operation of Landcare in NSW. This program is funded by the NSW Government whose expectation is the funding enables Landcare to carry out on ground activities.

Guidelines

Framework

All participants within the Landcare system, whether landholders or volunteers, committees, groups, Landcare Coordinators or Landcare NSW Councillors must protect the reputation of Landcare and avoid any action that would negatively affect the high degree of trust and credibility that Landcare enjoys in the NSW community.

The role of Landcare NSW is to:

1. educate decision makers about Landcare in NSW;
2. make representations for Landcare in NSW to receive support, recognition and resources which are essential to ensure a healthy Landcare movement;
3. make representations on the place of community-based natural resource management; and
4. gather and communicate information, views and advice from the Landcare community to inform governments and other stakeholders on natural resource management issues.

Landcare NSW does not adopt or promote public positions in policy debates.

Landcare NSW staff must not express a public opinion or view on any matter.

Landcare NSW Chair, CEO and Councillors

The Chair, CEO and Councillors of Landcare NSW may choose to express a personal opinion on a policy issue, for example the importance of climate change, however in doing so they should make clear it is a personal opinion as a leader in the Landcare community, and be mindful of the potential

impact of their statement on the reputation of Landcare generally, Landcare NSW and its relationships with Landcarers, government stakeholders and elected representatives.

Host Organisations, Regional and Local Landcare Coordinators

Host organisations, Regional Landcare Coordinators and Local Landcare Coordinators should take every opportunity to educate and form relationships with their elected representatives on local issues and are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from Landcare NSW regarding state and national issues. The primary purpose of this relationship should be to:

- raise awareness of the value of Landcare;
- seek the elected representative's assistance and support to enable growth and development of Landcare; and
- explain the role of local communities in natural resource management.

Regional Landcare Coordinators and Local Landcare Coordinators should not participate in public policy debates.

Local Landcare groups may decide to adopt a position on a local issue, however they are advised to ensure adequate processes are in place to ensure the position accurately reflects the views of the group and has been endorsed by the relevant group. Before making any public statements the group is asked to consider the potential impact on the reputation and standing of Landcare locally and in the state domain and nationally.

More information

This position was discussed and agreed at the Landcare NSW meeting in August 2019. Feedback, questions and comments are welcome: administration@landcarensw.org.au