



LANDCARE NSW

NSW LANDCARE PROGRAM FUNDING 2023-2027 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What funding is Landcare NSW seeking from the NSW Government?

Leading into the NSW State Election on Saturday, 25 March 2023, Landcare NSW is calling on all political representatives to support the Landcare movement and commit to funding an enhanced program requiring a \$59 million investment over the next four years.

Together with the NSW Local Land Services, Landcare NSW submitted a business case to the NSW Minister for Agriculture in October 2022.

The business case outlines why a bold, fully optimised Program funding of \$59 million is needed over four years to provide further support, and build on the success and momentum created through the NSW Landcare Program in 2019 - 2023.

Why \$59 million?

Funding for the \$59 million NSW Landcare Program 2023 - 2027 is critical to safeguarding the future of the Landcare movement in NSW.

A key component of the current program is to fund, nurture and support a state-wide network of 84 local and regional Landcare coordinators. A core part of the coordinator's role is to coordinate on-ground works as well as attract and expand a volunteer network of Landcarers. This expansive network enables on ground activities, including vegetation management, weed control and riparian works to build resilience in vulnerable landscapes and quickly respond to natural disasters including drought, bushfires and floods. The network can quickly assist across regions with emerging issues, as well as act as eyes and ears for identifying potential risks.

What is the NSW Landcare Program 2023 – 2027?

The NSW Landcare Program is designed to empower Landcare groups to continue achieving the Government's natural resource management goals in local communities across the state, every day. The Program will both expand the scope of the existing program components and introduce new initiatives whilst also building on the momentum achieved in the previous two programs. It includes a suite of core, and also new elements designed to deliver outcomes for the NSW Government, Local Land Services and NSW Landcare community.

These include:

- Project delivery through a network of 72 Local Landcare Coordinators and 12 Regional Coordinators who are connected, flexible and capable of responding to the changing needs of Landcare groups. Under the proposed and preferred option, referred to as Program Plus, these coordinators would be employed on a full-time basis (currently they are 1-2 days per week).
- Developing and implementing actions to build engagement between the Landcare movement and Aboriginal people, through training, representation, social support and project delivery, including increasing regional Aboriginal coordinators from 2 to 11 full time roles.
- Provision of the Community of Practice, a central resources hub designed to facilitate collaboration, shared learning and increased productivity and effectiveness of Landcare work across the state.
- Successful co-design model: Continuation of joint management of the NSW Landcare Program by Landcare NSW and Local Land Services, under oversight of a Joint Management Committee reporting to the Minister for Primary Industries, Regional Water and Trade and Industry.
- An innovation incubator and integration hub to capitalise on emerging technological trends.
- A streamlined Natural Resource Management (NRM) funding process, enabling high performing groups to join a preferred panel of NRM providers.
- Digital Landcare - to enable existing knowledge and materials to be easily shared and reporting of on-ground works and activities via an easy-to-use website and application.
- Local subject matter experts - to provide professional services to assist local groups to build their capacity and professionalism.
- A shared services hub - to provide centralised business support for everyday business functions – to both assist the organisations hosting the coordinators, and make the coordinators role easier and more effective.

Why is the funding so important?

The NSW Landcare Program has achieved outstanding momentum for the Landcare movement across NSW, in the past four years. However, funding for the NSW Landcare Program is set to expire on 1 July 2023.

If the NSW Government fails to refresh its funding for Landcare NSW, then Landcare in NSW would suffer significantly through:

- A net loss of benefits of at least \$63.5 million;
- Reduced circulation of vital NRM knowledge and know-how due to the loss of a systematic, or well-designed infrastructure to attract, collate, and distribute this intangible asset where and when it's needed;
- Effectiveness of on-ground activity may reduce due to loss of coordination function and/or the reduced ability to identify the right land management solutions at the right time;
- A loss of over 80 regional roles within the NRM space, along with loss of several Program roles within Local Land Services and Landcare NSW;
- Leveraged financial contributions decreased as funders lose confidence that their funds can be effectively and efficiently allocated to targeted and productive on-ground activity;
- A significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of both coordinators and volunteers state-wide;
- Without the Program, the in-kind time contributed by volunteers would likely decline significantly, and this would then need to be filled by government-sponsored and managed programs and associated recruits or be provided by the private sector. This would come at an estimated cost of \$38 million and would only service the baseline requirements of the Program, with no leveraging. The volunteer labour and goodwill within Landcare NSW therefore has significant economic value and maximises the leveraged impact of the NSW Government's investment.



Has the NSW Landcare Program been a success?

Yes. The NSW Landcare Program has proven that a flexible, organised network of coordinators can deliver significant outcomes in terms of capacity, growth and performance of Landcare networks. It brings tangible benefits to communities in natural resources management, building social capital and creating rural jobs.

The NSW Landcare Program has achieved remarkable momentum and results. Based upon economic analysis by Program end, it will have delivered:

- **Increased community participation benefits of over \$77 million**, including coordinators facilitating and supporting Landcare volunteer labour over the term of the Program and supporting the movement through various natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. The coordinators also planned, managed and delivered increased on-ground activity such as pest and weed management, soil and agricultural improvement, and biodiversity conservation. The coordinators also contributed to volunteers' and participants' improved sense of health, wellbeing and resilience of vulnerable communities to disasters.
- **Increased capacity to deliver, with benefits of approximately \$300,000** including facilitating and delivering a significant volume of knowledge and information sharing activities, via the local, regional and state Community of Practice events (30,000 hours to date). The coordinators also sources, shared and disseminated vital natural resource management (NRM) information and know-how to their groups and Landcare communities in NSW, and delivered the annual NSW Landcare Program State Gathering hosting over 130 delegates in Dubbo;
- **Funded formal professional development that supported coordinators** in delivering capacity building outcomes, with an economic return during the Program term of \$290,000;
- **Delivered knowledge and information efficiently** by creating and disseminating newsletters and case studies to the Landcare community, with over 400 newsletters published to-date, and the NSW Landcare Gateway website registering an average monthly readership of 14,000.
- **Increased collaboration with a benefit of over \$9.2 million** including leveraging additional funding through targeted partnerships and collaborations with funders such as the Biodiversity Conservation Trust. Improved Aboriginal engagement through the employment of a fulltime, dedicated Aboriginal coordinator within the Aboriginal Community Engagement 'Working Together' Program. This component facilitated grant funding towards increasing knowledge of cultural heritage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, fire management, field trips, and other cultural activities and has also partially funded two regional Aboriginal Coordinators. A key outcome was that 61% of Landcare coordinators reported increased confidence in engaging with Aboriginal communities, compared to at the time of Program inception;
- **Helped attract specialist knowledge into the Landcare ecosystem**, through targeted partnerships associated with pest management; Helped build resilience by supporting Landcarers to plan and implement strategies to support mental health and improve their disaster resilience and critical engagement with younger Landcarers through the Department of Education and Resilience NSW Connected Communities Program.

Why is Landcare worth funding in NSW?

The 2022 Economic Evaluation study by Nation Partners identified a total of \$86 million of benefits attributable to the Program and work of the coordinators, compared to a total Program investment of \$22.5 million.

This equates to a net benefit of \$63.5 million over the four-year delivery period, and an estimated economic return of \$3.83 per dollar of investment; it also noted that the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for the existing Program activities, could range from 3.83 to 5.61 reflecting potential disruptions to the Program in 2019 / 2020 (primarily bushfire / COVID related).

Should government commit to the \$59 million in funding, this would generate in the order of \$261 million in benefits or the equivalent of a 5.95 benefit-cost ratio.

A 2018 study also showed that a well-supported Landcare movement contributes \$500 million to the NSW economy each year. This equates to a return on investment of roughly \$6 for every \$1 spent on centralised and coordinated support for Landcare.

Landcare alone has the ability to meet social, environmental and agricultural needs for every local community in NSW. It unlocks several key benefits for the state, including:

- An unmatched local presence in every community throughout NSW
- The positive impact that Landcare has on the social wellbeing of local communities and the positive change it drives
- Enabling farmers to become our greatest environmentalists through sustainable agricultural practices and production
- Extraordinary capacity and ability to share knowledge through a large network of academics, landowners and volunteers

Every day across NSW Landcarers are building the resilience of our natural environment and the people who live and work in it.

This resilience building occurs across a range of activities, from managing pests and weeds, to rehabilitating coastal dunes and restoring healthy waterways, to improving biodiversity through enhanced flora and fauna habitats.

What can I do to help?

We urge anyone concerned about the future survival of the Program, and also the Landcare movement in NSW, to contact their local MPs and reiterate the urgent need for all government representatives to commit to providing \$59 million of funding towards the NSW Landcare Program for 2023 - 2027.