

NSW Landcare Fact Sheet 3

Joining the Landcare Network



If you wish to help improve the condition of the natural resources in your area, consider doing so as a member of a Landcare or other natural resource management group. You may join an existing group or form a new one if none already exists in your area.

Information in this fact sheet comprises:

- *Why be a member of a group?*
- *Joining an existing group*
- *Forming a new group*
- *Activities to get started*
- *List your group on the LandcareOnline database*
- *Valuing the Landcare image*
- *Operational principles of the Landcare network*

To become a member of a community natural resource management (NRM) group, such as a Landcare, Coastcare, Bushcare or Rivercare group, you can either join an existing group or form a new one. With over 1900 community NRM groups listed as landcare groups in NSW there is probably a group near you already. Investigate this first (see page 2), because the considerable costs, resources and time that go into establishing and running a group may be better directed to supporting an existing group.

Why be a member of a group?

- Group members work collaboratively on natural resource issues or problems, such as water pollution, salinity, biodiversity decline and weed invasion, that extend beyond fences or natural boundaries, where an individual's activities may have limited impact.
- Different members bring a variety of perspectives and skills to the group, contributing to a better understanding of the group's issues and enhancing the capacity to share scarce resources.
- Groups find it easier to access expert advice and funding from government agencies and funding programs.
- Many training programs are targeted to community groups. When participants are being sought, organisers usually first contact the well known networks of groups, such as Landcare.
- Landcare and other groups are often linked through regional networks and community support staff. These resources provide access to information, training opportunities and funding for group activities. These networks also participate in regional natural resource planning.
- Organisations such as catchment management authorities (CMAs) and local councils often prefer to work with groups that have established their bona fides in the community.

Landcare in NSW is supported by the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the NSW Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs). If you have a question regarding these Fact Sheets please contact your local CMA office (Details on your nearest CMA office may be found at www.cma.nsw.gov.au) or e-mail landcarensw.landcarensw@dnr.nsw.gov.au .

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Joining an existing group

To locate your nearest group you can either:

- Look up group details in Landcare Australia's Landcare Online website, www.landcareonline.com;
- Look up group details in Community Landcare Information Online (CLIO) on the NSW Landcare website, www.landcarensw.org; or
- Contact your Regional NRM facilitator or community support officer – contact details are available on the website.

Forming a new group

If you have decided to start a new group there is assistance available to you. Contact your regional Landcare network or local community support officer for help in getting started.

Regional Landcare networks

The majority of Landcare groups in NSW are members of a regional network. These networks assist groups to communicate and to share information and resources. They may also act as a communication link to Government and CMAs, employ staff and tender for and implement projects. Regional Landcare networks are listed on the NSW Landcare website with Landcare groups.

Community support officers

Community support officers are employed to work with community groups. Their duties vary from region to region. However, they can provide assistance if you wish to form a new group. Contact details for these officers are available on the NSW Landcare website.

Activities to get started

How a community group gets started will depend upon the potential members, the types of natural resource problems to be tackled and the type of work the members want to do.

You may choose to phone community members whom you know will be interested and organise an initial meeting, then expand your membership. Or you may like to call a community meeting and see how many people are interested. The first stages in forming a group are:

Naming your group

The name of your group should represent the area over which you operate. The same level of support is provided to groups irrespective of whether the group name includes 'Landcare', 'Coastcare', 'Bushcare' or 'Rivercare', or something else, such as 'Friends of ..'.

Form a management committee

Management committee positions may include president or chairperson, secretary, treasurer, public officer (for the purpose of incorporation), publicity officer and project officers. The latter three types of position may not be needed initially. More information on management positions is in the fact sheet 'Maintaining a Community Group'.

Present ideas on what Landcare can achieve

Organise a presentation from another group that can provide practical examples of how they operate, their achievements and their activities.

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Learn from and about each other

Members will bring to the group a diverse range of knowledge and skills. Organise farm walks or bus tours to visit potential project sites and discuss issues. Organise a group map illustrating the locations of members and their natural resource issues of interest. Try to keep activities interesting. Protracted meetings may not be how people want to spend their spare time.

Networks and partnerships

Identify the key groups: CMAs, regional and local networks and groups, and contacts in the local council and government agencies that may help you. Tell them about your group and invite them to be involved.

Developing a plan of action for your group

All group members need to have input into developing the objectives of their group. Groups that do not have agreed priorities for activity experience increased burnout of participants. All members should understand how their input and work will contribute to achieving the objectives of the group.

Group communication

Group members need to keep up to date with what the group is doing. When starting a new group plan how you will communicate through regular mail outs, newsletters, emails and other processes.

Incorporation and insurance

Groups should consider the issues of incorporation and insurance. Two fact sheets in this series are available on these subjects.

List your group on the Landcare Online database

The Landcare Online database is operated by Landcare Australia Ltd. It contains contact details and information on Landcare and other community NRM groups in NSW. Information in the database is available through the Landcare Online website, www.landcareonline.com; or the Community Landcare Information Online (CLIO) which is linked to the NSW Landcare website, www.landcarensw.org. You can register your group on-line through the Landcare Online website. If you need further assistance or have no internet access please contact your Regional NRM facilitator or local community support officer.

Valuing the Landcare image

The Landcare logo is now recognised by 84% of Australians.

Landcare group members and partners have worked hard to develop the respected Landcare image. Landcare attracts sponsorship, has a dedicated seat on the NSW Natural Resources Advisory Council, receives funding for national and State peak bodies and is consulted on a wide range of State and regional natural resource planning processes.

It is important that people using the name and logo continue to add to the image of Landcare as a willing and valuable partner in undertaking NRM activities. The fact sheet 'Use of the Landcare Logo' has more information.

If you make a statement in the name of Landcare you are speaking on behalf of over 1900 groups (comprising more than 45 000 members) in NSW

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who work on a diverse range of natural resource issues and activities.

Operational principles of the Landcare network

While there are no set rules on how a Landcare group must operate, there are some generally held principles for successful operation:

Autonomy

Groups are autonomous and operate to meet the needs of their members and to tackle the group's natural resource issues.

However, groups using public funding from sources such as the Envirofund or CMA contracts need to follow the rules and requirements stipulated by the funding body or contract.

Practical innovation

Landcare has been successful because it has provided a forum for land managers to develop and implement land management practices that meet their needs and timeframes. Groups have combined technical know-how with practical experience.

Flexible work practices

Groups work within local calendars of events, fitting group activities to accommodate business and family needs. For example, the activities of rural groups tend to be at a minimum during sowing, harvesting and shearing.

Share responsibilities

Landcare groups share responsibilities and learning opportunities between members. Landcare is about learning – you need to be involved to learn.

Networking

Landcare groups and networks provide an information network. Share ideas and information between members. Partnerships with all levels of government, business and CMAs are central to the Landcare ethic.

Not politically aligned

Landcare has no political affiliations.

Individual Landcarers

Individuals can be members of the Landcare network. You do not have to be in a group to embrace the Landcare ethic, although there are advantages, as discussed on page 1.

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