



**National
Landcare Network**

**NATIONAL LANDCARE
NETWORK LTD**

ABN: 40 612 363 121

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am delighted to have taken up the role of chair of the NLN this year when Peter Bridgewater stepped down after a period of dedicated and productive service. I want to thank Peter for his work in leading the Board of the NLN and for the healthy financial and strategic position the NLN is in at the end of 2019.

I take up this position as a relatively new participant in the governance of Community Landcare but with a lifetime of participation in landcare and nature conservation activities. I have worked in the government, private and not-for-profit sectors and maintain a research position in environmental science and economics. My experience shows me that collaboration and cooperation are essential to fulfilling the mission of Community Landcare and I approach the role with that in mind. The achievements of the NLN which are listed in this document are a result of collaboration and cooperation with many stakeholders and are a testament to the combined strength in the Landcare movement.



Some of the important things to note at this stage of development of the NLN are that the organisation is well administered and financially sound. From that position NLN has been undertaking work to invigorate Community Landcare and is making progress on important direction setting documents including a new Strategic Plan and a literature review and value proposition to underpin future positioning. It is important for Landcare to be at the table in discussions of how government and other stakeholders plan to tackle issues affecting Australia's agriculture and natural resources. Being a 'trusted partner' in national conversations helps the NLN represent the greater Landcare movement.

The year ahead is set to build on achievements and learn the lessons from 2019. Opening opportunities for Community Landcare requires continuous engagement and contribution to debate at all levels. Important contributions of this type come in the form of engagement in the Drought Summit, and ongoing contribution to the Future Drought Fund to ensure Landcare can contribute effectively for the environment and people. Developing a Policy Statement in lead up to the Federal election was also an excellent opportunity to create a piece of work that allows continuous positioning of the role and effectiveness of well-resourced Community Landcare.

The need for strong Landcare groups, networks and organisations is only growing with increased awareness of the need to transform our productive and natural landscapes. The NLN is well positioned to support Community Landcare is the task and I look forward to the coming year and a deeper engagement with all that is Landcare.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick O'Connor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr Patrick O'Connor



MESSAGE FROM THE FORMER CHAIR

In July I stepped down with regret because I know changes starting now in my life will take more of my time, and I wanted to make sure NLN was in the best hands for the future. So, first, I must acknowledge the support of all Board directors, the CEO and other staff over the past 3 years in supporting me during my time as Director and Chair. It was a great experience, particularly seeing the passion and positivity of all concerned in Community Landcare. Please, don't lose that!! I know the Members Council is the key means of channelling that passion to the Board, and I believe the working arrangements that are now in place will put NLN in a great position to be a real force for change into the future, and I wish the MC and Board to be elected at the Annual General Meeting all power and strength to do that.

NLN is a great advocacy organisation – but you need to be more than that, and you are. It's the mix of advocacy and practicality that really makes us different from any other organisation purportedly trying to recuperate and rejuvenate our land – and perhaps soon also our seascapes following work on sea-grass meadows in Victoria!! But the “kangaroo in the paddock” for Landcare is the glacial pace of movement to join forces with Landcare Australia Limited. I thought we were making good progress, but it seems always just out of reach and another tweak in wording brings into question what is being proposed. I urge all concerned at Board and MC level, and STOs one and all, to keep on with this task. We know it must be done, and so does Landcare Australia, but on terms fair to recognise all that you collectively accomplish each and every day. I really wish you well in reaching a conclusion – the fact that this has been almost shadowing the BREXIT process in the UK does give rise to some unease though!! My encouragement and challenge to you is to get the change done before BREXIT!

It's been a blast serving you all, and I will be watching from the sidelines.... The very best of luck to all of you individually, and as the collective powerhouse that is NLN.



Dr Peter Bridgewater



WHO'S WHO

Board

Dr Patrick O'Connor, Chair (South Australia)
 Mr Keith Bradby OAM (Western Australia)
 Ms Stephanie Cameron (New South Wales)
 Dr Maxine Cooper (Australian Capital Territory)
 Mr Geoffrey Elliot (Queensland)
 Dr Josie Kelman (Tasmania)
 Ms Susan McKinnon (Northern Territory)
 Dr Kaye Rodden (Victoria)

Company Secretary
 Mr Gerard Butler

Members Council

ACT: Martine Franco, Catherine Keirnan, Karissa Preuss
 New South Wales: Keith Hyde, Les Pearson, Louise Turner
 Northern Territory: Madonna Wuttke, Annie Andrews, Mike Clarke
 Queensland: Darryl Ebenezer, Phil Moran, Peter Stevens
 South Australia: Gerard Butler, Ross Oke
 Tasmania: Rod Knight, Ben Hooper
 Victoria: Jane Carney, Sandy MacKenzie, Beth Ripper
 Western Australia: Helen Watkins (Chair), Mick Davis, Louise Duxbury

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

Stephanie Cameron (Chair), Josie Kelman, John Holley (external), Gerard Butler (Company Secretary)

Selections Committee

Geoff Elliot, Josie Kelman, Sue McKinnon

Governance Committee

Patrick O'Connor (Chair), Rod Knight, Gerry Butler (Company Secretary)

LAL Restructure Working Group

Patrick O'Connor (Chair), Stephanie Cameron, Louise Duxbury, Geoff Elliot, Rod Knight, Helen Watkins, Adrian Zammit, Kaye Rodden



Chief Executive Officer

Jim Adams

Staff

Executive Support and Projects: Kerry Olsson (0.3 fte)

Board and Administrative Support: Jess Dickson (0.3fte)

Members Council Support: Sheree Bowman (0.3fte)



Photograph: Joint Board and Members Council Meeting, Adelaide, March 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

The National Landcare Network would like to acknowledge the significant contributions to the Board of departing members Peter Bridgewater, Gerard Butler, Rob Dulhunty and Terry Hubbard. We thank them for their commitment to Landcare and their generosity with their time and effort. Our thanks also go to departing Members Council representatives Parry Agius (South Australia), Blair Darville (Western Australia), Stephanie Grove (Northern Territory) and Kerry Olsson (ACT). Kaye Rodden (former Chair) and Patrick O'Connor also left the Members Council, in order to take up positions on the Board.



2018-2019 HIGHLIGHTS

- This year we focussed on providing a clear and unified voice at the national level for community-based Landcare, reaffirming our core purpose and values. This included releasing a national policy platform, [Landcare Communities - Australia's future](#) and a comprehensive [background paper](#).

These policy positions were supported by work to clarify the value proposition of community Landcare through a literature review, an overview value proposition, and new communications materials.

- We engaged with Government on the implementation of the National Landcare Program and other programs. We advocated for better Landcare outcomes and greater community group access to resources, as well as providing advice on the potential design of future programs and policy. We sought to contribute to the development of government responses to the deepening drought across much of Australia. We also commenced work to improve understanding and alignment between community Landcare groups and national Government programs.
- We provided \$747,500 in direct support to state and territory peak Landcare bodies, as part of our agreement with the Commonwealth government under the National Landcare Program to lead a national, representative and enabled network.
- We fostered an active and engaged Members Council, which met both separately and jointly with the Board to develop and share views on priorities as well as enabling skill sharing between member bodies to increase efficiency and innovation.
- The organisation welcomed a new Chair and Board member, Dr Patrick O'Connor, ecologist and Associate Professor, University of Adelaide, as well as new Board members Stephanie Cameron, Dr Maxine Cooper and Dr Kaye Rodden. Helen Watkins from WA kindly accepted the role of Chair of the Members Council vacated by Dr Rodden on her move to the Board.
- Throughout the year we continued to work cooperatively with like-minded organisations, including with Landcare Australia Ltd on the 2018 National Landcare Conference and awards, and the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Decade of Landcare.
- We also continued discussions with Landcare Australia Ltd, on behalf of our member bodies, on ways to bring the two organisations closer together without losing the commitment to community landcare which characterises the National Landcare Network.



ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST STRATEGIC PILLARS

The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan is used as the basis for the detailed strategic reporting in this report. While the plan was endorsed by the Board after the end of the 2018-19 financial year, sufficient consideration of the plan had taken place during the course of the year for its framework to underpin this year's reporting. This will also facilitate the future tracking of progress. Not all plan objectives were actioned this year and those are not included.

Strategic Pillar: Representation and Advocacy

Objective: Ensure the voice of community Landcare is influential and trusted in national conversations on natural resource management, sustainability, liveability, community wellbeing, agriculture and the environment.

Action: *Build relationships with national policy makers & decision takers*

- The CEO, and at times the Chair, undertook frequent liaison meetings with the Commonwealth Departments of Agriculture and Water Resources and Environment and Energy, and continued to build constructive relationships with the relevant Commonwealth Ministers and their staff, as well other members of Parliament.
- A new policy platform and background document was developed and advocated during the 2019 election campaign.

Action: *Communicate and promote the value of community Landcare*

- The organisation ran a stand and several sessions at the National Landcare Conference in Brisbane, October 2018.
- Several new publications were produced on the value of community Landcare, as well as new display posters.

Action: *Improve alignment of Government funding opportunities and local community Landcare priorities*

- A project was commenced in 2019 to better align the understandings and expectations of community Landcare groups and Commonwealth funding programs.

Action: *Advocate for increased bilateral Landcare funding commitments*

- We advocated for Landcare funding through the 2019 Commonwealth election campaign and shared our policy documents with key decision makers in the Government and the opposition.



Objective: Maintain and demonstrate representative structures and processes

Action: *Support an active Members Council which effectively represents 'grass roots' Landcare*

- The Board confirmed the Terms of Reference of the Members Council and criteria for membership during the year.
- The Members Council held joint face to face meetings with the Board twice during the year and conducted regular monthly teleconferences with strong attendance.
- The Selections Committee considered all new appointments to the Council.

Action: *Demonstrate effective representative and consultative processes*

- The Members Council is active and engaged. The Council met 12 times during the financial year including two face-to-face meetings with the Board.

Strategic Pillar: Coherence and Efficiency

Objective: Ensure effective internal governance

Action: *Maintain a strong and cohesive Board which fosters respectful and constructive debate*

- The Board came together over the year to act as a united and collegiate voice for community Landcare.
- They met on eleven occasions over the financial year, twice of those face-to-face, and held a two-day strategic workshop.
- Dr Bridgewater completed his term as Chair and Dr Patrick O'Connor was unanimously confirmed as the new Chair. Four new members (including Dr O'Connor) were welcomed to the Board.
- An independent Board review was undertaken by Christine Hawkins, Cinnabar International.

Action: *Ensure governance documents and processes are up to date, embody good practice, and foster engagement between the Board and the Members Council*

- A new Governance Committee was established, and risk was added to the Terms of Reference of the Finance and Audit Committee.

Objective: Ensure the operations of the NLN are effectively resourced

Action: *Support member organisations to participate in the NLN and, as required, build the capacity to do so*

- \$747,500 funding was provided to state and territory peak bodies to enable participation and build capacity.
- Meetings of administrative officers were held to share issues and solutions.



Objective: National institutional reform

Action: *Continue to be the national voice of Landcare*

- Liaison continued with officials from the Departments of Agriculture and Water Resources and Environment and Energy, as well as relevant Commonwealth Government Ministers, their advisers, and other members of Parliament.

Strategic Pillar: Knowledge and Capacity

Objective: Share systems and experience to increase the capacity of state and territory organisations

Action: *Share systems and skills amongst members*

- Experiences and challenges were shared through Executive Officer and Members Council meetings.

Action: *Undertake and promote relevant research and projects to resolve issues of common concern*

- Continued participation in the Landcare Farmer project. Commencement of engagement and alignment projects. New work completed on the value proposition and policy platform.

Strategic Pillar: Collaboration and Partnerships

Objective: Build strategic partnerships with landholders, industry, other NGOs, research agencies, and government

Action: *Increase engagement of groups in government programs, and with NRM organisations*

- An engagement project was commenced and a report on the policy history and context of the Landcare program was commissioned.

Action: *Continue 'NewCO' discussions with Landcare Australia Ltd*

- Negotiations continued with Landcare Australia Ltd on behalf of the State and Territory organisations led by the Chair and CEO with significant Board engagement.



FUTURE PRIORITIES

The highest priority activity for the National Landcare Network over the coming year will continue to be to advocate for community Landcare, to build recognition of the value of the community Landcare movement, and to seek to increase its access to planning processes, programs and funding.

We will seek to build the engagement of community Landcare groups with relevant government programs, and we will provide our advice and representative voice into the development of future programs and policies. We will act as a trusted partner of government as it seeks to achieve environmental outcomes, community resilience and sustainable agriculture.

Our priority activities will be consistent with the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan and will include:

- Increasing alignment and understanding between community Landcare and Government policy makers and decisions takers.
- Advocating the value of the community Landcare model.
- Providing a representative voice to Government on the design and implementation of any new policy and programs where community Landcare can make a significant contribution to achieving objectives.
- Working with our State and Territory member organisations and Landcare Australia Ltd to resolve the future relationships between the organisations.
- Increasing our engagement with Indigenous Landcare and Traditional Owners, working through our state and territory networks.
- Ensuring we remain a representative organisation with an engaged and respected Members Council.
- Improving and updating our internal processes and procedures.

In all of this work will adhere to our core values as set out in the Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

