



National Landcare Network

Communique

A message to the Australian Landcare movement regarding COVID-19

To all members, associates and Stakeholders of the Australian National Landcare movement, we live in extraordinary times. Many areas of our vast nation are still suffering the impacts and aftermath of drought, floods and bushfires.

On top of all this we are now also facing the COVID-19 health crisis and associated business and economic strain.

We have faced, bushfires, drought and floods, and even financial crises before, but we have not in most of our lifetimes faced a health crisis of the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 health crisis is not regionally restricted as other recent environmental challenges are, and is affecting us all either directly or indirectly and will continue to do so in ways we cannot yet foresee.

We must remain informed of government direction in dealing with the spread of COVID-19 and protect ourselves as individuals, our families, friends and associates and our organisations, and our broader communities.

One of the many great strengths of the Landcare movement is that it is community based, community driven and founded in the genuine caring and empathy of its members for those around them in the face of challenging circumstances and uncertainty.

We have seen these characteristics in our members through the drought, floods and bushfires and will see them again throughout 2020.

There are countless sources of excellent advice available to the general public and I add here only a few suggestions to assist Landcarers to manage Landcare-related issues in the coming months;

- **Grants:** Many groups will be in the middle of completing grant-funded projects with State, Federal or other granting agencies. These grants may be for activities which are not currently possible, and many will require reporting and reconciliations which may be difficult to complete due to incomplete actions or data and reporting resource interruptions.

Should you find yourself with project and reporting interruptions, we encourage you to contact your granting body to seek the necessary extensions, exemptions, and instructions to address the situation. It is wise to prepare ahead of the deadlines and granting bodies should be preparing for this to occur.

- **Communication:** At times like these it is important to communicate effectively and openly with each other, especially staying in touch with those in your networks who are isolated and vulnerable. Who might benefit from your contact and support in these times? What are the best ways to communicate for people you are connected to (many of the most isolated and vulnerable people in our communities are not easily contacted through social media). Communication also helps to maintain our sense of community, belonging and unity of purpose. All of these are important to coping and recovery in our networks and communities.
- **Plan and Prepare for recovery:** Opportunities for recovery will come when circumstances change and the next months are a good time for planning and preparing for a positive future.
- **Disruptions:** At all times heed official advice and restrictions in place to manage the current circumstances. Project disruptions may be unavoidable, challenges should be discussed and unnecessary risk avoided.
- **Keep things normal:** Keep operating as normally as possible within the restrictions on gatherings and as advice changes. Try to do keep doing things normally as much as possible, including Landcare activities, but modify behaviours to fit current circumstances.
- **Sources of information:** Use your State or Territory Landcare Peak body to track down key sources of information you will need over the next few months, and visit information sources regularly to make sure to keep up to date. Your Landcare Peak body may be providing regular updates. You can provide feedback and stories for sharing.
- **Do new things** , think about ways in which you can do things differently during this time, share those thoughts and ideas with the NLN and others. Can Landcaring become a virtual activity, does this offer an opportunity to engage with groups we don't usually think of?
- **Reach out**, during this time reach out just a little further beyond those you normally talk too, build new relationships, extend your network to the next level.

The National Landcare Network continues to work towards the objectives of the Australian Landcare movement and will be working to keep Landcare strong in these challenging times.

Regards



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