



The Power of One Voice

Dr. Patrick O'Connor | National Landcare Network

In a time where the focus is steadily shifting to the strength of the community, and the value of community-led change, it is more heartening than ever to see first-hand the power a grass-roots movement can have.

Landcare's long history of social mobilisation and community focus has never been more pointed than in response to the past 12 months. In a span of time where it was not easy to see our way past the natural disasters that have hit our communities hard, compounded by the massive disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, we did. Because our community knew, from 30 years of experience, that human health, the environment, society and the economy are interwoven, and engaging in one common cause can bring multiple benefits to the others.

Despite the restriction of movement, the entire Landcare community evolved and adapted to adhere to societal constraints. Against all odds we are still achieving high quality outcomes for the environment and our communities. We are leading the way in sustainability and environmental protection, and supporting meaningful connections despite the tyranny of distance.

Landcare in Australia is a collective movement, and the National Landcare Network (NLN) is the representative voice of Landcarers at the National level. The voices and needs of our States and Territories need to be heard as they should in any representative process. Because they define and guide where Landcare moves into the future.

We recently celebrated the launch of the Federal Parliamentary Friends of Landcare in Canberra, a big positive step forward as we position Landcare as a key stakeholder in our sustainable future. The voice of community Landcare is being recognised and heard at a national level. Parliamentarians are being informed and engaged on the achievements that our community undertake. Our non-partisan approach has helped us achieve this.

By collaborating with government, and non-government organisations we are helping to facilitate the changes needed for the future of a healthy and diverse network. By working with the members of the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare or through formal partnership arrangements, we are ensuring that we are working together to protect our lands and water and that these principles are at the heart of government and corporate policies, activities and projects.

By mobilising as a movement, by focusing on achieving environmental outcomes through connectivity, we can support a path to recovery. Both for our environment and for our economy. Working with Landcare across Australia offers a huge opportunity to employ an under-utilised workforce in improving the sustainability of our community and agricultural sector, and the environment on which it depends.

Our challenges will not become any less. Climate modelling suggest that extreme weather events will only increase, and it is up to every Australian to modify their lives to ensure that the voice of change is not only heard but actioned.

The challenges of the past 12 months and the COVID-19 crisis have reminded us that only by working together, can we take powerful action to protect our communities and our future while safeguarding our economic well-being and the future of our planet.