



# How to Start a Coastcare Group

[www.coastcare.org.au](http://www.coastcare.org.au)



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## About Coastcare

Australia has some of the best beaches in the world and with our Coastcare brand, we would like to help the Australian community keep it that way. With more than 30,000km of coastline to protect, Coastcare support groups and volunteers who care for our coasts and marine environments.

Coastcare is a community volunteer network of groups and individuals made up of Australians who care passionately about the protection and management of our coastal and marine environments.

Coastcare groups identify local environmental problems and work together with government, local businesses, schools and community groups to achieve practical and sustainable solutions.

Thousands of volunteers from across the country form more than 500 Coastcare groups. Their conservation activities include tackling dune erosion, loss of native coastal plants and animals, stormwater pollution, weeds and managing of human access to sensitive and vulnerable areas.

Landcare Australia supports, promotes and raises funds for Coastcare groups and volunteers across Australia.

## Getting started

Each year more than 1/3 of Australians volunteer their time to the causes they care for. In 2019 that equated to 596.2 million hours contributed through community groups and non-profit organisations. Contributing your volunteer time to an organisation or group as opposed to going it alone, amplifies your impact and generates a larger return on investment to the cause for your time.

Coastcare groups can be formed around location (e.g your local beach), topic (e.g habitat restoration), or campaign (e.g marine litter impact).

Importantly, anyone can start a Coastcare group. Coastcare groups are made up of people who have a common purpose to restore, enhance and protect the coastal and marine environments in their community. If you are ready to get started on forming your new Coastcare group, here are few useful tips on how to get started:

## Key Steps

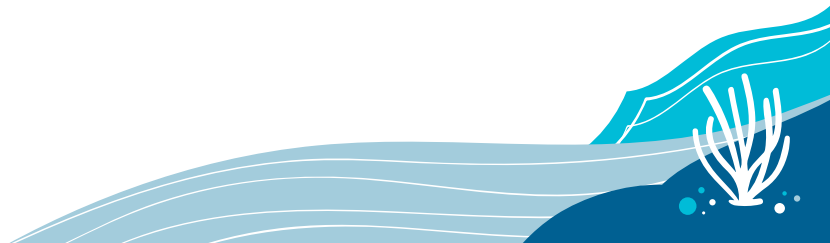
### 1. Check for existing groups

There are thousands of Coastcare volunteers across Australia and more than 500 Coastcare groups that already exist, so before you get started and kick off your new group, be sure to check what groups already exist in your region. Contact your local council, or you can search for a group on the National Landcare Directory here <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/landcare-get-involved/findagroup/>

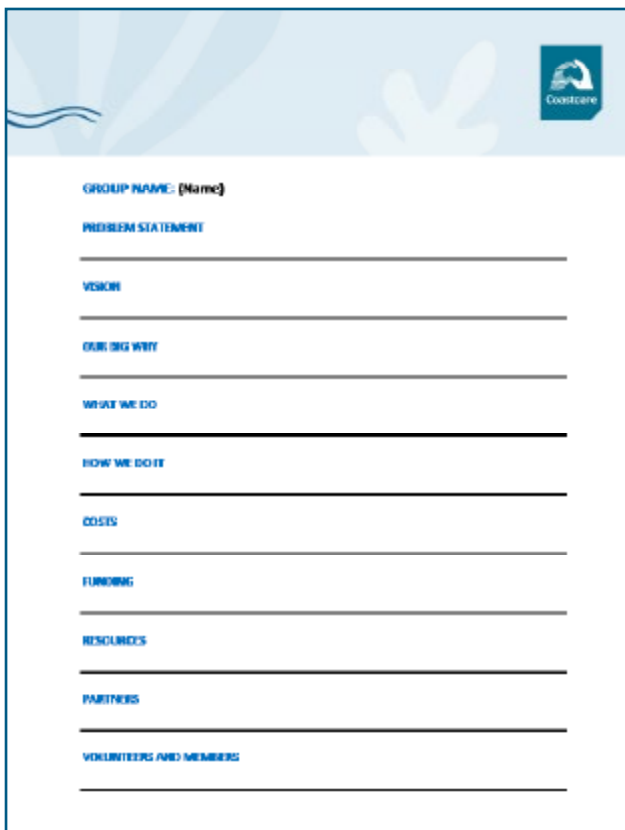
You may discover that a Coastcare group or other environmental community group already exists in your area. It is incredibly valuable to find out who else is operating in your area and reach out to ensure you are linking in with existing groups and contributing to coordinated local efforts. They can assist with useful information about local operations, environmental issues and become a precious partner.

### 2. Start fleshing out your ideas

Getting some initial thoughts down on paper will assist you to communicate your ideas to others and get them involved. It also helps to have a foundation from which to speak to local authorities such as local government or a local Landcare Facilitator or Coordinator. It can be a tricky line to discover how much planning you should do before getting others involved. On one hand, it's important to get your thoughts in order to help you clearly communicate and persuade others to come along on the journey. On the other hand, it is important to not get too attached to the details, as it is vital to engage people and allow others to input and feel a part of the group and its formation.



The **Community Group Canvas** is a template that will help you think through your initial ideas. Prior to a community meeting, the key areas to think through your Problem Statement (the environmental issue you are trying to solve) and the Our Big Why (your reason for coming together) as these will assist you to communicate the need to your audience and involve Partners (as this will assist you with understanding who else to invite).

The image shows a 'Community Group Canvas' template. It features a header with a blue background, a sun icon, and a 'Coastcare' logo. Below the header, there are several sections, each with a label and a horizontal line for input: 'GROUP NAME: (Name)', 'PROBLEM STATEMENT', 'VISION', 'OUR BIG WHY', 'WHAT WE DO', 'HOW WE DO IT', 'GOALS', 'FUNDING', 'RESOURCES', 'PARTNERS', and 'VOLUNTEERS (AND) MEMBERS'.

GROUP NAME: (Name)
PROBLEM STATEMENT
VISION
OUR BIG WHY
WHAT WE DO
HOW WE DO IT
GOALS
FUNDING
RESOURCES
PARTNERS
VOLUNTEERS (AND) MEMBERS

### 3. Gather support and assemble a core group

Reach out to your community broadly to garner support for your new group. Assembling a group of individuals to guide the group in its initial stages has many advantages including:

#### Credibility

When your group is diverse and representative of your community, it is more likely that the group will get off the ground and have enthusiastic support. Look to involve different community organisations, people with different interests and cultural backgrounds, Traditional Owners, local government, Landcare facilitators or Coordinators, and government agencies like natural resource management agencies and catchment management authorities, local businesses and schools.

#### More ideas

While it can be more difficult to take on board the many ideas of others, the end product will always be more interesting and effective than if you had approached it alone.

#### Opportunity to educate the public about your issue

The more involvement you get from the community in the initial stages, the more advocates you will have spreading the word.

#### Membership, support and fundraising

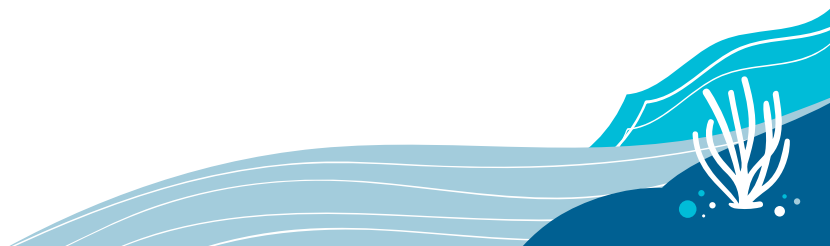
Each of the people you get involved will know hundreds of other people, and the connections you make in these early stages will make a huge difference to how quickly you can get your group off the ground.

#### Gather relevant experience

It is important to engage a group that includes the relevant stakeholders and key supporters as well as people with specific knowledge in the issue.

One of the best ways to kick off a new group is to hold a community meeting. Invite people to participate and find the balance of social, informative and creative. Present your planning template and gather the input of others. Using post it notes to add ideas to the planning template can be an effective way to capture input and be able to move things around easily. Treat it like a brainstorm session, where all ideas are captured and then refined by a steering committee or your core group at a later stage.

An alternative to a community meeting could be using social media (Facebook groups work well for this), existing local networks, and surveys to gather input and establish interest.



#### 4. To formalise or not to formalise

When it comes to formalising your group and attending to legalities, there are many options to consider at varying degrees of complexity, including deciding on a legal structure, electing a committee of management or executive committee, insurance requirements, Occupational Health and Safety, formalising membership processes, setting up a bank account or obtaining an ABN.

These issues broadly fall under the governance of your group and they are important aspects that need to be decided and addressed. There are many benefits to formalising aspects of your group, however not all are essential right away and particularly in the early stages you may wish to keep it fairly simple. In the very first stages you may wish to elect a committee who can gradually assess next steps as they become important for things like gaining funding, insurance and being able to work effectively with authorities. Talk to your local Landcare peak body in your state or territory for information on becoming a member and how they can support your group's activities.

#### 5. Connect with others who can support you

Connect with the people in your community who can help you get started and bring your ideas to life:

- Local government, water, natural resources or catchment management authorities
- Local Landcare facilitator or coordinator
- Landcare State and Territory peak body in your region

Contact other environmental groups in your area, you can find here using the National Landcare Directory on the Landcare Australia website.

#### 6. Connect with Coastcare

Register your new group with Landcare Australia's National Landcare Directory and receive a Coastcare logo for your group: <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/nld-form/>

Keep connected with Coastcare and access resources, campaigns, case studies with ideas for your group, and grants opportunities, visit the Coastcare website and subscribe to COASTCARER newsletter here:

<https://landcareaustralia.org.au/coastcare/>

Share your Coastcare story online and submit your stories, video and photos to the COASTCARER newsletter or on Landcare Australia's social media channels.

Explore Landcarer – there is a Coastcare community network on this page for people just like you <https://www.landcarer.com.au/>

This Coastcare resource has been developed by [The Forever Agenda](#) for Landcare Australia. The Forever Agenda have a great suite of training, facilitation and support solutions for community groups. You can read more about their great work here [www.theforeveragenda.com.au](http://www.theforeveragenda.com.au)

