



MAY 2021

# LANDCARE IN FOCUS



A Kalari Wiradjuri woman from the ACT, Dhani Gilbert is a nominee in the 2021 National Landcare Awards and the closing speaker for the 2021 National Landcare Conference



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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\*Due to space restrictions some article content may be edited. We also cannot guarantee that all submissions will be published.

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Cover Photo: Dhani Gilbert by photographer Dean Bradley. Image part of Country Road's proud partnership with Landcare Australia to support the regeneration of Australian farmlands with a focus on increasing biodiversity in cotton growing regions

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## Parliamentary Friends of Landcare

The National Landcare Network and Landcare Australia thank Co-chairs Senator Davey and Senator Ciccone for their leadership in establishing the national Parliamentary Friends of Landcare. This group is an opportunity for Members of Parliament to recognise the value of Landcare in communities across Australia. Drought, bushfires, floods and Covid-19 have made more difficult and critical the task of the Landcare movement to restoring health to our landscape and providing for a long term sustainable future. A cohesive Landcare movement is now more important than ever to the future of our natural assets and people.



Pictured L-R: Doug Humann AM, Chair Landcare Australia; Senator Davey; Senator Ciccone; Dr. Patrick O'Connor, Chair National Landcare Network.



## LANDCARE CONTINUES TO BREAK NEW GROUND

**HON DAVID LITTLEPROUD MP,  
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, DROUGHT AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

### FLOODS

I would firstly like to acknowledge the recent severe storms and floods, which have presented our communities with increased challenges.

To assist, disaster recovery assistance was made available in the Armidale, Bellingen, Central Coast, Cessnock City, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour City, Dungog, Kempsey, Lake Macquarie, Maitland City, Mid-Coast, Nambucca Valley, Newcastle City, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Port Stephens, and Tenterfield local government areas from 10 March 2021 onwards.

Assistance is being provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DREA).

### AMONGST FRIENDS

Landcare continues to break new ground, with the very first Parliamentary Friends of Landcare event on 16 March 2021 a celebration of the invaluable role landcarers play in building resilient, productive landscapes and communities.

The establishment of the friends group is recognition of the strong parliamentary support for Landcare and the important and inspiring work its thousands of volunteers undertake across Australia.

It was a great opportunity for me to meet with members of the Landcare community and to reaffirm the

Australian Government's support of their efforts.

Cultivating ties between parliamentarians and our landcarers builds an understanding through all levels of our community and strengthens the Landcare movement for the future.

Ensuring the collective voices of grassroots Landcare groups are heard at a national level is also critical if we are to grow sustainable agriculture and protect our biodiversity.

### RALF RESILIENCE

A big shout out to our Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators (RALFs) who have shown tremendous resilience and flexibility through drought, floods, fires and now COVID-19.

As part of the National Landcare Program, RALFs are working to build the future of sustainable agriculture in Australia.

We currently have 70 RALFs based across Australia. Their role is unique, they are out in the community assisting stakeholders and are the key contacts for landcarers to learn about sustainable agriculture.

Our RALFs have responded to the challenges of the pandemic, delivering online workshops and ensuring their stakeholders continue to receive information, whether via phone, email, newsletters, or podcasts.

An example of this is the successful webinar series by Perth NRM [HYPERLINK "http://www.perthnrm.com/resource/videos/"](http://www.perthnrm.com/resource/videos/) www.perthnrm.com/resource/videos/ developed by RALFs in the Swan region, which are hosted in collaboration with farmers, scientists and NGOs working on advanced farming practices and agricultural sustainability.

Thank you to the RALFs for continuing to support your stakeholders and agriculture communities.

### SMART FARMING

I am excited by the innovative ideas put forward by the successful applicants in the latest round of the Australian Government's Smart Farms Small Grants program.

In all, 84 projects, aimed at boosting farmers' agricultural productivity and natural resource management, have been awarded funding.

One such project, being delivered by Birchip Cropping Group, is investigating the use of multispecies cover crops in low rainfall broadacre mixed farming.

The project will focus on providing outcomes benefiting mixed farming systems, where livestock can supplement a winter cash crop operation.

Using local knowledge, the project is helping farmers make better, more cost-effective crop management decisions that optimise soil health.

Another project being delivered by Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Incorporated will provide farmers with a pathway to biologically improving soil health by building a connected network of livestock operations that will, in turn, provide corridors where beetles can follow dung across the region.

Dung beetles currently only exist in small isolated and scattered populations in the Wheatbelt so the project will also increase the numbers of beetles available in the area. These are just two examples of how grower groups, Landcare groups and other organisations are helping farmers to think outside the box and make a real impact on the ground.

The Smart Farms program is the key agriculture portfolio initiative under phase two of the \$1.1 billion National Landcare Program.

### NATIONAL LANDCARE CONFERENCE

The National Landcare Conference will be held on 4-6 August 2021 at the International Convention Centre in Sydney. There will be multiple events planned as part of the conference including the National Landcare Awards Gala Dinner and the National Landcare Youth Summit.

This year more than ever, the conference provides an opportunity to come together and celebrate the outstanding work underway across Australia.



## NATIONAL LANDCARE CONFERENCE WILL CELEBRATE EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH IN THE FACE OF UNPRECEDENTED ADVERSITY

**DR SHANE NORRISH,  
CEO LANDCARE AUSTRALIA**

Despite the challenges presented by these uncertain times, the Landcare community has evolved and successfully adapted in extraordinary ways. When on-ground projects in local areas were temporarily halted, and activities postponed, Landcarers successfully embraced a new normal, preparing and developing future plans through Zoom meetings and distanced communication. And in the true spirit of Landcare, the community provided support and solidarity to those who needed it the most.

So at this year's National Landcare Conference, we want to honour the passionate Landcare groups and volunteers who again and again, demonstrate extraordinary strength in the face of unprecedented adversity.

Rescheduled from last year, the largest knowledge sharing event for the landcare community will be an inspiring opportunity to reflect on the incredible work done, and look towards the important work ahead. Together with the National Landcare Network and State and Territory Landcare organisations, we will celebrate an enduring movement

that continues to flourish and grow in building resilience to climate change, drought and disaster events.

This comes in the wake of the celebrated launch of the National Parliamentary Friends of Landcare in March. A significant acknowledgement of Landcare's continuing positive impact, the Parliamentary Friends initiative demonstrates the bipartisan support for Landcare and the invaluable role landcarers play in caring for our country's vital natural assets. Thank you to Co-chairs, New South Wales Senator Perin Davey and Victorian Senator

Raff Ciccone, and their parliamentary colleagues for championing the work of Landcare, which is now more important than ever.

In recent years, Australia has suffered the devastating impacts of a changing climate, natural disasters and now a global health crisis. However, grassroots Landcare groups and networks have shown that by working together, exploring innovations and sharing knowledge, the movement remains at the heart of our country's efforts to build resilient communities and productive, biodiverse landscapes.

## PRODUCERS SOAK UP TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR ON-FARM BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

As part of the Regional Land Partnerships program, the 'Managing vegetation on farm and targeting pollinators and farm resilience' project has engaged dozens of farmers in the South West of Western Australia to learn how Cultural Land Management and Traditional Ecological Knowledge can enhance biodiversity and increase pollination of crops on-farm.

In February this year, nineteen producers gathered at Ridgewood farm in Balingup, where Andrew and Nuala Scott produce avocados and olives, for a unique workshop. Farmers had the opportunity to hear from Undalup Association's Zac Webb, a Wadandi-Pibulmun man with continuous connection to country. Zac creates strategies for restoring biodiversity, holds a Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management and trained internationally with First Nation's People in natural resource management.

As part of the five-year project, the Scotts have revegetated areas along a creek line with local vegetation chosen to provide continuous food and shelter for pollinators and beneficial insects. Vegetation decisions at Ridgewood farm are based on South West Catchments Council's (SWCC) seasonal flowering calendar, which has had great uptake and application from local farmers.

During the workshop, Zac shared his knowledge on seasonal variations in flowering and fruiting times and helped develop traditional fire management options to protect biodiversity on-farm. A walk through the remnant vegetation on the property highlighted several understorey native species that were still present despite previous grazing history. The area was also previously logged and requires targeted management to regenerate. Zac discussed how small mosaic fires in the cool of the late afternoon in autumn could assist with the regeneration of native plant species, and suggested undertaking trial burns as an initial step, as these would help determine how the bush reacts to fire and ensure that the fires remain controlled.

Farmers found the workshop invaluable as increasing biodiversity on-farm provides a range of ecosystem services, the key one sought in this project being increased pollination for food production.

**To learn more about this project visit the SWCC website or contact the project manager, Wendy Wilkins, at [wendy.wilkins@swccnrm.org.au](mailto:wendy.wilkins@swccnrm.org.au). This project is supported by South West Catchments Council, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.**



OceanWatch Master Fisherman graduation held as part of the Hawkesbury River Community Seafood Festival Feb 2020. Image Supplied

## CARING FOR OUR COAST

As an island nation, Australia will always have a special connection to the ocean. Our home is a vast land of beaches, coastline, rivers and estuaries and our relationship with our waterways is more important than ever.

Initiatives are happening all over the continent to ensure our environment has a sustainable future. While our Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators have been supporting farmers, landholders and community groups to adopt new and innovative sustainable agriculture practices, of equal importance is how we protect our shores, coasts and waterways.

OceanWatch Australia, the National Marine NRM organisation, is a not-for-profit focusing on exactly that, working to advance sustainability in the Australian Seafood industry. As part of the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, OceanWatch was granted \$1.5 million to implement the 'WetFEET' project which aims to assist inshore fishers with embedding best practice environmental stewardship into all aspects of their work. OceanWatch was also granted \$100,000 under the Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Program to undertake a bushfire impact reduction project that mitigates the impacts of bushfires on marine habitats.

One initiative currently being delivered is the Master Fisherman Program. This program provides formal training and assessment for professional fishers, providing valuable knowledge and improved fishing techniques. The program also provides certification in environmentally sustainable work practices through the seafood industry training package and formal recognition of successful participation by OceanWatch.

With 190 fishers and 40 oyster farmers in training, the Master Fisherman Program is a fantastic example of how the seafood industry can remain strong while also caring for the environment that sustains our marine life.

OceanWatch works closely with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment as well as an array of coastal Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators across Australia to align efforts on catchment management and habitat issues.

**For more information visit the OceanWatch website at [oceanwatchmasterfisherman.org.au](http://oceanwatchmasterfisherman.org.au) or contact [comms@oceanwatch.org.au](mailto:comms@oceanwatch.org.au)**



A birds eye view up and down the Woolamai Hills at Karl and Rachael Russo's property taken in 2020, three years after the first large scale plantings began. Image Supplied

## REGENERATING A FOREST IN THE WOOLAMAI HILLS

HOLLY GURLING (BASS COAST LANDCARE NETWORK)

What does it take to restore bald, cleared hills to biodiverse, forested corridors? One family wanted to know.

Rachel and Karl Russo live on a 100-acre property in the Woolamai Hills. Facing declining water quality, soil degradation and landslips, they started imagining what the hills would have looked like before the forest was cleared to build Melbourne; clear waterfalls and gullies covered by a dynamic, lowland forest ecosystem. Inspired to do something,

they contacted David Bateman, General Executive Manager of Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) for support. Karl said to Dave: "We want to revegetate this whole gully, this whole hill, as much as we can!"

The BCLN, Bass Coast Shire Council (BCSC) and others, were working on the Bass Coast Biolinks Program. This was excellent timing. As it turned out, the Russo's Project was set to become one of the largest and most successful within the program.

Many hands battled the slopes to plant over 74,000 plants between 2017-2020. Over 400 year-9's from Wonthaggi Secondary College were fuelled by hundreds of sausages cooked by Rotary Club volunteers. Gippsland Intrepid Landcare facilitated two 'plant and dance' events, while BCSC Staff and Councillors, Melbourne Water Staff, a Green Army team, and many more participated.

After three years, change is apparent. After rain, the once muddy and silty

waterfall at the end of the gully is now clear. The soil on the steep slopes is being held together. Water quality is improving. This patch of the Woolamai Hills is flourishing into a beautiful area for wildlife and Indigenous plant species.

**This project is supported by BCSC Bass Coast Biolinks Program, Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Program, Australian Federal Government's 20 Million Trees Program and The Victorian Landcare Grants.**



Landholder Colin Seis and Watershed Landcare Group conducted a paddock walk to showcase their findings for multispecies cropping. Image Supplied

## TRIAL PROJECT SHOWS BENEFITS OF MULTISPECIES PASTURE CROPPING

Cold temperatures during the winter months in areas like New South Wales' Central West, affect pasture growth and can result

in a winter-feed gap. To help alleviate this, as part of their community focused Australian Good Meat initiative, Meat & Livestock Australia

(MLA) in partnership with Landcare Australia, awarded the Watershed Landcare Group a MLA Landcare Excellence in Sustainable Farming Grant.

The grant funding provided resources and capacity for the Landcare group to support pioneering farmer, Colin Seis, to conduct a trial project on Winoma, his 840-hectare property of restored native pasture consisting of 50 native grassland species. The Gulgong area property in New South Wales has been farmed by Colin's family since the 1860s. He runs 4000 merino sheep for wool, merino lamb and mutton production.

The trial was built on growing evidence from Australia and the US that shows multispecies crops and pasture diversity can increase soil carbon, nutrient cycling and improve soil biology and farm ecosystems.

The demonstration site was set up in a 12.5 ha paddock of native grassland, subdivided to provide two grazing trial plots; 6 ha multi-species and 6.5 ha single species (barley).

A multispecies mix forage crop was zero-tilled (pasture cropped) into a dormant native grassland in March 2020. The mix of six species in the multispecies crop (barley, field pea, faba bean, Winfred forage brassica, tillage radish and turnip)

with its diverse mix of plant roots and flowering plants aims to build soil carbon and biology that cycles nutrients.

An adjacent area (paddock division) was sown to a single species (barley) fodder crop as a comparison. The project and control paddocks were used to fatten and finish merino lambs from May to July, with weight increases in the sheep periodically monitored over the course of the trial.

Data was collected to compare the multispecies pasture crop and the barley crop. Animal performance (weight gain) and pasture biomass were periodically monitored during the grazing trial. Changes in soil carbon, structure, chemistry and grassland species were monitored pre-sowing and post-grazing.

Initial results show promising improvement in groundcover and soil structure. Soil analysis results from multispecies and barley grazing plots show substantial (more than 20 per cent) changes in some parameters between the start and end of the trial.

Animal performance results (weight gain) from the trial are encouraging as perceived reduction in livestock performance is often a hindrance to the uptake of sustainable agriculture practices.



Zac Webb conveying Traditional Ecological Knowledge to farmers on managing biodiversity on-farm. Image Supplied



The elusive spotted-tail quoll is living in the City of Logan. Credit: Bruce Thomson

## QUOLL ON THE COMEBACK

The search has taken more than a decade, but the existence of the rare native spotted-tailed quoll has been confirmed in City of Logan.

Conclusive evidence of the animal has been uncovered in Undullah in the city's west.

A scat (faeces) was collected on a privately-owned property during a Logan City Council flora and fauna survey. The sample was sent to an independent laboratory for analysis and results confirmed the sample was from a spotted-tailed quoll.

It contained scientifically matched hair from the marsupial, which is listed as vulnerable under Queensland's Nature Conservation Act.

The last confirmed evidence of a quoll in City of Logan was a deceased male found on the side of the Mt Lindesay Highway in 2005.

The confirmation that quolls still exist in City of Logan is the second major environmental discovery in the region in recent years.

In 2019, eDNA (environmental DNA) was used to confirm the existence of the platypus in the upper reaches of the Albert River.

Environment Chair, Deputy Mayor Jon Raven, said confirmation that quoll still call City of Logan home was

another exciting result for Council's commitment to preserving wildlife and their habitats.

"There have many been many possible sightings of this elusive animal over the years, but this is the first hard evidence that has been found," Cr Raven said.

"This is proof of the diversity that exists in Logan's natural environments and underlines why Council is working so hard to protect and preserve our wildlife habitats."

The spotted-tailed quoll is a carnivorous marsupial similar in size to a cat, with ginger fur, white spots and a pouch.

They are mostly nocturnal and can roam up to six kilometres from their den for food. They use faeces to mark their territory.

Council will also work with the property owners where the quoll scat was found to help improve the conservation value of the land.

Council's Environmental Conservation Partnerships program provides opportunities for landholders to have expert flora and fauna surveys conducted on their properties.

**Watch a video on quoll detection dogs in action on Logan City Council's YouTube channel**

## EMBRACE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ON YOUR LAND

Owners Jane and David Vincent along with their son Sam are Landcare Award winners and long-time contributors to the movement. They have been farming at Gollion in Sutton on the NSW/ACT border for 37 years.

During that time they've introduced regenerative practices to the property where they run angus cattle and are also moving into black genoa figs – Sam's new venture.

In recent years the family engaged with Ngunawal and other Aboriginal people in a bid to see if there were any significant Aboriginal sites on their farm. An ochre quarry was discovered which holds significant meaning for the local Aboriginal community.

In partnership with the local Aboriginal community, the family decided to seek NSW Government recognition for the site as an Aboriginal Place, one of very few on private land in NSW.

"Aboriginal cultural heritage isn't something in the ancient past, it isn't history, it's something ongoing and it has really enriched and enhanced our love and understanding of this landscape," Sam said.

Ngunawal Elder Wally Bell has been involved in the process since the beginning and has led tours of the site, facilitated by the Yass Area Network Landcare Group and Ginninderra Catchment Group.

"We really respect the opportunity that is given to us by the Vincent family to acknowledge our culture on their country," he said.

According to Jane Vincent, farmers shouldn't fear losing property if they engage with local Aboriginal community and the cultural heritage on their land.

"It's something to be welcomed, not only can you then think about the ancient history on your property, you can also share it with the local Indigenous mobs who really can enjoy coming to that place and connecting with their heritage there", Jane said.

**You can see a video about the Vincents here [vimeo.com/showcase/8173600](https://vimeo.com/showcase/8173600) or on the Landcare ACT Facebook page which is part of a series funded by the Commonwealth Government Landcare Programme Smart Farms initiative.**



Ngunawal Traditional Custodian Uncle Wally Bell (left) and landowner Sam Vincent (right) with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage sign identifying the ochre quarry as an Aboriginal Place. Image Supplied

### DERRAWA DHAURA Aboriginal Place

Declared 17th of August 2018

The declaration of Derrawa Dhaura as an Aboriginal Place is in recognition of the cultural, historical and spiritual significance of the site to the local Aboriginal people.

This area is gazetted and protected under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974).

Penalties apply for any unauthorised activity or damage to this area.

NSW Office of Environment & Heritage



Lilly from Star of the Sea Ocean Grove who took part in the Coastcare Mentorship Program. Image Supplied

## HOW CHALLENGING TIMES LED TO ONLINE CONNECTIONS FOR BELLARINE CATCHMENT NETWORK

Like so many similar organisations, work for the team at Victoria's Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN) changed hugely last year. They were forced to think about how they could continue to have an impact when face-to-face contact with groups, schools and local communities they relied on so heavily, simply couldn't happen.

Regular meetings were brought online. Working bees were suspended. School programs were put on hold.

Naomi Wells, Communications and Engagement Coordinator with BCN, had already been doing some work on the online community platform, Landcarer.

She had set up a BCN page on the platform, and was regularly posting stories and updates about the

organisation's activities. She was connecting with like-minded people and groups, and could see value in the peer-to-peer connection and learning opportunities the platform offered.

Naomi decided to bring the Coastcare Mentorship Program she was due to run with local students online – onto Landcarer.

She set up a 'secret' project on the platform, and began sharing videos, lessons and resources. The group settings ensured that only those invited by Naomi could access it, and the uptake and engagement was fantastic.

When students couldn't attend school and couldn't access the program, Landcarer helped open up a whole new, and collaborative, way of learning.

"The creation of the online Coastcare Mentorship Program has been such a great way of managing an educational program," Naomi shared.

"Teachers and parents used the platform to engage with documents, videos and photos they couldn't access elsewhere, and we were still able to run the program we were so invested in.

She added: "Following that I was able to establish and moderate a national online Coastcare group on Landcarer. It's been such a great way of encouraging people to join an online community for like-minded people, access resources and share knowledge in a dedicated, safe space."

**“ While 2020 certainly threw up a whole new set of challenges, the benefits of a safe and dedicated online community platform is certainly something I can see us continuing to take advantage of ”**

**The Coastcare Mentorship Program is funded by the Federal Government Communities Environment Program [landcarer.com.au](https://landcarer.com.au)**



The day included a site visit to Wayne Pech's farm which allowed participants to see and hear about the initial progress of a local carbon project. Image Supplied

## WALN TALKS CARBON FARMING AT FIRST REGIONAL FORUM FOR 2021

KYLIE PAYNE

March saw WA Landcare Network host their first Regional Forum of 2021 in Cranbrook, facilitated by Freya Spencer and the team at Gillamii - The Gillamii Centre.

Fifty people participated in the Carbon Farming forum including Landcare facilitators, farmers and landholders, TAFE students, NRM groups, government officers, carbon industry representatives and interested members of the community.

Main presenter Jen West (Carbon West) provided an overview of the industry and answered a plethora of

questions. Keith Bradby (Gondwana Link), Dustin McCreery (Chatfields Nursery), and Justin Jonson (Threshold Environmental) presented different aspects of the carbon picture including opportunities and issues to consider.

The day included a site visit to Wayne Pech's farm which allowed participants to see and hear about the initial progress of a local carbon project with service providers Harley Lacy (Outback Carbon) and Dr Geoff Woodall on site.

It was a memorable trip to the farm with a torrential downpour en route and a thunderstorm on arrival. Local

were excited to see the rain and it only increased the enjoyment.

Next steps identified included the need for a matrix of information on carbon industry service providers in WA as well as a summary of carbon footprint tools. The takeaway message for community landcare groups is that engagement in carbon farming can lead to a significant increase in the ability to get biodiversity plantings in the ground for multiple benefits.

Gillamii has shown the way, facilitating involvement of seven farmers and partnering with Threshold

Environmental to obtain quality biodiversity outcomes. More information and resources to support community landcare groups to help facilitate meaningful carbon farming projects is needed, this could be funded through arrangement with carbon service providers.

**If you are interested in hosting or attending a carbon forum in your area or if you'd like to attend a follow-on workshop, contact the WA Landcare Network on: [enquiries@landcarewa.org.au](mailto:enquiries@landcarewa.org.au)**

# Rare opportunity

## FOR LANDCARERS TO COME TOGETHER



Landcarers from across the country will gather this August to share knowledge, ideas and plans for the future – as part of the 2021 National Landcare Conference.

Rescheduled from last year, the largest knowledge sharing event for the landcare community will take place from Wednesday 4 to Friday 6 August at Sydney's International Convention Centre, with opportunities for delegates who can't be there in person to attend online – as all sessions will be livestreamed and recorded.

Returning as MC for the event, Costa Georgiadis, Junior Landcare ambassador, is excited to be part of this key opportunity for the Landcare

community to come together and learn from one other.

"The National Landcare Conference is a timely opportunity for the Landcare community to come together and share ideas, brainstorm and present their experiences in an inspiring forum," he said.

"The national landcare community brings together a wealth of knowledge that has never been more important as we plan for the future during uncertain times. It's an honour to MC the conference and I look forward to meeting all the speakers and delegates."

As well as the inaugural National Landcare Youth Conference, the first day of the event will see local groups and

organisations showcasing a number of projects in the Greater Sydney region through a series of field trips. From beaches to the bush, and from mountains to farms, the variety of field trips is sure to offer something for everyone.

Gundungurra man, David King will show visitors the Blue Mountains region from an Aboriginal perspective including the opportunity to meet with members of Garguree Swampcare and a Welcome to Country at beautiful Echo Point.

Other excursions feature exploration of the coastal lagoons of the Northern Beaches, a ferry trip on the Hawkesbury River where Floating Landcare volunteers work, and an agricultural journey to some of the most fertile and productive farms in the Sydney region.

The second and third days of the event will see delegates spoil for choice with a huge variety of networking opportunities, keynote speakers and concurrent sessions.

Speakers from the Landcare community will then join government representatives and academics in 40 sessions across the four conference streams: Sustainable Agriculture; Environment and Climate Change; Community Partnerships in Action; and Landcare Impact.

A hugely diverse range of topics will be presented including sessions on empowering rural women, the value of on-farm biodiversity, meeting the challenges of climate change, connecting through online communities, Landcare

and Aboriginal cultural heritage and much more.

Special guest speakers participating include ANU scientist and academic Professor David Lindenmayer, while Stacey Vogel from the Cotton Research Development Corporation will discuss their ambitious Cotton Landcare Tech-Innovations 2021 being delivered over three years from 2019-2021.

Delegates will also have the opportunity to attend panel discussions on a variety of topics sure to be of interest to so many involved in Landcare.

Pip Job from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and former CEO for Little River Landcare will facilitate a panel on Wellbeing and Mental Health.

Elsewhere Peter Pigott from Resilience NSW will facilitate a panel on Bushfire Recovery and Resilience, while Farmers for Climate Action's Lucinda Corrigan will participate in a panel on Landcare Farming and Cultural Land Management.

A highlight of the National Landcare Conference program is the 2021 National Landcare Awards Gala Dinner, taking place on 5 August. An excellent opportunity for Landcarers to come together, the event will play host to 69 finalists from the 2019 State & Territory Landcare Awards. Winners of nine National Landcare Awards categories will be announced, as well the winner of the Bob Hawke Landcare Award and the winner of the General Jeffery Soil Health Award.

Due to COVID-19, the 2021 National Landcare Conference and 2021 National Landcare Awards will be hybrid events with both in-person and online delegate options. Landcare Australia is working with the venue to ensure that the 2021 National Landcare Conference and 2021 National Landcare Awards are safe events for delegates, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors.

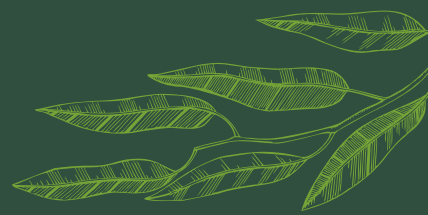
The Landcare Conference and Awards are biannual events. This year's National Landcare Conference and National Landcare Awards were originally scheduled to take place in 2020. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 both events are being held in 2021. Please note that we are also running the 2021 State and Territory Landcare Awards this year

with the finalists going forward to be nominees at the 2022 National Landcare Awards, an event that will be held as part of the 2022 National Landcare Conference.

To check out the full 2021 National Landcare Conference program and info on registering to attend either in-person or online, visit [nationallandcareconference.org.au](http://nationallandcareconference.org.au)



Landcare legend Pam Robinson is pictured recently at Parliament House in Canberra where the very first National Landcare Awards took place in 1991. The 2021 National Landcare Awards will celebrate its 30th anniversary with award nominees, landcare volunteers and coordinators, conference speakers and sponsors, and Landcare Australia corporate and philanthropic partners



The largest knowledge sharing event for the Landcare community will take place from Wednesday 4 to Friday 6 August at Sydney's International Convention Centre. You can attend in person or register to watch online



Returning as MC for the event, Costa Georgiadis, Junior Landcare ambassador, is excited to be part of this key opportunity for the Landcare community to come together



[Top-bottom] Stacey Vogel from the Cotton Research Development Corporation will discuss ambitious Cotton Landcare Tech-Innovations while ANU scientist and academic Prof David Lindenmayer will also be a special guest speaker.



Pip Job from the NSW Department of Primary Industries will facilitate a panel on Wellbeing and Mental Health



[Top-bottom] Peter Pigott from Resilience NSW will facilitate a panel on Bushfire Recovery and Resilience and Farmers for Climate Action's Lucinda Corrigan will participate in a panel on Landcare Farming



At least 70 per cent of the feral pig population must be removed annually, over a broad geographical area, to suppress the growth potential of the population and prevent its rapid recovery. Credit: Central West Local Land Services, NSW

## WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE FERAL PIG IMPACTS

The National Feral Pig Action Plan is the first national framework developed to reduce impacts feral pigs create across Australia's environmental, agricultural, cultural and social assets. This plan, informed by extensive consultations with the wide range of stakeholders affected by feral pigs, will be used to align local, regional and state/territory management plans. It is focused on supporting land managers with enhancing their effectiveness in applying best practice management techniques in an integrated and adaptive way over the long-term, encouraging land managers to work together and

delivering tools, technologies, resources and training.

It is being supported through a 3.5 year program funded by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and managed by Australian Pork Limited, to facilitate the national coordination of feral pig management, surveillance and control activities, engage with stakeholders, drive effective investment and raise awareness.

The plan's vision is to actively suppress, or eradicate (where feasible), feral pig populations to reduce their impacts on Australia's environment, \$65 billion

agricultural sector, cultural sites and social assets.

Feral pig management can be challenging, costly and time consuming. At least 70 per cent of the population must be removed annually, over a broad geographical area, to suppress the growth potential of the population and prevent its rapid recovery. This reflects the high reproductive rate of feral pigs (second only to rabbits), their intelligence and adaptiveness to survive in a wide range of habitats.

An information hub has been established on our website for everyone to access

details on the many on-ground feral pig management programs being conducted - please get in touch to discuss and to include your group's details.

This call to action is core business for Landcare and provides a significant opportunity to deliver benefits to communities, soil, water and biodiversity health.

**More information about the National Feral Pig Action Plan can be found at [feralpigs.com.au](http://feralpigs.com.au)**

**For more information on control methods for feral pigs, see [pestsmart.org.au](http://pestsmart.org.au)**



Over 50 years of land management, Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative has achieved the preservation of an area that is now considered of exceptional local and regional biodiversity. Image Supplied

## CELEBRATING A LEGACY

**KARYN KAMMINGA**, Secretary, Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative and Member of the Bend of Islands Landcare Group and the Nillumbik Landcare Network.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative by a group of people in 1971 who wanted to prove that it was possible to live in the bush and protect it at the same time. It was a new idea that we called "residential conservation" and was based on co-operation to care for the land. We have 24 houses along three access tracks, there are no fences and more than 90 per cent of our property is devoted solely to the conservation of the predominantly Box-Ironbark forest.

In the early years, our land management was concentrated on the removal of over two thousand pine trees, followed by eradicating large groves of Boneseed. We now have a Flora Management Strategy and we recently successfully completed a five-year project to eradicate the perennial Panic Veldt-grass (*Ehrharta erecta*) which can displace a whole range of different species, like orchids, and overtake the ground cover.

As part of our aim to increase biodiversity, we have been planting locally rare and threatened flora such as Christmas Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia porcata*); Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria*

*spinosa*) and Large-leaf Bush-pea (*Pultenaea daphnoides*) among others. We've recorded 58 different orchids on the property, including rare species, and we're currently involved in the reintroduction of the Wine-lipped Spider Orchid (*Caladenia oenochila*) as part of the Shire of Nillumbik's 'Threatened Orchid Reintroduction Program.

At last count, we have 166 species of native vertebrate fauna recorded on the property, including the endangered Brush-tailed Phascogale and the Powerful Owl. We've also seen the Lyrebird return to the area after an absence of 38 years due to the bushfires in 1962.

Over 50 years of co-operative land management we've achieved the preservation of an area that is now considered of exceptional local and regional biodiversity. This has benefitted both the animals that inhabit the forest and our residents that enjoy living close to nature and belonging to a community with strong conservation and environmental values.

[roundthebend.org.au](http://roundthebend.org.au)



Riparian zone choked with exotic flora - Before photo 2019

## WHAT A DIFFERENCE TWO YEARS MAKES

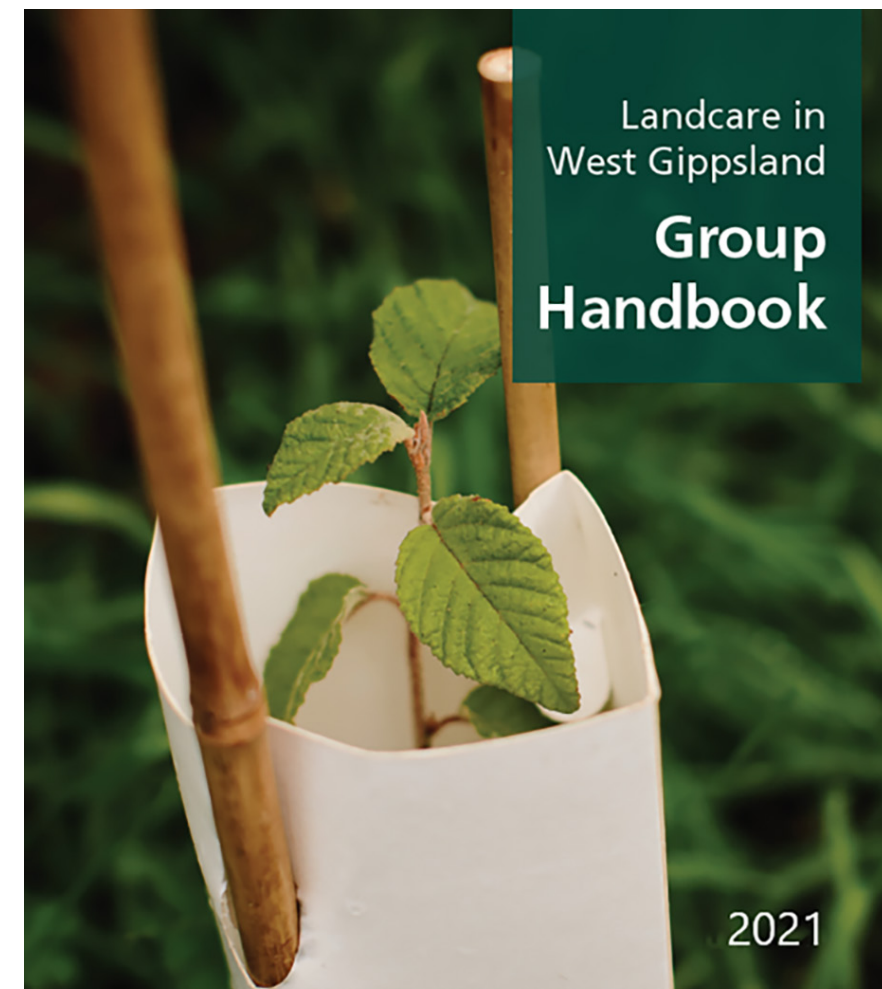
Landcare Australia's riparian restoration project located on Brown Hill Creek in the City of West Torrens, Adelaide is thriving. Since 2019, the project site has had close to 20,000 local native seedlings planted across a highly urbanized stretch of creek line. Landcare Australia has worked in partnership with multiple corporate partners and the local community in order to

deliver over 2 km of creek line restoration work.

This project has helped transform a once degraded section of Brown Hill Creek into an ecological refuge, with many local wildlife species now moving in and utilizing the site. This project has helped to improve water quality and amenity for the public, while also creating a biodiverse refuge for wildlife species in a highly urbanized environment.



Local flora has been replanted across a 1km stretch of creek line - After photo 2021



Landcare in West Gippsland Group Handbook

2021



## NEW GO-TO GOVERNANCE GUIDE CREATED FOR LANDCARE GROUPS IN WEST GIPPSLAND

Good governance is essential to Landcare groups and networks. It ensures that obligations are met, fairness and due process are followed, problems are minimised and groups and committees function well. However, it can also be time consuming and challenging for volunteers and sometimes even a barrier to being involved on committees.

The Landcare in West Gippsland Group Handbook was developed for local Landcare and NRM groups as a complete governance manual and to help with record keeping and decision making. Landcare Facilitator, Marnie Ellis said the handbook ensures that groups don't need to start from scratch when tackling governance as all the hard work has been done for them.

"One of the great features of the handbook is that all the forms are editable, and groups can tailor each form to their own needs before downloading a copy," explains Marnie. "We know from speaking to groups that this is a huge

timesaver for them and we're happily taking feedback on other forms or updates that will further assist."

Each of the Landcare groups and networks in West Gippsland were supplied with a hardcopy of the handbook and it is also available electronically at [www.wgma.vic.gov.au/governance-handbook](http://www.wgma.vic.gov.au/governance-handbook)

The Landcare in West Gippsland Group Handbook was developed with the support of the Victorian State Government and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Landcare in West Gippsland would like to acknowledge and thank East Gippsland Regional Landcare for allowing us to adapt their handbook to create the West Gippsland version.

**If you have any questions about the Handbook or its contents, please don't hesitate to contact Kathleen Brack, our Regional Landcare Program Officer on 1300 094 262 or [kathleenb@wgma.vic.gov.au](mailto:kathleenb@wgma.vic.gov.au)**



Students from Manyallaluk School won the Northern Territory Next Generation NRM Award in 2020. Image Supplied

## BUDDING BUSH RANGERS OF THE TOP END

Situated in northern Australia's Roper Gulf Region, the remote community of Manyallaluk is about an hour's drive north east of Katherine, off the Central Arnhem Highway.

The surrounding landscape is filled with rivers, gorges and plateaus, precious habitat for native species under threat from the impacts of feral animals such as feral cats and buffalo.

Students of the local Manyallaluk School or "small school with a big heart", are passionate about their country, its

environment and wildlife. The school's use of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) empower students toward interesting careers including land management, which won them the Northern Territory Next Generation NRM Award in 2020.

The award recognised the student's skills in the use of drones, setting-up trail cameras and camera traps, recording, graphing and analysing data, as well as conducting surveys with a focus on comparing feral and native animal numbers.

This hands-on learning, using sophisticated tools has inspired many of the young students, from preschool to Year 6, to dream of careers as future rangers. Local Aboriginal Ranger groups such as the Warddeken Rangers and Jawoyn Rangers often join them as mentors in the field.

These activities raise awareness of problems and stimulate the young students to find solutions to protect their environment.

**You can follow their journey on the Manyallaluk School YouTube channel, which has become increasingly popular since their stage debut, presenting at the Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) conference in 2020.**

**You can find out more about the conference and Territory Natural Resource Management through their website, [www.territorynrm.org.au](http://www.territorynrm.org.au) or by emailing [info@territorynrm.org.au](mailto:info@territorynrm.org.au)**



Reducing soil evaporation is a key strategy to maximise the amount of water available to plants and reduce moisture stress. Credit Melanie Jensen

## ANOTHER LOOK AT MANAGING WATER AND SOILS

The Bureau of Meteorology reported that 2019 was our driest year on record, with the extraordinarily low rainfall comparable to the notorious Federation and Millennium Droughts. It was also our hottest year on record. This was an extremely difficult time for many Australians, particularly farmers grappling with extended dry conditions.

Reducing soil evaporation is a key strategy to maximise the amount of water available to plants (crops, pastures, vegetation) and reduce moisture stress. Latina™ Fresh a General Mills brand has been working with Landcare Australia, the Northern Grower Alliance and grain growers in north-west NSW to evaluate methods for minimising the impact of drier seasons on grain crops.

Cover cropping has been around for a long time, and there has been renewed interest in the practice in response to the recent tough seasons. A newer

option is increasing stubble height to reduce evaporative losses, which is now more practical through the introduction of stripper fronts on grain headers. With the support of Latina™ Fresh a General Mills brand who has partnered with Landcare Australia, farmers and advisors have been evaluating the benefits of both practices, which also have the additional benefit of reducing soil erosion. The early results of a cover cropping trial on Rimanui Farms west of Moree indicated increased soil water under a cover crop, however, this is being further explored in another trial. Stubble management trials are also underway on five properties across the north-west which are evaluating whether high stubble (approximately waist height) increases fallow efficiency (the amount of rainfall stored in the soil) over normal stubble height (approximately knee height). Further information on the trial results will be available on the Landcare Australia website.

## RECOVERY OF THE MACCA IN THE MURRUMBIDGEE

Endangered Macquarie Perch populations in the upper Murrumbidgee received a boost recently when a number of new broodstock were translocated into the river system.

Affectionately known as Maccas, the translocated fish are the descendants of those moved out of the system to Cataract Dam near Sydney over 100 years ago.

The fish were returned to improve genetic diversity in the local population as part of South East Local Land Service's 'Reaching for the Recovery of the Macquarie Perch' project.

"The once populous species has been endangered in its natural range for many years. With the severe impacts of recent drought and bushfires we need to act now to have any chance to secure its future", said South East Local Land Services' Felicity Sturgiss.

"The Macquarie Perch in the Upper Murrumbidgee River are one of only four remaining natural populations in NSW"

"We're been working alongside local groups, land managers, Aboriginal people and government agencies to share knowledge of these iconic fish and their needs, and how to reach the long-term vision to #BringBackTheMacca!

"The project also provides support to land managers to remediate some of the threats to Macca habitat by way of targeted weed control, revegetation and excluding livestock from sections of the river to improve water quality".

The release of these fish into the upper Murrumbidgee is the first stage of a five-part genetic rescue program for the South East. NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Fisheries are working alongside Local Land Services on the program guiding the process and undertaking research



Wendy Mason, a Wagonga LALC ranger releasing Macquarie Perch into a side channel of the upper Murrumbidgee river. Image Supplied.

and biosecurity checks as they roll out similar measures across the state.

The Macquarie Perch in Cataract Dam are descended from fish translocated from the Murrumbidgee River in approximately 1914. Several batches of Macquarie Perch from Cataract Dam will be released into the Murrumbidgee River in the coming years.

**The Reaching for the Recovery of the Macquarie Perch project is supported by South East Local Land Services in partnership with NSW DPI Fisheries through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.**



Eubenangee Swamp's rehabilitation has been a 30-year project. Image Supplied

## RESTORING A SWAMP ECOSYSTEM

Over 60,000 trees have been added to an internationally recognised coastal wetland near Innisfail - and the plan is to plant even more.

Eubenangee Swamp's rehabilitation has been a 30-year project. The tallest trees have created a forest canopy while the smallest, planted just six months ago, extend a rainforest corridor to link the coast with mountain ranges on the Atherton Tablelands.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service ranger Chris Roach said the project was a labour of love for rangers and Indigenous groups.

"The results are pretty amazing - it was hard work at the start but we've got a dedicated team and you can see the difference it's making," Mr Roach said.

**“ With revegetation, weed and fire management and water restoration work, we've seen huge changes over a relatively short period. ”**

"Areas that were infested with weeds, and silent to work in, are now alive with birds, frogs and all manner of wildlife. Ecosystems that were completely modified are functioning again."

Rangers are working with Terrain NRM and a group of Indigenous people to plant native trees on what was previously marginal farming land. The land was added to national park in 2003 to secure a wetland water source and strengthen the link between coastal areas and mountains.

Terrain NRM's Tony O'Malley said trees had been planted along Casey Creek to widen the corridor as part of Terrain's Building Rainforest Resilience project funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

The funding has enabled the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to employ Indigenous people for revegetation maintenance work.

"Planting trees is the first step keeping weeds down so they can grow is an essential part of revegetation projects," Tony added.

Mamu Traditional owner Steve Purcell said the project was bringing younger Indigenous people "back on Country".

"We look forward to going out there," he said. "It gives them a sense of caring for their place."



KSPS became a member of Landcare NT in August 2019 but started their love of the environment long before that with the establishment of a vegetable garden and launch of their EcoWarriors group in 2016. Image Supplied

## FOSTERING THE NEXT GENERATION

**K**atherine South Primary School (KSPS), located 320km SE of Darwin, is one of six local primary schools located on the Katherine River, adjacent to the popular Katherine Hot Springs.

KSPS became a member of Landcare NT in August 2019 but started their love of the environment long before that with the establishment of a vegetable garden and launch of their EcoWarriors group in 2016. Through these initiatives, students engage with growing vegetables and herbs as well

as caring for their school environment and learning about sustainability and recycling.

KSPS has recently embarked on an ambitious project which includes the construction of a nursery, reconfiguration and extension of the existing vegetable and herb gardens, installation of animal shelters and hotels as well as the addition of a native bush tucker garden.

Project managers Rachel Jay and Nicole Grenfell (STEAM teachers) and Dale Hillen (Cultural Coordinator) are

being supported by Landcare NT to source grants, donations and advice for the school's project. The school has submitted a Junior Landcare Grant application for the construction of the nursery and rehabilitation of the existing vegetable and herb gardens. The school has approached local businesses for donations of gardening supplies, building equipment and seedlings. The project is also exploring opportunities to collaborate with the Remote Indigenous Gardens (RIG) Network who will provide cultural guidance.

Students will learn about the influence of environmental factors on the rate of plant growth, the importance of healthy eating habits and the cultural significance of native vegetation endemic to the local area. The school's canteen will continue to utilise the fresh seasonal produce in their menu as different varieties become available.

**If you would like further information about KSPS's Gardening project, please contact Landcare NT at [info@landcarent.org.au](mailto:info@landcarent.org.au)**

## WHAT CAN WE ACHIEVE ON THE GROUND WITH SOIL ORGANIC CARBON?

**R**ecently, interest in soil organic carbon (SOC) among decision-makers, industry, and the broader public has increased significantly—particularly when it comes to its possible role in climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience.

While environmental and agricultural productivity benefits of healthy soils are well known, the opportunity for SOC in a climate change context is not well understood—particularly around permanence. So what are the realities? What can we achieve on the ground?

On 22 April 2021, the National Soils Advocate, the Hon. Penny Wensley AC, hosted the Forum: Soil Organic Carbon – Realities and science for policy advisers and decision-makers, at the National Press Club in Canberra.

The Forum helped attendees gain a better understanding of the challenges and complexities associated with SOC and its measurement. Designed for non-scientists at all levels working on soil related issues and policy, participants heard some of Australia's top soil scientists present evidence-based

information about SOC to help inform policy advice and decision-making in this field.

“As the government finalises a new National Soil Strategy, and is also directing greater attention to the issue of soil carbon sequestration and to soil carbon policy, it is important that there be a good understanding of the science involved” Penny Wensley said.

“The Covid pandemic has underlined the importance of science, as a critical input to public policy and government decision-making”, she said.

Attendees commented that the Forum was held at an opportune time—with the Australian Government, and other jurisdictions, ramping up their interest in sponsoring a variety of soil organic carbon projects across the country.

“At this time, it is certainly a priority that our policy advisers and decision-makers understand what the science is telling us about soil organic carbon. This scientific understanding will also tell us what is achievable when it comes to sequestering soil carbon,” Penny Wensley said.



The National Soils Advocate, the Hon. Penny Wensley AC in the field. Image Supplied

The Forum was hosted by the Office of the National Soils Advocate within the Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The program was developed in conjunction with key agencies and organisations including the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; CSIRO; the Office of the Clean Energy Regulator; Soil Science Australia; the Cooperative Research Centre for High Performance Soils and Soils For Life.

**The National Soils Advocate is Australia's independent champion for soils, soil health and sustainability. For more information visit [pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/national-soils-advocate](http://pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/national-soils-advocate)**



# THE LANDCARE FARMING PROGRAM

## Creating a common link between soil health, productivity and sustainability

One of our most invaluable natural assets is our soil, and on-farm soil improvement actions must be supported by accurate information based on scientific evidence. The Landcare Farming Program, Accounting for Nature, Regen Soils and experts from CSIRO have worked together to develop a simple, robust soil evaluation and monitoring method. The Landcare Soil Assessment for Productive Land method enables farmers to generate meaningful and affordable data for informing on-farm decisions that can improve natural capital. The new method provides a consistent approach to measuring and verifying change in soil condition over time and is being used in the Landcare Farming Benchmarking project.

**Find out more: [landcareaustralia.org.au/landcarefarming/landcare-farming-projects/](http://landcareaustralia.org.au/landcarefarming/landcare-farming-projects/)**

### Landcare Benchmarking Project

Over 130 landcare, farming groups and individual producers have applied via an open call for Expressions of Interest to participate in the Landcare Farming Benchmarking Project.

The 50 groups selected to participate across Australia are now training to measure the carbon footprint or natural capital of their business. Following the training workshops, the participating groups will have an opportunity to develop a demonstration project showcasing farming practices that build carbon and increase the value

of their ecosystem services. An overarching project will aggregate lessons from these producer 'hubs' to address stakeholder investment and reporting needs. Information about the project is available on Landcarer, an online platform that helps people to connect, collaborate and communicate. To make sure you are in the front seat for future information about this exciting project please join Landcarer and follow the Landcare Farming and Benchmarking projects as these groups integrate carbon management and natural capital accounting into their farm management practices.

**Find out more: [www.landcarer.com.au/stories/391](http://www.landcarer.com.au/stories/391)**

### STO Roundtable – Planning the next five years for Landcare Farming

Landcare farmers, facilitators and agricultural stakeholders have banded together to provide feedback on the Landcare Farming Program road map for the next five years. In late 2020 Landcare representatives from across Australia attended one of the eight planning workshops involving each State and Territory Landcare Organisation (STO), and groups, networks and members.

More than 250 leading Landcare and agricultural industry stakeholders provided personal insights into their resource needs, known knowledge gaps and priorities across agriculture sectors.

Additionally they provided clear feedback on communication preferences for target audiences and extension pathways, as well as opportunities for the Landcare Farming Program to develop a simple reporting and monitoring system that can be easily used by all. The findings have been collated and aligned to the Landcare Farming Program strategy to help design a national flagship project that addresses the needs of land managers at a farm level. The final report and a discussion paper will assist to prioritise future Landcare Farming Program investment.

For further information about the Landcare Farming Program or to access a copy of the full report please contact: [mick.taylor@landcareaustralia.com.au](mailto:mick.taylor@landcareaustralia.com.au)

This project is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



## SUBSCRIBE TO THE LANDCARE WEBINAR SERIES

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- Five interventions to improve soil health
- Feral pig impacts on conservation and food production
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# 2021 NATIONAL LANDCARE CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY 4 TO FRIDAY 6 AUGUST

# 2021 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

THURSDAY 5 AUGUST

**International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, Sydney**

- Landcare champion and ABC TV host Costa Georgiadis is conference MC
- 60 + Speakers
- Landcare Farming Panel
- Mental Health & Wellbeing Panel
- Cultural Land Management Panel
- All sessions will be live streamed and recorded for online delegates
- Field trips across the Greater Sydney area.

**You can register to attend in person or register as an online delegate.**

For more information about the 2021 National Landcare Conference and the 2021 National Landcare Awards please visit [www.nationallandcareconference.org.au](http://www.nationallandcareconference.org.au)



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