National Landcare Week 2026 Survey Findings Report

Australians are **finding hope**, **connection** and **purpose** through landcare.

Acknowledgement:

Landcare Australia is proud to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which we live and work. We value and respect their deep and continued spiritual and Cultural connections to the land, waters and seas, and pay our respects to their Ancestors, and Elders past, present and future.

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If you have any questions, please contact us via email at enquiries@landcareaustralia.com.au.

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Overview

This report presents the key findings from the National Landcare Week 2026 Survey, highlighting the environmental, social and community impact of landcare across Australia and the challenges facing local groups. The survey was promoted to the landcare movement and the general public involved landcare activities.

What is landcare?

Landcare brings environment, agriculture and community together to shape a more sustainable future. Landcare is a grassroots movement of individuals, groups and organisations across Australia with a shared vision to restore, enhance and protect our natural environment. Landcare is community action – sharing knowledge, building skills, improving biodiversity, creating healthier landscapes and resilient communities.

Landcare enables people to actively care for the natural environment in their community by creating partnerships to manage environmental conservation and sustainable land management activities. Landcare connects people from all walks of life to do something good for the environment.

The landcare movement includes:

- Volunteers
- Landcarer groups and networks
- Bushcare, 'Friends of', Coastcare, Rivercare, Wildcare and other other community-led environmental groups involved in landcare activity
- Farming systems groups and primary producers
- Traditional Owners, First Nations organisations, Rangers and individuals
- Landcare facilitators and co-ordinators
- Schools and youth groups
- Young adult environment and agriculture groups
- Scientists and research organisations
- Government agencies supporting landcare activities
- Corporate, philanthropic and government supporters investing in landcare

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Report themes

- Australians are finding purpose and connection through local environmental action
- Volunteer pressure on Australia's community conservation movement
- Landcare participation is supporting wellbeing, belonging and community connection
- Community volunteers are helping protect threatened species across Australia
- Landcare groups need funding certainty as climate impacts disrupt local projects
- Traditional Owner partnerships are strengthening outcomes

The strongest story for Landcare Week is clear: Australians are ready to care for their local environment, but local groups need consistent support to keep delivering for communities, landscapes and biodiversity.

About the survey

More than 1,200 Australians took part in the National Landcare Week 2026 Survey, providing **one of the largest national snapshots** of community environmental volunteering, local conservation action and the pressures facing grassroots groups.

The National Landcare Week 2026 Survey builds on the 2025 findings, confirming that landcare continues to strengthen communities while revealing challenges to support the growing landcare movement.

The results are geographically robust, with representation well distributed across rural, regional, and metropolitan areas. The findings show that landcare is delivering practical environmental outcomes while also strengthening wellbeing, social connection and local resilience. They also point to growing challenges, including volunteer pressures, climate-related disruption and ongoing funding uncertainty.

Despite these challenges, Australians are stepping up for nature. The survey shows overwhelming optimism, with participants reporting improvements in wellbeing, stronger community connection and greater hope for Australia's environmental future.

> *"People may join for the cause, but they stay for the community."*

Report findings

83%
of respondents regularly help care for their local environment

93%
have made friends or new social connections through landcare

88%
agree that getting involved helped them feel more connected to their community

59% say there is pressure on volunteer participation

66% say access to consistent funding or small grants would make the biggest difference

> *Landcare has shown us the power of community action. Seeing volunteers of all ages come together to restore habitat, monitor wildlife and improve local waterways creates a genuine sense of connection and purpose. The lasting relationships increased environmental knowledge and visible improvements to the landscape demonstrate that small actions, when multiplied across a community, can have a significant and lasting impact.*

Key insight:
Landcare is helping Australians turn concern for the environment into practical local action, while also building connection, wellbeing and hope.

Report takeaway:
The findings show a strong national appetite for community-led environmental action but also reveal pressure on volunteer pipelines and local group capacity.

1. Landcare is strengthening wellbeing and community connection

Participants described landcare as much more than environmental volunteering. Many reported stronger connection to nature, improved wellbeing, a greater sense of purpose and deeper community ties.

The strongest reported benefits included:

82% stronger connection to nature

66% improved physical and mental wellbeing

72% greater sense of purpose

74% stronger local community connections

27% reduced feelings of social and climate anxiety

Many respondents described landcare as providing hope in the face of environmental challenges. 93% of respondents have made friends or new social connections and 88% agree or strongly agree that landcare participants feel more connected to community, suggesting that landcare builds belonging as well as biodiversity.

Open-ended responses* reinforce these findings, with many sharing stories of new friendships, increased confidence, and a sense of making a tangible difference which demonstrates that landcare is both personally fulfilling and socially enriching.

(See appendix 2)

> *To know you will regularly connect with people in your community each month gives a greater sense of belonging.*

Compared with the 2025 survey:

The strong social and wellbeing outcomes reported last year remain evident, reinforcing that landcare continues to build connection, belonging and optimism alongside environmental outcomes.

What does this mean?

The survey suggests that people may come to landcare for the environment, but they often stay for the people.

While environmental outcomes remain a key motivator, respondents consistently highlighted friendship, community connection, wellbeing and a sense of purpose as some of the most valuable aspects of participation.

Many described landcare as a place where they found belonging, built lasting relationships and felt connected to their local community. These social benefits appear to play a major role in keeping volunteers engaged, showing that landcare is strengthening communities as well as landscapes.

Report takeaway:

Landcare is not only restoring landscapes; it is helping Australians feel connected, useful and hopeful at a time of environmental change.

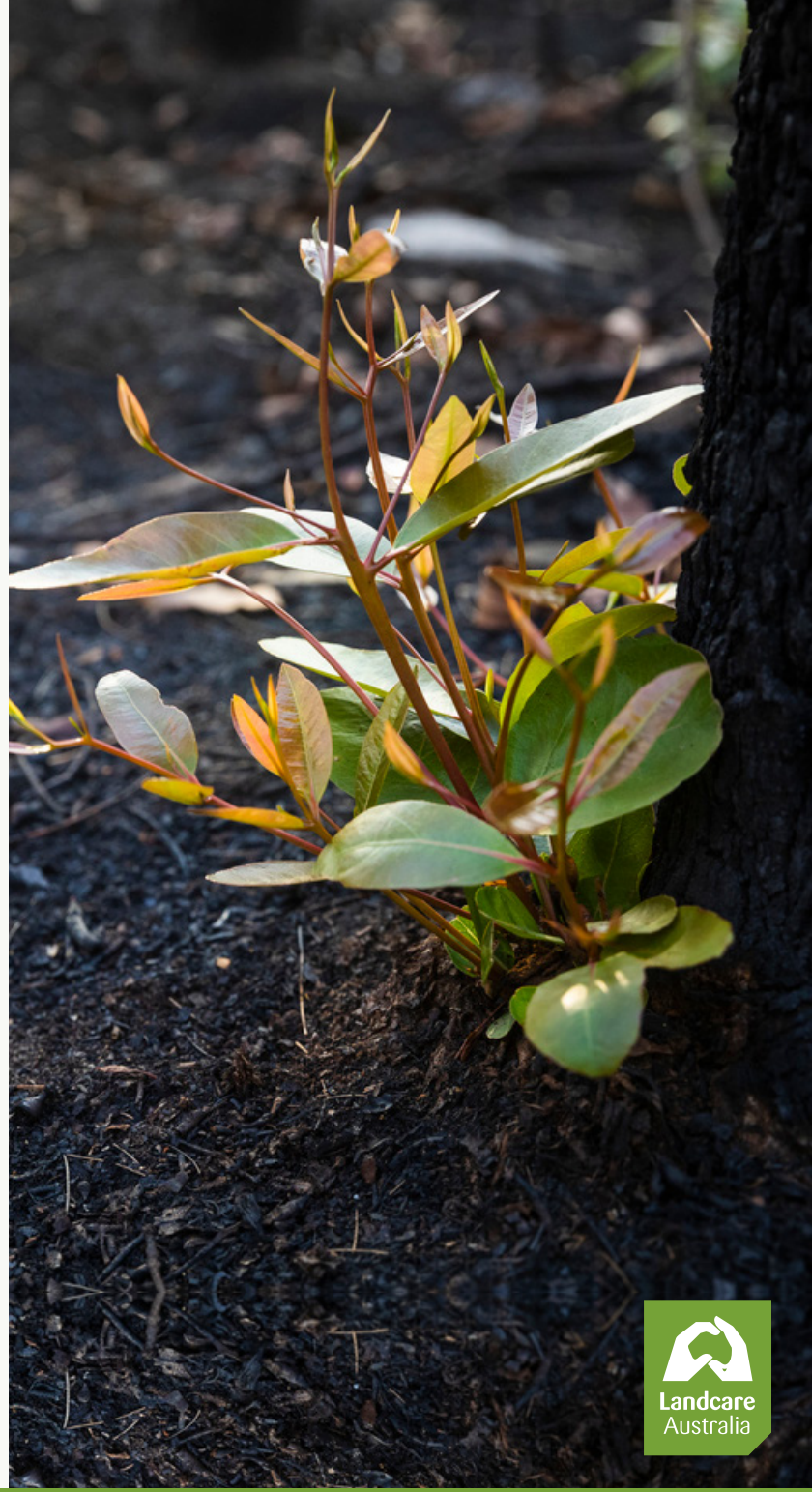
2. Climate impacts are disrupting community conservation

Many groups reported having projects cancelled, delayed or significantly altered due to extreme heat, storms, flooding, drought and bushfires. For many groups, weather disruption is becoming a regular part of planning restoration activities.

Extreme heat affects scheduling, with some groups avoiding activities during hot periods and some groups mention that weather conditions lead to hazardous working environments, logistical challenges, and postponed activities.

52% of respondents experienced 1-5 cancellations or changes due to weather in the past year. Storms and heavy rain are the most common weather-related disruptions, with **52% citing storms** and **16% flooding**.

Report takeaway:
Climate change is no longer a future issue for local conservation groups; it is already changing how community projects are planned and delivered.



3. Volunteer pressure on Australia's community conservation movement

Volunteer recruitment and succession planning are among the biggest challenges facing landcare groups. Respondents pointed to declining volunteer numbers, ageing volunteer bases, cost-of-living pressures, administrative demands and difficulty attracting younger members.

Groups consistently identified:

- Declining volunteer numbers
- Cost-of-living pressures
- Aging volunteer bases
- Succession planning
- Difficulty attracting younger volunteers

Many groups said community interest remains strong, but they need more capacity, resources and practical support to welcome and retain volunteers. **Overall, 59% of groups said it is getting harder to find volunteers, while 66% said consistent funding or small grants would help most.**

> *"These days everyone is 'time poor'. The younger ones struggle with everyday living whilst the older ones are being continuely asked to do more."*
>
> *"Younger people are busy with their own lives, children, mortgages, etc. Older people who have been the backbone of landcare for many years are aging and unable to do as much as they would like."*

Compared with the 2025 survey:

Volunteer recruitment has shifted from being one of several challenges to the dominant issue raised by respondents.

What does this mean?

Australians haven't stopped volunteering – they have become time poor. The survey suggests that people are not losing interest in landcare. Instead, many are finding it harder to make time to stay involved due to work, family and caring commitments. As life gets busier, some volunteers participate less often, while others stop volunteering altogether.

This challenge is particularly evident among Australians in their working and family-raising years. The findings indicate that volunteer shortages are being driven more by competing demands on people's time than by a lack of interest in environmental action. In other words, the desire to get involved is still there, but many people need more flexible opportunities to participate.

Report takeaway:

Community willingness exists, but local groups need greater support to sustain Australia's environmental volunteer workforce.

4. Landcare is changing, but Australians still want to help

The survey suggests Australians haven't lost interest in volunteering. Instead, modern life is changing how people volunteer. Respondents repeatedly cited:

- Cost of living pressure
- Ageing volunteer base
- Work commitments
- Preference for flexible volunteering
- Caring responsibilities
- Fewer people wanting committee roles

The survey suggests Australians haven't lost interest in volunteering. Instead, modern life is changing how people volunteer. Respondents repeatedly cited:

83%
actively care for nature

93%
build friendships

88%
strengthen community connection

That tells a much richer story than simply ***"volunteer shortages"*** it suggests the next evolution of landcare may need to make volunteering easier, more flexible and more accessible, particularly for younger Australians and working families.

Report takeaway:
Australians still want to care for nature, but landcare will need to evolve with changing lifestyles by offering more flexible and accessible ways for people to get involved.

5. Volunteers are helping protect threatened species

Thousands of volunteers are helping restore habitat and support recovery efforts for Australia's threatened wildlife. Groups reported working with threatened plants, birds, mammals, reptiles and freshwater ecosystems through activities including:

- Habitat restoration
- Citizen science monitoring
- Invasive species control
- Native seed collection
- Nest box installation
- Wetland restoration

Many respondents also reported observing wildlife returning following restoration efforts.

> *Grey-headed Flying-foxes now inhabit eucalypts in an area that 20 years ago was a bare paddock. Bird diversity has greatly increased, and we have greater awareness of flora and fauna species that are present.*

> *Long-term community monitoring has significantly increased our understanding of threatened species such as platypus, sea turtles and koalas, providing valuable data on distribution, habitat use and population trends. More than 20 years of platypus surveys have enabled us to track changes in local populations and observe their responses to extreme weather events, helping to inform conservation planning and management.*

Report takeaway:
Local volunteers are not only restoring habitat. They are generating long-term biodiversity knowledge and stewardship needed to protect Australia's threatened species.

6. Traditional Owner partnerships are strengthening outcomes

Many respondents highlighted the value of working with Traditional Owners, saying these partnerships support better environmental outcomes while strengthening connections to Country. Although the level of engagement varies, **44% saying they already collaborate**, there is clear interest in expanding these relationships with **30% of respondents expressing an interest in doing so in the future**, especially in regional areas where landcare groups often have long-standing connections with local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities. Many landcare groups reported collaborating with Traditional Owners through:

47% on Country activities

31% caring for Country workshops

19% restoration planning

37% cultural knowledge sharing

26% threatened species projects

> *Working alongside elders provides invaluable cultural knowledge, strengthens relationships and ensures our projects are respectful, authentic and connected to Country.*

Report takeaway:
Collaborative conservation can deliver stronger environmental and cultural outcomes when groups work respectfully with Traditional Owners.

7. What landcare groups need next

Respondents identified several priorities that would make the biggest difference:

66%
consistent funding

41%
volunteer recruitment support

27%
insurance and compliance assistance

20%
equipment and materials

26%
project planning support

32%
promotion of local groups

These challenges vary across Australia. In rural and regional areas, landcare groups are often dealing with ageing volunteer base and the growing impact of droughts, floods and other extreme weather. In urban areas, the biggest challenge is finding volunteers with enough time to participate alongside work, family and other commitments.

Report takeaway:
Landcare gives practicals way to act. To keep delivering for communities, landscapes and biodiversity, local groups need reliable funding, volunteer recruitment support and practical resources.

What does this mean?

Landcare groups across Australia are facing similar challenges: finding volunteers, securing reliable funding and responding to growing climate pressures. However, the challenges look different depending on where groups are based.

In rural and regional areas, groups are often dealing with ageing volunteer bases, smaller populations and the increasing impact of droughts, floods and other extreme weather. In cities and suburbs, the challenge is less about interest and more about time, with work, family and other commitments making it harder for people to get involved.

Despite these differences, participants shared common concerns about biodiversity loss, climate change and the need to attract the next generation of volunteers. The findings suggest that while support needs may vary across Australia, strengthening local groups and growing volunteer participation remain critical everywhere.

Calls for funding have become more specific, with respondents increasingly seeking reliable, long-term support rather than one-off project grants.

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8. What's changed since 2025?

While the National Landcare Week 2025 Survey highlighted the personal and community benefits of getting involved in landcare, the 2026 findings reveal a movement entering a new phase. Australians remain deeply committed to caring for nature, but local groups are increasingly focused on sustaining that momentum. Volunteer pressures, funding certainty and climate disruption have emerged as the defining challenges facing community conservation, even as landcare continues to deliver strong environmental, social and wellbeing outcomes.

Overall message for Landcare Week 2026

The National Landcare Week 2026 Survey shows that landcare continues to deliver significant environmental, social and community benefits across Australia.

Australians are ready to care for their local environment, and landcare gives them a practical way to act. To keep delivering for communities, landscapes and biodiversity, local groups need reliable funding, volunteer recruitment support and practical resources.

Appendix 1: Additional survey analysis

The following additional analysis provides supporting detail and should be treated as supplementary survey material.

A strong majority **(83%) of respondents regularly help care for their local environmen**t, showing high engagement in environmental stewardship.

Volunteerism is robust: **42% volunteer weekly**, and another **20% volunteer monthly**. However, **58% say it is getting harder to find volunteers**, with time constraints and demographic shifts being major challenges.

The most common landcare activities are **planting (81%)**, **landscape restoration (73%**), and **managing invasive species (66%)**.

Extreme weather is a significant disruptor: **52% of groups had work plans changed 1–5 times in the past year due to weather events**, with storms and extreme heat being the most disruptive.

Participation in landcare brings strong personal benefits:

- **81% feel more connected to nature**
- **74% report greater social connection**
- **66% note improved wellbeing**
- **Social impact is high: 93% have made new friends or social connections through landcare.**

The top challenges facing groups are **succession planning (50%)**, **declining volunteer numbers (49%)**, and **lack of ongoing funding (46%)**.

The most important support needed is **access to consistent funding (66%)**, followed by help with **volunteer recruitment and retention (41%)**.

Demographically, the majority of respondents are **aged 55 and over (80%)**, and most live in **rural or regional areas (76%)**.

How does volunteer frequency vary by respondents' age groups? (Q3,Q34)

Volunteer frequency increases with age. The 65+ group is by far the most active, with 212 volunteering weekly and high numbers also volunteering monthly or fortnightly. The 55-64 and 45-54 groups also show strong weekly and monthly participation. In contrast, younger age groups (under 35) have much lower volunteer rates and are more likely to volunteer only a few times a year or less frequently. Overall, regular (weekly or monthly) volunteering is most common among older adults, while younger respondents participate less frequently.

How do feelings of community connection through landcare differ by gender? (Q16, Q35)

Feelings of community connection through landcare are strong across all genders, but women report the highest levels: 87% of female respondents agree or strongly agree that landcare has helped them feel more connected to their community. Among men, this figure is also high at 82%. Other gender identities and those who prefer not to say also mostly agree, though their sample sizes are much smaller. Overall, women are slightly more likely than men to report a strong sense of community connection from their involvement in landcare.

What are the main volunteer recruitment challenges reported by respondents in different Australian states or territories? (Q6, Q37)

Across Australian states and territories, the most common volunteer recruitment challenges reported are younger demographic time constraints, aging and demographic shifts, and difficulties engaging and motivating youth. These issues are especially prominent in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. Economic and financial pressures, volunteer engagement and retention, and competing activities or priorities are also frequently mentioned. While the specific ranking of challenges varies by state, concerns about attracting younger volunteers and adapting to demographic changes are consistent themes nationwide.

How do concerns about climate change and natural disasters rank among respondents from rural versus urban areas?(Q24, Q36)

Concerns about climate change and natural disasters are ranked highly across all residence areas, but are strongest among respondents living in capital cities, followed by those in regional, rural, and remote areas. On a 1–9 ranking scale (with 9 being highest concern), capital city residents average 7.57, regional residents 7.18, rural residents 7.04, and remote residents 6.91. This indicates that urban respondents are slightly more likely to prioritise climate change and natural disasters as top concerns compared to those in rural or remote areas.

How does the motivation to volunteer to restore the local environment differ by respondents' working or study status? (Q22, Q38)

Motivation to volunteer to restore and protect the local environment is universally high across all working and study status groups. Every respondent in each category, including full-time and part-time workers, retirees, carers, students, unemployed, and those with other statuses selected this as a motivation, resulting in 100% of respondents in each group being motivated by this reason. This highlights a shared, strong commitment to local environmental restoration regardless of employment or study situation.

Landcare's role in community and social connections

The survey highlights the significant social value of landcare participation, with 93.12% of respondents (828 people) reporting they had made friends or new social connections through their involvement. Respondents described building relationships with neighbours, colleagues, community members and people from diverse age groups and backgrounds through working bees, committee meetings, field days, events and shared land management activities. Many groups also foster social connection through shared meals, art weekends, community events and field trips, creating opportunities for friendships to develop beyond volunteer activities.

These relationships often extend outside of landcare, contributing to improved personal wellbeing, stronger community cohesion and mutual support during times of need. Some respondents reported forming lifelong friendships, expanding professional networks and developing collaborative relationships with Traditional Owners, government agencies and community organisations. **The findings suggest that landcare plays a valuable role in fostering inclusivity, strengthening intergenerational connections and creating pathways to leadership, employment and broader community participation.**

Community building through landcare

Landcare fosters strong social connections, friendships, and a sense of belonging among volunteers across diverse age groups and backgrounds.

Over 50% of respondents strongly agree that landcare helps them feel more connected to their community. Many participants have formed long-lasting friendships, some lasting over 20 years. Volunteers meet socially at events like morning teas, dinners, bush walks, and community gatherings. Landcare groups include a wide range of ages, from young families to retirees, promoting intergenerational bonds. Connections often extend beyond landcare activities, supporting mental health, wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Appendix 2: In their own words

Hope, purpose and personal wellbeing

Gives me hope for the future.

Landcare helps me to feel positive about the future, as I meet passionate people who care deeply about the environment.

I feel satisfied when our group creates practical benefit for Country and ecosystem health.

This is not about me. It is essential for the world I live in.

Cleaning up and planting trees in my local area makes me feel that I am looking after the flora and fauna and keeping the planet cleaner for future generations.

I've built a wonderful group of like-minded, nature loving friends who support each other to take positive action in our local environment.

Enjoy working out in nature with like-minded people. A great opportunity to learn about bush regeneration, identify weeds and participate with planting natives in our local area.

As a farmer, landcare has been an invaluable source of information and inspiration.

Landcare had introduced me to many like-minded people who are taking positive steps to care for the environment. It's a safe and supportive space.

By engaging with the First Nations representatives, it has given me a better understanding and appreciation of their valuable knowledge of the land we share. It nourishes my soul.

Sense of achievement when the job is done.

Visible Environmental Impact and Biodiversity Recovery

Having done something good for the community and environment, I feel good too.

Trees planted 20 years ago are now near full size and completely changed the landscape. This gives a sense of satisfaction and a more aesthetically pleasing vista.

Local native plants thriving when weeds are eliminated. Native animals are returning to areas where there is biodiversity in place.

In the ACT and NSW all known Gang-gang nest trees now have legal protection. Our research information is guiding the species management and has been incorporated into national and State/Territory recovery plans.

Regenerative in every sense.

The joy of working with a variety of people with a common purpose which is worthy and meaningful.

A camp of grey-headed flying foxes has recently established in one of our planting sites that was previously a grazing paddock by a creek and is now a small patch of rainforest.

Involvement has also increased awareness and reporting, creating a stronger evidence base for protecting these iconic species.

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Community connection, belonging and intergenerational learning

Moving interstate into a new community meant having to develop new friends and new social networks. Having retired meant a particular challenge in this respect. Doing meaningful volunteer work not only connects me with people but adds meaning to my life. Getting out of doors and being active is also a benefit with Landcare.

I have met more people in our community.

Making friends quickly when moving to the country including with people who have been here for generations.

When volunteers just show up to a planting event, I am humbled, it is their time and they are choosing to spend it caring for the environment. It makes me happy to be sure :)

It is a privilege to work on Country through Landcare. There is the opportunity to learn about and improve the land. Although the work can sometimes feel like a losing battle, it is immensely satisfying to look back at the transformation—from a barren landscape to a flourishing biodiversity corridor, where there is now little room left to plant.

Every time I look out of my windows, I can see the natural environment around me, and I know the improvements that I and my Landcare colleagues have made to the natural world around us.

Being over 80 and with a background in conservation on a remote property, Landcare has given me the opportunity to keep up this work and keep fit and involved with my new community as well.

I have reflected that the time I spend volunteering is worth 5 times more than my regular job. I feel like I make a difference and that my effort has purpose and even though we are just a group of volunteers, we have created strong connections and are capable of remarkable things.

I feel hopeful for the future as Landcare enables me to care for my local environment despite so many other problems in the world.

Working with like-minded passionate people to restore a degraded environment gives one hope. The saying ‘Plant and they will come’ is true. Landcare has given me the opportunity to connect with my community.

Landcare has helped me feel connected to the land and community that I moved to about two years ago. I joined Landcare pretty much straight away and met a lot of people who share similar values.

Just wonderful to be with young and old who care for the coastal environment and the variety of skills and viewpoints.

The group that I volunteer with are mostly older folk in their 50s-80s. I’m 24 and there’s a few of us who are younger, so I’ve made some great connections with the regular volunteers and look forward to seeing them each week. We get to talk about conservation and changes in the landscape and especially the older people can recall how things used to be and pass down that knowledge that wasn’t captured in photographs back then, and that I wasn’t around to see. It’s great.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the National Landcare Week 2026 Survey. Your experiences and insights have helped build a valuable picture of the people, communities and organisations driving community-led environmental action across Australia.

For more information about Landcare Australia, please visit our website landcareaustrali.org.au or email us at **enquiries@landcareaustralia.com.au**