

# The state of Landcare and Bushcare in Greater Sydney 2023/24

Greater Sydney Local Land Services surveys Landcare and Bushcare groups in the region every two years to track the impact, wellbeing and changes of the volunteer community. This information helps us to understand the type of support these volunteers need and promote the benefits of environmental volunteering across our region.

The most recent survey focused on the 2023/24 financial year and targeted incorporated Landcare groups, council and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service's -supported Bushcare programs as well as local and regional networks.

We received responses from **33 Bushcare programs, 20 Landcare groups and 8 Landcare networks**.

## Across Greater Sydney



932

Landcare and Bushcare groups



15,593

one-off  
volunteers



7,230

regular volunteers

\$9.9 million\* worth  
of labour donated



765,608

plants propagated in 25 community nurseries



209,793

hours of work

\* hourly rate of \$46.96 based on [The Centre for Volunteering's Cost Calculator](#)

## What did the data tell us

In 2023/24, 932 groups participated in Bushcare and Landcare activities. Bushcare groups that are supported by local councils and National Parks and Wildlife Service made up 92% of the total. Independent Landcare groups accounted for 8%, with 50 unincorporated and supported by Landcare networks or Bushcare programs. There were also 25 community-run nurseries, 23 linked to local council Bushcare programs.

Bush regeneration was the main focus across urban, suburban, and peri-urban areas. Bushcare groups worked on public reserves and national parks, often incorporating tree and shrub planting. Around half of Landcare groups focused on privately managed peri-urban land, with community education also a priority.

First Nations' Caring for Country strategies were adopted by 12 groups, with 11 others working towards them. Actions, amongst others, include seeking Aboriginal input for strategic planning and sharing cultural knowledge with volunteers.

## Weather-related disruptions

About three-quarters of survey respondents paused work or training in 2023/24 due to extreme weather, mainly heavy rain, flooding, and damage. Some cancellations were also due to extreme heat. One bushcare program lost 68 of 288 sessions to rain.

## Wellbeing of Landcare groups

This reporting period picked up two newly formed networks and, about half the groups have been active for 15 years or more and another third of the groups active for five to fifteen years.

Two-thirds of surveyed groups and networks reported stable wellbeing, while about a quarter said they were thriving. Two groups indicated they were struggling.

The biggest challenges ahead include declining volunteer numbers, aging membership, and lack of ongoing funding. Over half of the groups rely on government grants, while a quarter depend on membership fees, and a few sustain themselves through fee-for-service activities like nurseries, bush regeneration, and education programs.

To thrive, groups need more volunteers, particularly younger participants and succession planning, along with secure, long-term funding to support volunteer efforts, paid coordinators, and administrative staff.



## Support

77% of surveyed groups engaged with Greater Sydney Local Land Services. Of those, 86% were either extremely or somewhat satisfied. The most common types of engagement included reading the Greater Sydney Local Land Services Landcare and Community News, receiving support from a Land Services Officer, attending Volunteer Coordinator Network meetings, and accessing online resources.

Landcare across the region benefits from various additional support, particularly from local councils, Greater Sydney Landcare, and Landcare NSW. Half of the surveyed Landcare groups were members of Greater Sydney Landcare.

## Did you know?

In February 2024, Greater Sydney Landcare’s application to the NSW Landcare Enabling Program 2023–2027 was approved. The funding provides just over \$3 million over 4 years and supports 10 coordinators (7.75 full-time equivalent) in partnership with other networks.



Image: Little Wheeny Creek Landcare Group.

## The benefits of Landcare and Bushcare volunteering

### Conservation

Maintaining connectivity in urban and peri-urban Sydney is crucial, with 800+ of 935 volunteer sites forming wildlife corridors or linking natural areas. Volunteers also help protect threatened species, ecological communities, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Places, wetlands, heritage sites, and state reserves.

### Citizen Science

Forty-four surveyed groups participate in citizen science, mainly bird surveys and Streamwatch. Other activities include species recording, litter data collection, and ClimateWatch.

### Community Education

Landcare groups dedicate 12% of their time to raising environmental awareness.

### Specialist Skills

Over half of all groups offer volunteer training in plant identification and bush regeneration.

### Community Health & Wellbeing

Landcare and Bushcare volunteering contributed an estimated \$2.9 million in avoided healthcare costs across Greater Sydney, equating to \$403 per volunteer per year (2021 KPMG report).

To learn more visit our website:  
<https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/greater-sydney/community-groups>