



# Starting a landcare group

in Greater Sydney



Local Land  
Services  
Greater Sydney



# Who is Greater Sydney Local Land Services?

Greater Sydney Local Land Services works with land managers and the community to improve primary production and the natural environment. We help people make better decisions about the land they manage and assist communities and agricultural industries to be productive and sustainable into the future. We connect people with groups, information, support and funding to improve agricultural productivity and better manage our natural resources.

Local Land Services works to improve primary production and the natural environment

## Office Locations

- Penrith** Level 4, 2-6 Station St  
PO Box 4515 Penrith Westfield 2750  
Ph: (02) 4724 2100
- Wyong** 3/34-36 Pacific Hwy  
PO Box 600 Wyong NSW 2259  
Ph: (02) 4355 8200
- Camden Saleyard** 30 Edward St, Camden  
Sale days only (Tues / Weds) from 8 - 11 am



# What is landcare?

Landcare is a community-based approach to managing Australia's natural environment

Landcare is a grassroots environmental movement organised into groups and organisations – some are purely voluntary with half a dozen members while others are substantial organisations that employ paid staff and operate with significant budgets.

Landcare NSW defines landcare as “... a unique community-based approach to managing and restoring Australia's natural environment, improving the sustainability of agricultural activities, and building the resilience of local communities”.

Landcare refers to **any community-based group operating in the sphere of sustainable agriculture and natural resource management** and includes but is not limited to groups that describe themselves as landcare, bushcare, coastcare, dunecare, “friends of” groups and producer groups. There are around 3600 such groups in NSW and a 2016 survey recorded around 980 groups in the Greater Sydney region.

## Why start a landcare group?

A landcare group provides an ideal structure for a concerned group of individuals wanting to get together and do something about an environmental or land management issue they all share.

Landcare provides:

- A recognised and respected “brand”
- A national and state structure for organisational and political support
- Access to support from government agencies and councils
- Access to grant programs
- Improved access to group insurance, and in some cases financial assistance with insurance
- Technical and organisational support from landcare networks and other groups
- Access to landcare training events provided by government and other agencies
- A quick and easy way to establish an online presence for a group via the [NSW Landcare Gateway website](#).



# How to form a landcare group?

To start a landcare group you need to identify a core group of people dedicated to addressing the same environmental/land management issue. It is important to generate as much interest as possible well before you start your group. Remember that while Local Land Services is keen to support you, we are unable to offer regular assistance at landcare days so you need to ensure you have a responsible, committed and enthusiastic group to drive your activities.

Once you have established your core group, the next step is to ask yourself the following questions.

It's important to generate as much interest as possible

## What do we want to achieve?

The majority of groups in Sydney work on conservation-focussed projects such as removing weeds from bushland, planting trees or improving habitat for native wildlife. A few groups also work on sustainable agriculture or pest animal management projects such as fox control. It is common for groups to form to address a specific issue such as weed control in a bush reserve and then move on to other issues as the group evolves.

The focus of your group is entirely up to its members.

It is important to have a clear goal to work towards. This will allow you to create clear steps to help you get there.



It's important to know the land tenure for your project

## Whose land do we want to work on?

It is important to know the land tenure for your project as this will influence what you will and won't be able to do, what sort of insurance you might need and whether your project will be viable long-term.

- **Local council land** – If the land is owned or managed by a local council you will need to speak to their environment team before starting a group. Many councils have very well organised and supportive 'bushcare' programs that are usually a great starting point. You must obtain council permission before working on council owned or managed land.
- **Crown land** – Some crown land is managed by local government and so the above still applies. However, if the land is not managed by a council you will need to get permission from Crown Lands (Department of Industry - Lands and Forestry) prior to starting work. Local Land Services can help with this.
- **School or church land** – You need to make sure you have permission to undertake the proposed works and keep an open dialogue with the landowner. Forming a dedicated committee or working group is a great way to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- **Private land** – This is the traditional model of landcare which sees neighbours uniting to remove weeds and plant trees in their local area through a formal or informal group.
- **Community title land** - A landcare group is a great way to manage common land in a community title development. You will need to ensure you have permission from the strata committee and that the body corporate's insurance covers your activities.
- **Other land such as Water NSW or Roads and Maritime Services land** - You can only work on a government agency's land with permission. This can sometimes be difficult to obtain. Some sites also require special permits, for example, group members may be required to obtain a "Work safely in the construction industry" certificate (White Card). Local Land Services can facilitate communication with other organisations but cannot guarantee a specific outcome.



## What tools, training or other support do we need to work safely and successfully?

A Local Land Services officer can come to your site and give you advice on what resourcing you need to achieve your goals. If you are new to environmental management, you may need training to ensure you undertake work without causing any damage to sensitive areas, wildlife habitat or Aboriginal Cultural Heritage sites. You may also need specific tools, safety equipment and training to avoid risking the health and safety of group members. Local Land Services can help you design a workable plan and provide advice on getting the right equipment. Local Land Services may also be able to provide funding or help you access funding through other organisations.

You may need specific tools, equipment and training

## Do we need to incorporate?

Many landcare groups opt to become incorporated associations. This is usually so they can apply for grant funding or enter into legally binding contracts. Incorporation also provides the group with its own legal identity which protects individual members during any legal transactions. Incorporation comes with specific governance obligations including a minimum of five legal members, the formation of a committee, developing a constitution and appointing a public officer. There are small ongoing annual costs to the NSW Department of Fair Trading associated with becoming incorporated.

If your group is affiliated with another entity, such as a church, school, community strata title or local council you may not need to be incorporated as they can act as a legal entity on your behalf. If you can avoid incorporation by working with another entity you can have all the benefits of being able to receive grant funding etc without the governance requirements associated with incorporating.

Similarly, if you are a group of landholders working on private land only wanting to engage in landcare informally with no interest in getting funds as a group or entering into contracts you do not need to become incorporated.

If you decide it is best to incorporate as you would like to receive funding as a group or think your group would benefit from a more formalised governance structure, Local Land Services can help you through this process.

To read more about incorporation, visit the [NSW Fair Trading website](#).



Insurance protects you and your group members

## Do we need insurance?

Insurance protects you and your group members and should always be considered a priority. If your landcare activity comes under the auspices of another entity then you may be covered by their insurance. It is important you have this confirmed by the entity. If you are working on Crown or private land your group members will need to purchase insurance. Generally, incorporated groups have both Public Liability and Voluntary Workers Insurance. They may also opt for Associations Insurance and if they employ staff will need to ensure they provide Workers Compensation Insurance. Local Land Services can provide you with advice about appropriate types of insurance and in some instances will cover the cost of insurance.

## Next steps

So... now you have a core group of enthusiastic people, know what you want to do and where you want to work. The next steps are:

### Naming your group

Decide on a name for your group - chose a name that you like and represents the work you want to do. If you are becoming incorporated you will need to also register your landcare group as a business name with NSW Fair Trading. You will have to ensure your name is not being used by anybody else in this instance.

### Register with Greater Sydney Local Land Services

Greater Sydney Local Land Services keeps an up-to-date list of landcare groups in the region and is committed to providing financial support and advice where possible. Local Land Services also produces a monthly landcare e-newsletter to keep you informed about any funding or training opportunities available. Make sure you let Local Land Services know you exist so we can help you meet your goals. Contact the Greater Sydney Regional Landcare Facilitator on 02 4724 21 18 or email [admin.greatersydney@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin.greatersydney@lls.nsw.gov.au).



## Put your group on the NSW Landcare Gateway

The [NSW Landcare Gateway](#) is a free website dedicated to showcasing landcare groups and helping interested members of the public find their local group. You can upload photos, information and events to the site. The gateway allows you to have an online presence without the cost of hosting a website.

## Connect with your local or regional landcare networks

Many parts of Sydney are covered by a local or regional landcare network. Landcare networks are umbrella organisations of local landcare groups, which provide ongoing support to member groups and manage cross-tenure projects. See “Support networks for your landcare group” below.

## Let your local council know

Tell your local council's environment team, as there might be similar groups working in your area. Council's bushcare/landcare volunteer coordinator may also be able to assist your group with training and other support.

The NSW Landcare Gateway allows you to have an online presence



# Working safely

Safe environments are created by a safe work culture

Establishing good safety protocols from the very beginning will keep your landcare group members safe and happy. Remember safe environments are created by having a safe work culture.

Under NSW Work Health and Safety legislation we are all responsible for safety. The 'Duty of Care' refers to each individual's requirement to ensure themselves and others are safe.

Some key actions to ensure safety are

- Undertake a '**risk assessment**' of your site/activity prior to starting to ensure all possible hazards are identified, along with actions to mitigate these hazards
- Have a daily work **sign on sheet**. This is not only important for helping you keep track of everyone, it also allows you to log your group's work hours which can be really useful when telling your group's story or applying for funding
- Start each work day with a '**Tool Box Talk**'. This is a short five minute talk about any potential hazards, areas to avoid and safe work practices
- Ensure adequate **personal protective gear**. Some hazards can only be mitigated by wearing protective clothing, especially when working in the bush. Gloves, hats, safety glasses, long pants, long sleeve shirts and closed shoes are standard for many landcare activities
- Make sure you have a fully stocked **first aid kit** and someone trained in first aid at each work day
- **Avoid unsafe work environments** like really hot, cold or wet days, steep slopes or roadsides
- Make sure you are aware of **any relevant medical conditions** your group members might have and check they are carrying any relevant medication eg ventolin
- Make sure you have **mobile phone reception** in case you need to call emergency services. If your area does not have good phone coverage consider stocking an 'Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) or similar device
- Ensure all members of your group **stay within sight of each other** throughout the day. Consider a buddy system to make sure everyone returns safely.

Conservation Volunteers Australia has produced a fantastic publication to help you keep safe. The [In Safe Hands Tool Kit](#) provides resources for community groups to ensure their 'duty of care' is met and work is done in a safe manner.



# Support for your Landcare Group

The following people, networks and organisations are available to provide a wide range of advice and support to landcare groups, both new or established.

## Greater Sydney Regional Landcare Facilitator and Local Land Services staff

A Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) role is undertaken by two Local Land Services staff for the Greater Sydney region: one based in Penrith and one in Wyong (NB this role will change title to Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator from June 2018). The role is supported by funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and coordinates many of the region's landcare support functions.

The role of the RLF is to engage with the landcare community and support them to achieve their goals. The position provides a broad range of landcare support including:

- Organising major regional landcare events
- Providing direct support to community based groups and networks on administration, funding applications, and the formation of new groups
- Facilitating insurance for community based groups
- Facilitating training workshops in Equine Landcare and other sustainable agricultural practices
- Facilitating a range of training workshops for landcare and bushcare members and coordinators.

Additional general support is also provided to the landcare community from Greater Sydney Local Land Services natural resource management, agricultural extension and biosecurity staff.

Local Land Services staff can support your landcare activity



Landcare networks provide on-going support to member groups

## Local Landcare Networks

Many parts of Sydney are covered by a local or regional landcare network. Landcare networks are umbrella organisations of local landcare groups, which provide ongoing support to member groups and manage cross-tenure projects. Landcare networks in Greater Sydney include

**Hawkesbury Landcare Network** - working across the Hawkesbury Local Government Area on both conservation and sustainable agriculture focused projects. Membership is open to groups and individuals.

**Central Coast Community Environment Network** - working across the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie LGAs for Ecologically Sustainable Development and against threats to it. Membership is open to groups and individuals.

**Greater Sydney Landcare Network** - a regional landcare network that aims to support individuals and groups who are working to protect, restore and improve the natural environment of Greater Sydney. Membership is open to groups and individuals.

**Blue Mountains Bushcare Network** - Blue Mountains Council supports both bushcare groups working on public land, and landcare groups working on private land.

**Cattai Hills Environment Network** - a new network that aims to support landcare and private land conservation in the Hills District of north west Sydney.

**Western Sydney Intrepid Landcare** - is a youth focused landcare network under the auspices of the Greater Sydney Landcare Network.



## Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative

The NSW government has committed to providing funding for landcare organisations to host part time local landcare coordinators under the NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative.

Local Landcare Coordinators exist to support their host organisations and members. The Greater Sydney region currently has five local landcare coordinators working to support and expand landcare in their areas.

These are:

Organisation	Local Landcare Coordinator	Focus
NSW Farmers Central Coast Horticulture Branch	Sonia Lee sonia.lee@lls.nsw.gov.au or phone: 02 4355 8200	Working with growers on the Central Coast to promote sustainable farm practices.
Greater Sydney Landcare Network	Elisha Duxbury elisha.duxbury@greatersydneylandcare.org Xuela Sledge xuela.sledge@greatersydneylandcare.org or phone: 02 4724 2146	Support individuals and groups working to restore the natural environment of Greater Sydney.
Hawkesbury Landcare Network	Xuela Sledge landcare@hrcc.nsw.gov.au or phone	Supporting conservation and sustainable farming outcomes in the Hawkesbury LGA.
Parramatta River Catchment Group	Jacinta Green jgreen@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au or phone: 02 9806 8118	Supports urban landcare activities in the Parramatta River Catchment.
Oceanwatch Australia	Andy Myers andy@oceanwatch.org.au or phone: 02 9660 2262	Supports oyster growers along the NSW coast.

Landcare NSW is the representative body for landcare at a state level

## Landcare NSW

Landcare NSW is the representative body of the Landcare movement in NSW. They have produced a fantastic range of resources to help groups get started and keep going. Check out their [website](#) to see what they have on offer.

## Landcare Australia Ltd

Landcare Australia Ltd is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the landcare movement. The Landcare Australia website provides information about the various ways you can promote your group in your community. They also host the National Landcare Directory where you can advertise your group and work with corporate partners to source funding. Visit their [website](#) to find out more.

## Junior Landcare

[Junior Landcare](#) is a program of Landcare Australia Ltd focused on engaging children in landcare activities. They have specific programs for schools and youth groups as well as small grants for junior landcare programs.



# Resources for new groups

All of these resources are available on our website.

Visit <https://greatersydney.lis.nsw.gov.au/> and navigate to the Community Groups section under 'Our Region'.

- **New Landcare Group Starter Kit** - Landcare Australia Ltd has produced a helpful booklet telling everything you need to know about starting a new Landcare group.
- **Landcare Toolbox** - Landcare NSW has produced a number of resources, funded by the State Government Landcare Support Program, including Governance Checklists, Factsheets, Landcare Policy templates and Insurance Information.
- **Greater Sydney Local Land Services Volunteer Coordinators Manual** The 2015, fourth edition of the Volunteer Coordinators Manual includes 39 new case studies that show the diversity of environmental volunteer programs in urban and rural areas throughout Australia.
- **The Bushcare Boosters workshop program** aims to assist bushcare coordinators to help volunteers value and understand their Bushcare work as part of the big picture of biodiversity restoration across Australia. Three modules were produced.
- **The Bushcare Website** is a national website dedicated to promoting Bushcare and getting interested individuals volunteering with their local group.
- **Sydney Nature Carers Network (SNaC)** is a Yahoo Group of people who take an active interest in the natural environment within Sydney. If you would like to participate in the group send your name and details to [SNaC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SNaC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

There are a range of great resources to help you on your way

## Other resources

- **Schools** - Greater Sydney Landcare Network have pulled together a range of resources to help you develop a project with your local school. Visit their website and look under the 'Resources' tab. <https://greatersydneylandcare.org/>
- **Youth Engagement in Landcare** - Intrepid Landcare are a not-for-profit dedicated to involving young people in Landcare. Visit their website to find out more. <http://intrepidlandcare.org/>

