



# Local Land Services Greater Sydney Landcare Strategy 2021 - 2026



Local Land  
Services

Published by Greater Sydney Local Land Services

GS LLS Landcare Strategy

First published February 2021

More information

[www.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au)

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Version - 22.3.21

# Landcare Strategy

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# 1. Introduction

Landcare is “a unique community-based approach that has played a major role in raising awareness, influencing farming and land management practices and delivering environmental outcomes across Australian landscapes for many years. Largely, local group involvement has been the catalyst for voluntary community engagement, understanding and action in the development and adoption of sustainable land management practices and the acknowledgment of our shared responsibility for conserving biodiversity” (Australian Framework for Landcare Reference Group, Australian Framework for Landcare, 2010).

The local Landcare community have contributed to natural resource management and environmental rehabilitation in the Greater Sydney region over the past 30 years. Greater Sydney Local Land Services (GS LLS) is committed to continuing this important work into the future.

## 2. Vision and Purpose

**Our vision** for Landcare in the Greater Sydney region is to see a diverse range of community groups across the region building community resilience and actively involved in delivering positive sustainable environmental, social and economic outcomes in natural and agricultural systems.

**The purpose** of this Strategy is to guide GS LLS support of Landcare for the period 2021-2026. This Strategy describes what Landcare activity currently occurs in Greater Sydney, and clarifies the objectives and activities of GS LLS in supporting Landcare across this region over the next five years.



Map 1: GS LLS regional map

# 3. Background

## 3.1. Local Land Services

Local Land Services is a statutory corporation established under the NSW Local Land Services Act (2013) to manage and deliver services that bring positive social, economic and environmental outcomes to communities and landscapes in NSW. It brings together agricultural production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management into a single state wide organisation consisting of eleven regions.

The Greater Sydney Local Land Services region includes the metropolitan area of Sydney, parts of the Central Coast and the Blue Mountains. It consists of 28 local government areas (in 2020) and is home to some 5.3 million people. Map 1 shows the region's boundaries.

GS LLS maintains consistency with relevant State and Commonwealth legislation and policies. Those specifically relating to Landcare include:

*Table 1 State and Commonwealth legislation and policies specifically relating to Landcare.*

	Australian Government	State	Regional and Local
GS LLS Landcare Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Landcare Program, 2019-23</li> <li>Australian Framework for Landcare, 2010</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landcare NSW / Local Land Services partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (2021)</li> <li>NSW Landcare Program Strategic Plan 2019-2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GS LLS Local Strategic Plan 2021-2026</li> </ul>

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Landcare NSW and Local Land Services was signed on 1 September 2015. The MoU established a foundation for collaboration between Landcare NSW and Local Land Services at a state level on a broad range of natural resource management and farm productivity issues, and aspects of biosecurity and emergency management (Landcare NSW/Local Land Services partnership Memorandum of Understanding 2015). It is also intended to provide guidance for the building of similar relationships at a regional level. The two organisations re-committed to the Memorandum of Understanding in January 2021.

The Greater Sydney LLS Landcare Strategy 2021 – 2026 is intended to provide a regional expression of this collaboration.

## 3.2. Defining Landcare in the Greater Sydney region

Landcare in the Greater Sydney region can be described as functioning mainly in three categories:

- community-based autonomous groups
- supported Bushcare groups (local government or National Parks and Wildlife Service-supported groups working on public lands)
- local or sub-regional networks of groups (umbrella groups in various forms)

Landcare in the Greater Sydney region is therefore defined as any community based group or network operating in the sphere of sustainable agriculture or natural resource management. It includes groups identifying themselves as Landcare, Bushcare and Streamwatch groups, and Landcare, Bushcare and Environment networks.



## Landcare groups in Greater Sydney

Landcare in Greater Sydney, as it is across Australia, is fundamentally driven by local communities and volunteers. The Greater Sydney region has a distinctive Landcare landscape consisting of some 964 individual groups, comprising about 30% of all the groups in NSW and one sixth of all groups in Australia. In comparison to the rest of NSW, there is a greater percentage of groups in this region (around 97%) connected with local Councils working on public land (Bushcare groups) and fewer groups primarily focused on private land management in agricultural or peri-urban landscapes (community-based autonomous groups). Greater Sydney region also includes a number of Aboriginal Landcare groups focusing on caring for and implementing cultural practices on Country.

As of June 2020, it was estimated that Landcare in the Greater Sydney region contributes around 150,000 volunteer hours annually, benefiting Sydney's unique environment and social landscape (Greater Sydney Regional Landcare Bushcare Survey 2020).

## Landcare networks in Greater Sydney

These networks cover larger areas of the region than individual groups and usually involve multiple groups within their operations. Current networks operating in Greater Sydney include:

### **Council Bushcare Networks**

Many local Councils facilitate Bushcare networks which bring together representatives from local Bushcare groups to collaborate on relevant issues in their local government area (e.g. Blue Mountains Bushcare Network and Ku-ring-gai Bushcare Association).

### **River-based Catchment Groups**

A number of councils work together as groups and alliances at the catchment level of major rivers in the Greater Sydney region. These are the [Parramatta River Catchment Group](#), the [Cooks River Alliance](#) and the [Georges Riverkeeper](#).



### **Central Coast Community Environment Network (CEN)**

A network formed in 1997 as an overarching body to support individuals and groups in Lake Macquarie and Central Coast Local Government Areas who are working for the environment - [www.cen.org.au](http://www.cen.org.au)

### **Greater Sydney Landcare Network (GSLN)**

A network started in 2014 aiming to forge better links between Landcare, Bushcare, bush regeneration contractors and others in bushland management in Greater Sydney. GSLN also supports the Sydney-region Streamwatch Network. - [www.greatersydneylandcare.org](http://www.greatersydneylandcare.org)

### **Hawkesbury Nepean Landcare Network**

A network launched in 2011 as an environmental umbrella group in the Hawkesbury, Hills, Penrith and Blacktown Local Government areas.

### **Cattai Hills Environment Network (CHEN)**

A network of community members formed in 2016 to coordinate and strengthen work protecting the Cattai and Little Cattai catchments. - [chen.org.au](http://chen.org.au)

## **4. Review of GS LLS support of Landcare**

### **4.1. NSW Landcare Program 2019-2023**

The NSW Landcare Program (2019 – 2023) is a \$22.4 million investment co-delivered by Landcare NSW and NSW Local Land Services to support the Landcare movement across NSW. The program employs 12 Regional Landcare Coordinators and 72 Local Landcare Coordinators across NSW. The NSW Landcare Program 2019 – 2023 builds on the previous Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative 2015-2019. The Memorandum of Understanding between Local Land Services and Landcare NSW underpins the NSW Landcare Program.

In Greater Sydney, the program supports one Regional Landcare Coordinator, employed by GS LLS and six Local Landcare Coordinators employed by various networks.

#### **4.1.1. Regional Landcare Coordinator**

GS LLS employs a part-time (0.6 FTE) Regional Landcare Coordinator. This role is dedicated to supporting the region's six Local Landcare Coordinators and driving the growth of a regional Community of Practice.

#### **4.1.2. Local Landcare Coordinators**

The Local Landcare Coordinators in Greater Sydney are employed by the Greater Sydney Landcare Network, the Hawkesbury Nepean Landcare Network, the Parramatta River Catchment Group, the Cooks River Alliance and Oceanwatch. The local coordinator roles vary in focus, ranging from engaging young adults in Landcare, supporting landholders and community groups in specific geographic areas to strengthen and grow Landcare, supporting oyster growers and engaging Aboriginal communities in Landcare.

#### **4.1.3. Regional Landcare Community of Practice**

The Regional Community of Practice includes the Landcare Coordinators and their host organisations as well as other volunteers and professionals engaging with Landcare. Regular meetings between the coordinators aim to support learning amongst the group and identify potential opportunities for collaboration. Additional events and learning opportunities are organized to provide capacity building and networking opportunities for a broader group across the region.

## 4.2. Volunteer Coordinators Network Sydney Region (VCN)

The VCN is a long-running network of people employed to co-ordinate volunteer involvement in natural resource management. It primarily consists of local government and National Parks & Wildlife Bushcare Coordinators. GS LLS chairs and organises the Sydney Volunteer Coordinators Network's quarterly meetings. The meetings are an opportunity to share knowledge, lessons learnt and new initiatives.

## 4.3. Other GS LLS Staff Support

### 4.3.1. Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator

GS LLS employs a full-time Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator (RALF) via the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. This funding is until June 2023. The role of the RALF is to support farmers, industry and community groups (including Landcare Groups) to adopt new and innovative sustainable agriculture practices. In Greater Sydney, the RALF focuses on small and emerging farmers across the region and helps landcare groups and networks with regards to sustainable agriculture projects.

### 4.3.2. Other staff support

Additional general support is also provided to the Landcare community from GS LLS natural resource management, agricultural extension and biosecurity staff as requested or when further funding allows. This may be in the form of expert advice, attending or presenting at landcare events or helping groups to access funding.

## 4.4. Funding

In Greater Sydney, the NSW Landcare Program provides funding for:

- one part-time Regional Landcare Coordinator,
- six part-time Local Landcare Coordinators,
- professional development for landcare staff and committees,
- a regional Landcare Community of Practice.

This is currently the key funding source for landcare in the region.

GS LLS also provides office space for Greater Sydney Landcare Network staff including two local landcare coordinators, a Streamwatch Coordinator and a "Creating Canopies" project officer. This in-kind contribution amounts to approximately \$26,000 year in overhead costs (desks, computers, internet, printing, storage space etc.).

Where feasible, GS LLS also supports landcare groups and networks with 'natural resource management' (NRM) incentive funding. This funding comes from a range of sources and consequently has a range of eligibility requirements. GS LLS NRM staff work with groups and networks to facilitate access to this funding where appropriate.

GS LLS has also provided public liability and volunteers insurance to a number of autonomous Landcare groups and networks for many years.



## 4.5. Current communication to networks and groups

GS LLS uses various means to inform the Landcare community about training events, funding availability, updates on what Landcare groups are achieving, and other initiatives. These currently include:

- Landcare & Community E-news – a monthly e-newsletter with a focus on environmental improvement predominately targeting landcare volunteers and peri-urban landholders. The distribution list has approximately 750 subscribers and is maintained by GS LLS staff.
- Sydney Small Farms Newsletter - a monthly e-newsletter with a focus on productive agriculture on small farms. The distribution list has approximately 620 subscribers and is maintained by the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator.
- Local Landcare Coordinator catch ups and direct emails – from the Regional Landcare Coordinator.



## 4.6. Events for Landcare groups and Networks

- **Regional Landcare Bushcare Forum**

Regional Landcare Bushcare Forums with volunteer award systems have been held by GS LLS and predecessor organisations either annually or biennially since 2009. They are a signature event for GS LLS in demonstrating its support for, and celebration of, Landcare volunteerism in the region and have proven to be effective in promoting a regional identity, sharing knowledge, networking, and generating good will and encouragement.

- **Landcare training and information events**

In addition to the Regional Landcare Community of Practice, GS LLS runs training events to support Landcare volunteers, bushcare coordinators, farmers and other primary producers in the region depending on funding availability.

## 4.7. Regional Landcare Bushcare Survey

Regional surveys of the landcare / bushcare community have been periodically undertaken in the region since 2007. We currently survey the landcare / bushcare community every two years.

GS LLS has used the results of these surveys to better understand the issues and constraints faced by groups within the region.

The following key points have been compiled from the 2019/2020 Regional Landcare Survey results:

- Around 90% of Landcare groups and Bushcare programs access and appreciate support from GS LLS
- Speaking to Land Services officers and receiving LLS e-newsletters are the most frequent forms of interaction and support
- The VCN meetings are well attended by Bushcare Program coordinators
- The groups and networks receiving insurance coverage through GS LLS identify this support as important for their continuing work
- Over the past five years, the total number of volunteers and volunteer hours has not changed greatly, although the numbers do fluctuate
- There are concerns about funding security for the future longevity of Landcare groups
- The interplay between funding, manageable workloads and attracting volunteers is an important key for the future of Landcare and Bushcare in Greater Sydney

## 5. GS LLS Landcare Strategic Outcomes

GS LLS will continue to operate strategically in order to deliver support for Landcare effectively and efficiently. Principally, GS LLS will strengthen partnerships with existing networks as the most efficient way of supporting the large number of Landcare groups the region contains. The Objectives, Outcomes and Key Results that GS LLS will undertake are provided in the table overleaf.

Objective	Outcome	Key Result
<b>Objective 1: Work with state &amp; federal landcare programs to deliver regional outcomes</b>	<b>Outcome 1.1</b> Continued participation in the NSW Landcare Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ Regional Landcare Coordinator</li> <li>Coordinate regular catch-ups for coordinators across the region</li> </ul>
	<b>Outcome 1.2</b> Support development opportunities for landcare staff and volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to undertake a biennial survey of the landcare community to provide a “pulse-check” and determine support needs</li> <li>Participate in the Greater Sydney Landcare Community of Practice</li> <li>Provide funding (in-kind and direct) for Community of Practice events as allows</li> </ul>
	<b>Outcome 1.3</b> Continued participation in the national landcare programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator</li> <li>Support and participate in National Landcare Conferences where appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2: Support landcare groups and networks to achieve their missions</b>	<b>Outcome 2.1</b> Provide direct support to groups and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the on-going availability of GS LLS staff to landcare groups and networks including the provision of expert advice, support at events, presence on steering committees etc</li> <li>Provide funding to Landcare consistent with available funding sources, GS LLS strategic priorities and investor preferences.</li> <li>Support Landcare groups and networks to apply for available funding</li> <li>Develop &amp; support projects that have NRM and community engagement objectives i.e. NRM projects that have objectives that strengthen community engagement</li> <li>Continue to host Greater Sydney Landcare Network staff in LLS Penrith Office</li> <li>Provide insurance when required and funding allows</li> <li>Maintain relevant newsletters</li> <li>Facilitate quarterly meetings</li> <li>New council staff are invited and participate</li> <li>Targeted surveys identify format and approach is appropriate</li> <li>Include VCN members in Community of Practice activities</li> </ul>
	<b>Outcome 2.2</b> Maintain support to the Sydney Bushcare Community via the Volunteers Coordinators Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver annual Landcare Bushcare forum</li> <li>Deliver biennial landcare awards event</li> <li>Promote Landcare activities through LLS media channels as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3: Celebrate landcare at a regional, state and national scale</b>	<b>Outcome 3.1</b> Recognize and celebrate Landcare achievements at a regional scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nominate regional award winners to state landcare awards</li> <li>Support attendance of landcare staff and volunteers to regional, state &amp; national landcare events.</li> </ul>
	<b>Outcome 3.2</b> Support and celebrate Landcare achievements at a state & national scale	

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