



Communiqué November 2011

Canberra hosted the National Landcare Network's (NLN) quarterly meeting on 21st and 22nd November 2011. This body represents peak community Landcare networks from each State and Territory. The ACT Catchment Landcare Association, supported by the ACT NRM Council hosted the meeting. Discussion covered various ongoing items of interest to the Australian Landcare movement. These ranged from Promotion and Communication of the Landcare movement, Insurance, Climate Change, and Carbon Farming Initiative implications for Landcare, the 2012 National Landcare Forum and the RLF Program.

An area of concern to the NLN is the Carbon Farming Initiative where the Prime Minister stated in her election policy that, " Landcare, the trusted volunteer organisation which has been working with our farmers for the past 21 years, will be funded to help farmers by providing information on how to further benefit under the initiative. Landcare will also advise farmers if there are opportunities to "pool" with nearby properties and catchment areas. It means that if farmers share parts of less productive land, they could create carbon estates and share the profits." To date there have been no discussions with Landcare in relation to this, and it appears as if the Regional Landcare Facilitators are now expected to take on this Landcare role. This is something the NLN will be pursuing further with the relevant Departments and Ministers.

To further our search for ways to improve communication and promotion of Landcare activities we looked at the new "Do Something" Website and talked with Landcare Australia Limited (LAL). We were updated about what is happening with LAL, including recent LAL initiatives and bequests and the proposal that next year be the "Year of the Farmer". We also looked at the Victorian Landcare Calendar, an example of cooperation between LAL and Victorian Landcare and funded by the CMAs.

We were updated by the Federal Government Landcare Unit re the Australian government scene and future implications for the Landcare movement. Information was provided about some of the Land Sector Packages as part of the Clean Energy Futures, various possible future grants, particularly in the area of bio-diversity. The recent United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification held in Korea earlier this year, where Landcare played an important role, was also discussed.

The NLN is looking at the possibility of a national insurance initiative for Landcare and we invited a representative of Jardine Lloyd Thompson, to speak to us. During the discussions it was mentioned that Insurance in the Landcare area does not, by law, cover the Gap with Medical expenses for volunteers. It was decided that NLN should follow up on this issue with the Health Minister. We were also fortunate in having people from the Department of Climate Change talk to us about latest development re the Carbon Farming Initiative, from a policy perspective.

Development of the Green Nomads program, an initiative of one of our members, Queensland Water and Landcarers (QWALC) was explained in more detail. This program aims to link Grey Nomads with relevant Landcare groups working on improving our environment. It would enable those that want to, to put something back into the community. It shows great potential for being extended to other States and Territories by 2013.

During this meeting we discussed our ongoing concerns re the Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) process; the Action Plan for the Australian Landcare Framework; our input into the 2012 National Landcare Forum; problems with getting government access and being recognized as a body that can be involved in the Carbon Farming Initiative and Clean Energy Futures; the need for a recognized National Landcare Plan and ways to support protection of prime agricultural land to meet the Landcare challenge of Food Security.

The NLN and the National NRM Regional Working Group (the representative body of the Chairs of Australia's 56 regional Natural Resource Management organisations), have been working together for eighteen months to develop a Statement of Common Purpose to establish an enduring and productive relationship between the two organisations. This was extensively discussed at the meeting so the NLN representatives on this committee could contribute to ensure Landcare was adequately reflected in this Statement. A draft Statement has now been produced and will be circulated to all members by the end of December for comment.

David Walker (Chair) and Gerry Butler (Deputy Chair) were interviewed by ABC Radio while in Canberra. This interview is on the ABC website: <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201111/s3376213.htm>
To listen to this interview go to: http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rural/news/201111/r860442_8244662.mp3

The next meeting will be held in Hobart on 20 to 21 February 2012.