

Press release October 29

Tamworth Landcare Muster forms new State Lobby Group

A long-term grass roots push to establish a State Landcare Community Reference Group finally succeeded in Tamworth last week.



The NSW Landcare Muster held Wednesday, October 24 saw the acceptance and implementation of a proposal to form a NSW Landcare Community Reference Group, which would act as a lobby and community liaison group for the State's large and forever growing Landcare network.

The formation of the Community Reference Group, which will hopefully have Landcare representatives from all 13 catchment areas in NSW, is a landmark step for the NSW Landcare Movement.

David Walker of Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee, one of the organisers of the Tamworth Muster, said the amazing work being done by Landcarers in their communities will now effectively be backed up by a State lobby group.

"The movement needs to make sure its voice is heard and that support continues through the inevitable changes to governments and their policies," David Walker said.

"Currently we have the NSW Landcare Committee, which, though poorly resourced, is recognised by the NSW Government.

The problem has been there has been no mechanism for the committee to communicate with the Landcare population. This community Reference Group should enable effective communication, to allow the grassroots to tell the Committee what they want, and for the Committee to keep Landcarers 'in the loop'."

Chairman of the NSW Landcare Committee, Chris Scott, has agreed to be interim convenor of the Community Reference Group.

"We know that it is really important that communication between Government and Landcare is improved," Chris Scott said.

"In NSW we currently have 1,854 groups and over 47,000 individuals who call themselves landcarers.

"Landcare continues to grow as it has done since its inception in the mid to late 1980s, despite varying levels of support from governments.

"Landcare works and the community likes to use the landcare model to get involved in natural resource management.

"Volunteers will turn up regardless of any policy or program. To encourage this urge to be part of the solution, we must continue to ensure there are policies and programs that support, encourage and even inspire the Landcare movement."

Mr Walker explained the Tamworth meeting followed an earlier meeting in June this year, hosted by Lake Macquarie Landcare at Myuna Bay to address the issues facing the Landcare network.

"The Myuna Bay 'Landcare Gathering' gathering was prompted by the feeling among many landcarers that landcare, since the NSW Government's "NRM Reforms", was not receiving the strong, bipartisan support for its activities that it has enjoyed in the past," David Walker said.

"The gathering was an effort to discuss this and other issues with a view to strengthening landcare's voice across the state through mutual support, sharing success and by improving communications."

The Tamworth meeting last week saw a larger gathering of Landcarers which were given the task of finetuning and ratifying the proposal to form the Community Reference Group.

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Contact David Walker, Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee 0428 418 332