WORKING TOGETHER

North Coast Regional Landcare Network

2021-22 Report

Aboriginal Engagement Program

North Coast Regional Landcare Network acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of the nations we work across. We respect and support the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This initiative made possible by the NSW Landcare Program.
A collaboration of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW Inc.
supported by the NSW Government.

North Coast Regional Landcare Network

North Coast Regional Landcare Network (NCRLN) is an independent Not-For-Profit (NFP) organisation supporting 11 Local Landcare networks across the region. The network connects the NSW North Coast's community Landcare groups that address local and regional Resilience, Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource and Environmental Management issues. These groups and networks use community action to achieve primarily on-ground environmental and community capacity building outcomes.

Established in 2009 and has provided leadership, governance, communication, financial management, a regional voice, undertaking larger scale projects, develop network and community skills, and deliver NFP business activities to support and resource our member networks.

The Program

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been sustainably managing their country for thousands of years.

Under the NCRLN Aboriginal engagement program, we are working to support Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Island people to have a voice within Landcare, to connect them with local Landcare communities and help share Traditional land management approaches.

The NSW Landcare Program has funded NCRLN through the *Working Together* initiative to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in undertaking collaborative Landcare projects and protecting cultural values.

Aboriginal nations of the North Coast region

Program objectives:

This program seeks to recognise and respect the ongoing cultural responsibilities of Indigenous people to care for country and support multiple benefits for traditional owners.

What actions will be undertaken:

- improve and increase Landcare engagement with Aboriginal People.
- support the network of Coordinators to better link with Aboriginal communities in their areas.
- support the capability of the Local and Regional Coordinators and other district and network Landcare staff to work with Aboriginal communities and agency staff in more appropriate and effective ways.

- facilitate improved and sustained interactions with Aboriginal communities specifically those with a focused interest in Natural Resource Management and Traditional Land Management Practices
- increase participation by Aboriginal people in Landcare
- increased adoption of traditional practices in Landcare
- identifying opportunities and mechanisms to engage traditional owners and support Indigenous rangers in developing projects
- providing information to Indigenous people about Landcare
- increasing understanding of traditional knowledge and cultural values

Implementation:

NCRLN initiated this program in September 2021 with funding from the Working Together Program.

Subsequently, Landcare-Led Bushfire Recovery funding became available allowing for a full time Aboriginal Landcare Officer to be employed.

Activities have been delivered across all the 11 networks in the region to ensure we achieve outcomes and benefits that support social, cultural and economic benefits for traditional owners.

A Steering Committee has been convened to meet quarterly and provide guidance to the Aboriginal Landcare Officer position. This Committee comprises NCRLN, LNSW and North Coast LLS

Michael Kennedy, Aboriginal Landcare Officer, presenting to the Coffs Harbour Landcare Awards ceremony.

Achievements:

- Assist in identify any training needs Aboriginal community members/organisations need in regard to NRM activities.

- Create opportunities for 'Cultural Connectedness' where the different generations of the Aboriginal community come together to take part in NRM activities and share cultural knowledge between the generations ensuring that it is passed on to the next generation.

- Create opportunities for 'Social Connectedness' where mainstream (non-Indigenous) community members come to take part in NRM activities with the Indigenous community/stakeholders to increase cultural awareness, appreciation and respect including aids in building a network of Indigenous stakeholders to engage with.

- Participating in North Coast LLS/Landcare Aboriginal engagement workshops and supporting the outcomes including mentoring and the younger participants desire to create opportunities/programs for Cultural knowledge/practices to be passed on especially in relation to NRM activities.

- Dual naming of Landcare sites, flora and fauna found on those sites including song line stories.
- Delivering Cross Cultural Aboriginal Awareness Training to Landcare networks and groups.
- Helping to improve education retention through improved learning outcomes by undertaking bush regeneration activities e.g. Bellingen High School Program with one year 8 class.
- Developing collaborative partnerships including sourcing funding opportunities, grant writing applications, completing reporting requirements, project management and sharing knowledge and resources.
- Identifying education and awareness programs about pest species and NRM activities.
- Dissemination of NRM information including training opportunities, workshops, funding grants and employment opportunities.
- Attend Aboriginal inter-agency meetings.
- Promote contracting opportunities to Aboriginal stakeholders.
- Discussions about setting up Aboriginal Ranger Teams and undertaking NRM activities.
- Funding and developing Cultural Burn workshops.
- Discussing possible support for Plans of Management of LALC properties.
- Participating in local network Reconciliation Action Plan working groups.

North Coast Regional Landcare Network – CountryCare Program

The *CountryCare* initiative was developed with funding from the Landcare-Led Bushfire Recovery Program and value-added to the Working Together initiative by providing funding to design and develop projects that provided practical opportunities for Landcare and Aboriginal partners to work together. Funded by the Australian Government, the program provided grants for local and regional activities supporting bushfire recovery for fire-affected plant and animal species, ecological communities, and natural assets.

Key activities delivered by the CountryCare Program:

Engagement across Landcare and Aboriginal organisations to develop ways to work together.

Promoting Landcare to Aboriginal organisations and finding common, shared objectives in biodiversity conservation, land management, disaster recovery and community resilience.

Undertake the project to develop direct relationships between Landcare and the local Aboriginal community – providing a platform for longer term collaborative project partnerships into the future.

Meetings were held with local Landcare networks to identify support from the Working Together program

Development of collaborative projects that included:

- Indigenous Signage – for Nature Trail, outdoor learning spaces and sandpit area.
- Large Mural adjoining Yarning Circle.
- Expansion of Junior Rangers Program, incorporating Bandjalang culture and history to be incorporated into school learning.
- Bush Tucker & Indigenous plant nursey program.
- Meeting in Kyogle with Indigenous fire practitioners and Landcare reps to discuss project.
- A day of learning about cultural and ecological fire. Visits to three sites (Roseberry Creek, Gradys Creek and Fawcetts Plains – may occur across 2 days) with landholders/Landcare members (Kyogle Landcare/Roseberry Creek Landcare), BRRVLN Landcare staff and committee reps, NPWS representative, Bush regenerator (working in Roseberry Creek across several neighbour properties), Northern Rivers Fire and Biodiversity Consortium rep and Githabul and/or Gullibul representatives (rangers and/or elders as appropriate).

Workshop on cultural and ecological fire supported by NCRLN Working Together and delivered by BRRVLN

- Preparation of 2 burn plans to support readiness to burn when conditions suit.
- Development of a case study and a local protocol for Indigenous consultation and inclusion in fire management with consideration to 'Empowering Indigenous leadership and participating in bushfire recovery, cultural burning and land management' paper (Robinson, Costello, Lockwood, Pert and Garnett July 2021)
- Compilation of a webpage on BRRVLN website about cultural fire.
- Contracting Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-Operative (Murrbay ALCC) to provide advice on an appropriate Gumbaynggirr name and story or part thereof to be associated with several of our local Landcare group sites, and to use this information in ongoing publicity and education.
- Expression of interest with local groups to select the sites to participate.
- Organise for site visits with Muurrbay ALCC staff and local volunteers as appropriate.
- Ongoing community education and publicity of the names and stories.
- Meeting at Ngerrie LALC with community to present overview of idea and gain feedback.
- Site visit to scope out activity.
- Have blocks slashed for comfortable/safe access.

- Community gathering yarning circle and lunch – then talk about ideas for the blocks.
- Professional Video – documenting the day.
- Wrap up debrief and planning session for future project development ideas.
- Collaborate with the Coffs Harbour & District LALC to identify a suitable project contract.
- Meet with project contact and work with them to identify 5 Landcare sites that have cultural significance.
- Identify a suitable Gumbaynggirr name for each site and any stories that are linked to the site.
- Look at possibly getting an Indigenous artist to develop a simple design that could be used on the signs.
- Create and install the signage – include a QR code that can link to the CHRL website with information on the site.

Aboriginal Landcare Officer at a NAIDOC display engaging with community

- Collaborate with the Darrunda Wajaarr Ranger team to identify any site improvement that they think may be needed.
- Hold an Awareness raising event inviting the local Aboriginal and Landcare communities.
- Develop a comprehensive property plan of management for Tweed Byron LALC land in the Wommin area, Tweed Heads.
- Implement the activities specified in SCHEDULE A that deliver components of the above-mentioned work.
- Deliver the Nambucca River Access Project together with the Bowraville Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Facilitation of Workshop series by UCCL LLC with invited Aboriginal speakers.
- Provision of basic bush regeneration tools and PPE for Football Club.

Landcare stall with bushfood plants and other resources available for community.

- On-ground training and practical experience controlling Cats Claw on LALC frontage to Rocky River.

Summary of project activities across the Working Together – North Coast Program

- Collaborative meetings, workshops and project launch events.
- On site events, visits, yarning, community day including Welcome to Country.
- Planning and mapping; burn plans, property management plans, case studies and developing cultural protocol.
- Community engagement with 29 project partners such as schools, traditional language centre, Aboriginal Land Councils, local networks, Landcare groups, government agencies and landholders. Broad promotion through newsletters, media, web material, school events, short film development and on-site activities.
- Indigenous themed signage along nature trail and learning areas.
- Cultural research to name Landcare sites in traditional language.
- Aboriginal inspired mural near the school yarning circle.
- More involvement in junior rangers program supported.
- Expansion of the bush tucker and native nursery
- Planting, weed control , stock exclusion fencing and other property management for Aboriginal community access.
- Bush regeneration techniques training including tools, equipment and PPE.
- Project partners include Githabul Rangers, Fire and Biodiversity Consortium, NPWS, Bandjalang, Evans Head Primary School, Muurrbay Indigenous Language Centre, Grafton-Ngerrie LALC, Gumbaynggirr people, Coffs Harbour & District LALC, Bowraville LALC, Tweed LALC, Mahidma Gulgan Aboriginal Network, Bellinger, Border Ranges, Richmond Valley, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, Clarence, Upper Clarence and Tweed Landcare networks.
- There have been productive meetings with key Aboriginal stakeholders and individual experts in the field of cultural fire. Connections and recognition of the project with government agencies has also been a positive outcome.

Future opportunities:

As the Working Together initiative on the North Coast continues over 2022-23, there are promising opportunities arising with funding for further workshops and project activities coming online. This is the result of the Aboriginal Landcare Officer networking and building partner and key stakeholder awareness of the Working Together initiative and the opportunity is presents for government agencies, Landcare networks and Aboriginal organisations to collaborate and ‘work together’.