Landcare ACT Annual Report 2017-18

Introduction

Landcare ACT (LACT) is the Territory's peak non-government organisation for landcare, the stewardship of the land by the people. LACT is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and represents the ACT on the National Landcare Network (NLN). Together LACT's members provide a voice for over 1500 active landcarers who work together in more than 60 community groups.

Strategic Intent

LACT developed a new Strategic Plan during the course of 2018. The plan's statement of intent focuses the objectives set out under the Constitution, recognising that the primary purpose of LACT is to be a knowledge broker and represent the community on Landcare issues to government and business.

The LACT Strategic Plan 2018-2021 establishes a framework with goals with intended outcomes, actions to realise them, and measures to gauge performance. Implementation of the Strategic Plan by the Board and the Members Council will support local and national conservation strategies and the global Sustainable Development Goals. The Strategic Plan is to be reviewed annually and refreshed at least every five years.

Achievements

Achievement s for 2017-18 are reported against the headline priorities of the previous Strategic and Business Plans. A draft business plan has been prepared against the new Strategic Plan and will be the basis of activities and reporting in 2018-19 once endorsed by the Board.

1. Sound Governance

- 8 Board meetings were held in 2017-18.
- 5 Joint meetings of the Board and Members Council were held
- All Board meetings from December 2018 included a joint session with the Members Council. This approach was implemented to improve communications and

understanding between the Members Council and the Board and ensure the Members Council has regular access to the Board.

- Joint Meetings were generally preceded by a Members Council meeting, at the Council's own discretion.
- The Board did not have a Treasurer during the year with financial functions delivered by the CEO.
- Overlaps in membership between the Board and Members Council remain a potential challenge to the effectiveness of the governance model.
- There was no increase in funding for core activities which remain limited to that provided through the National Landcare Network. The funding issue of focus has been the urgent and critical funding challenge faced by the three Catchment Group members.

2. Effective administration

- The website and email systems were replaced in 2018 with arrangements entered into with a local provider for a new WordPress-based web site and not-for-profit status established with Gmail for a low-cost email solution. These arrangements are more suited to LACT's limited technical and financial resources.
- Reporting and/or contractual obligations were successfully met with ASIC and ACNC as our regulators, the National Landcare Network as the principle funder and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as the funder of the Sustainable Agriculture project.

3. Establishment of Fund / trust

- No further development of this mechanism.

4. Effective communications

- Limited resources have constrained new approaches to communication.
- Face-to-face meetings by the Chair with the ACT Minister and high-level public officials have continued.
- Submissions to government and parliamentary inquiries have been used to promote the LACT perspective.
- The new website has been the principle medium for dissemination of reports and position statements.

5. Effective representation

Regional

- Chair representations to the ACT Minister and officials, including on funding for member bodies and strategic landcare issues.

- Successful events held on Peri-Urban Land Management, Regenerative Agriculture and Indigenous Agriculture as issues of key interest to rural landholders and landcarers. Dissemination of reports on the new website.
- Participation in ACT Government consultations and informal networking.

National

- Very substantial involvement at Chair level in negotiations with Landcare Australia Limited on a potential merger with the NLN.
- Representation at all meetings of the NLN Members Council, including at the face-to-face meeting in Adelaide.
- Contributions to NLN strategy and policy development.

6. Facilitation for collaboration and partnerships

- No new partnerships formed. This area would benefit from increased attention at Board level in the coming year.

7. Capacity building

- The regional workshops held under the Sustainable Agriculture grant, which is now finalised.

8. Flagship projects

- Encouragingly high levels of attendance and positive feedback from attendees at regional workshops. Several of these topics offer opportunities for further action.
- With the conclusion of the Sustainable Agriculture project, new flagship projects will be identified in the 18-19 business plan.
- Additional resources will be required to implement new projects.

In summary

2017-18 has seen the implementation of a new iteration of the National Landcare Program (NLP2) and it has been a year of transition and reform across the Landcare landscape. Local issues affecting the viability of member groups and proposed mergers at the national level are reshaping the operating environment and been significant issues for LACT this year. These structural reforms are not yet finalised and will continue to be an area of focus in 2018-19.

LACT adjusted how it operated during the year in an effort to improve communication with the Members Council and implement web and email systems which suit the very limited available resourcing while also being fit-for-purpose. Successful events were held, thanks to the assistance of the member groups, addressing regenerative agriculture, Indigenous agriculture and peri-urban issues and these are indicative of the type of issues where LACT

can play a role. Key ongoing challenges for the Board include sourcing further funding to enable LACT to leverage the work of members and their members at a strategic regional level, and ensuring the organisation remains representative while adapting to new operating contexts.