



Communiqué of the Australian Landcare Council Meeting 41, Canberra, 14 – 15 August 2007

The Australian Landcare Council (ALC) held its 41st meeting (ALC 41) in Canberra on Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 August 2007. On Wednesday morning, the ALC also convened a workshop addressing the current health of the landcare¹ movement.

The Chairman's report noted the 10-year anniversary of the NHT and the worth of this programme. The Chairman has attended several important events and meetings since ALC 40, including the launch of the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge (TRACK) programme, a meeting with DAFF staff to review a draft capacity building strategy paper, a gathering of chairs and coordinators of the seven landcare regions in the Condamine Catchment and a meeting of the landcare support structures (DAFF, the National Landcare Facilitator and CEO of Landcare Australia Ltd). The Chairman thanked Carl Binning of Greening Australia for his six years of dedicated service on the Council and wished him well for his new role.

The Chairman's letter to the Ministers from ALC 40 included the two reports: *Native Vegetation Management on Private Land* and *Australian Landcare Council's comments on the Australian Government's Stewardship Programme: Stewardship – a Principled Approach*.

ALC 41 included reports from Mr Rod Shaw (DAFF) and Ms Mary Colreavy (DEW). These included updates on Australian Government natural resource management (NRM) programmes, the NLP, NHT and NAP. The NHT3 bilateral negotiations have commenced with all jurisdictions, and the aim is to finalise as many as possible by December 2007.

Mr Gerry Smith from the Australian Government NRM Team delivered a presentation on the development of a new strategic plan for improving the capacity of individuals, groups and organisations to implement sustainable NRM. The Council will be providing input into the plan. This was followed by a short video presentation and address by Mr Ted Rowley, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Australian Government NRM Team. The video illustrated case studies of how qualitative social data on changed practices and awareness can be useful for evaluating NRM programme outcomes. The ALC has been considering project funding application processes, monitoring, evaluation and reporting and is currently drafting an advisory paper on these issues.

For this meeting, the Chairman had asked members to seek feedback from their networks for the question: 'Could members please consult their networks to obtain some feedback on the current state / "health" of the landcare movement in general terms, and more particularly, how the landcare networks are working within the framework of the NRM Regions at this time?' A considerable amount of feedback was received and this helped form a basis for discussions in the workshop on Wednesday morning.

The Council discussed progress towards calling for submissions for a book highlighting the recent achievements of landcare and agreed to issue an invitation for contributions.

¹ For ALC purposes, 'landcare' includes all volunteer NRM groups such as sustainable agriculture organisations, 'friends of' groups, all 'care' groups, Waterwatch and so on.

Members reviewed and considered progress to date against the Council's 2006-09 Strategic Plan on an item-by-item basis. The consensus was that the ALC is making good progress in meeting its strategic objectives.

At the dinner on Tuesday evening, the Hon Peter McGauran, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry addressed ALC members and dinner guests. The Minister then took questions from the floor and later circulated to canvass delegates' opinions on various topics.

On Wednesday morning the ALC convened a workshop to consider the current state or overall health of the landcare movement and also to review how volunteer NRM groups are faring under the NHT regional delivery model. Each state and territory had nominated one active landcare practitioner to participate, and inform discussions. Ms Pam Green (Chair – Southern Rivers CMA) and Mr John Dalton (NSW Landcare Coordinator) also took part.

As would be expected, feedback on the health of the landcare movement varied widely and there were some robust discussions. However, there was also a great deal of consensus on many issues confronting landcare, and what advice should be provided to government.

Presentations at the workshop were given by:

- Professor Allan Curtis – Integrated Environmental Management, Charles Sturt University
- Mr John Carter – Longstanding landcarer
- Mr Tom Aldred – Executive Manager, DAFF NRM Division
- Mr Owen Whitaker – Longstanding landcarer

The outcomes and recommendations from the workshop will be finalised within the next few weeks and presented to Ministers.

After lunch, the ALC meeting resumed and members were addressed by Senator The Hon Bill Heffernan, Chairman – Northern Australia Land and Water Resources Taskforce. Senator Heffernan provided details of the Taskforce's work and answered questions.

Coral Love, the National Landcare Facilitator, updated members on developments in NLP funded sustainable production activities around Australia to be promoted through the *Partners in Sustainable Production* publication due to be released in late August.

After the conclusion of the meeting on Wednesday, ALC members were honoured with a reception at Government House with the Governor General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery and Mrs Jeffery. Members thank the Governor-General and Mrs Jeffery for their kind hospitality.

The Council's next meeting will be held on 9–10 October in Kununurra. Members will be undertaking a field trip centred around the Ord irrigation scheme, and Lakes Argyle and Kununurra to gain an understanding of the NRM challenges facing the region.