

BELLINGER LANDCARE INC.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020



THE PLANNING PROCESS

Bellinger Landcare Inc. (BLI) embarked on a strategic planning process in 2016 to help define and focus the direction of the organisation over the coming 4-year period. Planning sessions were held with the BLI Executive over several months and during these sessions the Executive worked through a series of planning activities based on the “Planning with Purpose Toolkit” developed by the Bass Coast Landcare Network. The following Strategic Plan provides a summary of these planning sessions.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BELLINGER LANDCARE

In the early 1990's a number of landcare groups were operating in the Bellingen Shire and these groups formed the “Bellingen Care Coordinating Committee” (BCCC) in late 1997, facilitated by the then NSW Department of Land & Water Conservation. Geoff Bridger of the Mountain Top Landcare Group was the first president of the BCCC. NSW State Forests, who were represented on the Bellingen Catchment



From left: Peter Wilson , Colin Matthews, Geoff Bridger, John Hamill

Committee, offered free office space in their Urunga building and Pia Dollmann was employed as coordinator on a part-time basis in 1998. Initially funding was provided by the Natural Heritage Trust and in the second year BCCC was able to engage Colin Matthews, also on a part-time basis.

The premises at Urunga were required by Bellingen Council's Fire Control Officer and BCCC became 'Bellinger Landcare Incorporated' (BLI) and moved to the current office space in the Old Chambers at Oak Street in Bellingen.

Dave Ryan of Bostobrick Landcare became the next president of BLI. Bellinger Landcare successfully applied for project funding from a variety of sources and soon had four desks occupied in the little office with Kate Goode and Ross Macleay joining in part-time. Fifteen member groups and a mailing list with over 100 addresses made for a very active Landcare community. Mountain Top and Bellingen Island Landcare Groups each won National Landcare Awards for their outstanding achievements.



The Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (NRCMA) came about in 2005 and soon acknowledged the important role of Landcare coordination in local offices by supporting Landcare staff in each network area in relation to the Landcare activity and size of the network area.

Ross Macleay of Bellingen Island Landcare Group became the next president, after Dave Ryan retired due to health reasons. Dave sadly passed away in 2008.

Ross Macleay 2nd from left; David Ryan 3rd from right

In 2009 BLI entered into a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Bellingen Shire Council. The MoU formalised the ways in which the two organisations worked together and soon after Council offered financial support to BLI to contribute to office rent and expenses. Other support funding started to decline after 2012 and in 2014 the NRCMA became incorporated into North Coast Local Land Services.



Pia Dollmann returned to BLI when she was elected president in early 2015, after leaving her coordinating position in 2007 and after Colin Matthews had left in 2014.

Currently (2017) we have Natasha English in the role of Landcare coordinator, supported by Amanda Norman, and most recently by Colin Matthews in the role of administrator. The office is still in the Old Bellingen Chambers, there is a new website and the membership is growing again, albeit with more individual members than groups.

BLI Executive Committee 2016/17, from left: Pia Dollmann, Craig Stehn, Martin Frank, Amanda Norman, Dorin Hart, Kim Cheney. Not in the picture: Frank Wynen, John Allen.

BELLINGER LANDCARE VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Our vision is to be an independent, professional and community-based organisation providing support and leadership for community involvement in sustainable natural resource management, now and into the future.

Mission Statements

Partnership Building: *To engage with government agencies and Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations to promote a network of community and other land managers implementing sustainable agricultural and environmental management at the local, regional and landscape scales.*

Landcare Community: *To provide advocacy, support and resources for Landcarers and volunteers working on public and private land in the Bellingen Shire and surrounds, to improve the health and sustainability of our natural and agricultural systems.*

Project Delivery: *To provide leadership and practical assistance in the development and delivery of projects that support the community in managing our natural and agricultural assets.*

Awareness Raising: *To promote the Landcare ethic and raise awareness of sustainable natural resource management issues with our partners and the local community.*

Training: *To develop and deliver professional and engaging workshops and training events to empower the community to be pro-active in the management of their environment.*

Cultural Values: *To recognise and respect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural and historical connections within the landscape as they relate to our Landcare activities.*

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSES

Strengths (Internal Factors) - What makes our Landcare network stand out?

- Long-standing (18 year) presence in the community with existing networks
- Well-resourced office/physical presence
- Established contact point for the community
- Local knowledge
- Well trained/experienced staff
- Respected in the community
- Excellent relations with the agricultural *and* environmental sectors

Weaknesses (Internal factors) - How is our capacity limited?

- Maintaining presence across the landscape (coastal, valley and plateau)
- Maintaining a strong membership and volunteer base
- Staffing (poor succession planning, “small staff” issues – stress, breadth of knowledge, lack of policy and procedures)
- Retaining corporate knowledge

Opportunities (external factors) – Where do opportunities lie for our Network to fulfil its mission?

- Expanded commitment from NSW Government to Landcare
- Strengthen our relationship with Bellingen Council
- Generational change in government, farmers and landholders – opportunities for fresh engagement
- New engagement opportunities with landholders in the Dorrigo community
- Natural disasters (fire, floods) lead to spike in interest – opportunities for engagement.

Threats (external factors) – What factors will limit or inhibit our ability to succeed?

- Uncertainty of funding
- Misconceptions in the community (lack of awareness of what Landcare does)
- Changes in government departments, policies and staff
- Legislative reform
- Climate change – uncertainty

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS (SWOT) AND ACTIONS TABLE

The following Actions Table is based on a the above SWOT Analysis undertaken by the BLI Executive in 2016. The identified 6 key SWOT factors were used to formulate a range of strategic objectives and delivery actions for the BLI staff and Executive to implement over the period of this plan.

SWOT Factors	Objectives	Actions	Who will do this?	When will this be done?
A. BLI's staff, executive members, volunteers and members are the key to our success. How we support these people is what maintains our success.	1. To support the professional and career development of our staff.	1. Maintain a budget for staff professional development in the annual BLI budget and encourage staff to attend and present at relevant NRM conferences.	BLI Exec	On-going
		2. Undertake performance reviews for all staff and review position description as required.	BLI Exec and staff	Min. annually
	2. To provide a supportive and safe work environment for our staff.	1. Support flexible work arrangements and develop a process for staff to raise workplace issues with the BLI Executive.	BLI Exec	2016-17
		2. Update BLI WH&S policy and ensure all executive members, staff and volunteers are familiar with the policy.	BLI Exec & Staff	2016-17
		3. Encourage staff to raise issues relating to workloads at BLI Executive Meetings.	BLI Exec & Staff	On-going

<i>SWOT Factors</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Who will do this?</i>	<i>When will this be done?</i>
	3. To provide better opportunities and support for people wanting to volunteer with Landcare.	1. Investigate opportunities for volunteer involvement with BLI including within the BLI office.	Staff	2017-18
		2. Develop or update the BLI Volunteer Policy to support current volunteer roles.	BLI Exec & Staff	2017-18
		3. Develop opportunities to support volunteers across the BLI network (e.g. groups, and other environmental NGO's).	BLI Exec & Staff	2017-18
	4. To provide support and training for the BLI Executive	1. See Governance section below (3)		
	5. To recognise and promote the activities and contributions of Landcare in the Bellinger LGA.	1. Investigate opportunities to recognise outstanding contributions to Landcare in the Bellinger LGA.	BLI Exec	Annually
		2 Promote Landcare activities and achievements through local media/BLI website (see Communication Section D).	Staff	Bi-monthly

SWOT Factors	Objectives	Actions	Who will do this?	When will this be done?
B. Strong relationships with our partners (Local Government, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, and State Government Agencies) are essential if we are to work effectively for our community.	1. To strengthen our working relationship with the public land managers in the Bellingen LGA.	1. Renew the MoU with Bellingen Shire Council and investigate opportunities to increase our engagement with BSC staff.	BLI Exec & Staff	2016
		2. Apply for BLI Executive membership on the BSC Environment Levy Committee.	BLI Exec & Staff	2016
		3. Investigate ways to contribute to the BSC weed management strategy and policy.	Staff	2016
C. BLI needs to excel in our corporate governance and project management if we are to operate effectively and maintain our strong reputation.	1. To support appropriate skills development within the BLI Executive.	1. BLI Executive to undertake an annual organisational health check (See Organisational Health Check for Landcare Networks, Landcare NSW).	BLI Exec	Annually
		2. Support Executive members (1or 2) to attend Landcare conferences (regional, state and national) and other training opport. as appropri.	BLI Exec	On-going

SWOT Factors	Objectives	Actions	Who will do this?	When will this be done?
	2. To support the professional development of our staff.	As Section 1 above.		
	3. To better document our internal processes and build our corporate knowledge.	1. Develop a yearly program of policy development and reviews to be approved by the Executive each year (see 'In Safe Hands').	BLI Exec	Annually
		2. Develop a Procedures and Operations Manual that covers all aspects of BLI operations and office management.	Staff	2016
	4. To improve the management of executive duties.	1. Establish portfolios and sub-committees to help manage the workload of the Executive.	BLI Exec	2016-17, then on-going
D. Communicating our purpose and successes to the broader community, and creating new engagement opportunities are necessary if we are to build our network into the future.	1. To improve the effectiveness of our communications and better target our messages.	1. Develop a communication plan.	BLI Exec & Staff	2016-17
		2. Begin to implement the communication plan when approved.	Staff	On-going

SWOT Factors	Objectives	Actions	Who will do this?	When will this be done?
		3. Investigate ways to improve communication with the BLI membership (General Meetings?).	Staff	2017-18
E. BLI has a long history of community engagement and NRM extension in the Bellingen Shire. Having the on-going trust and respect of the community is what allows us to continue to work with them.	1. To develop and communicate the achievements and history of BLI.	1. Produce a publication that documents the history of the BLI Network.	BLI Exec	2016
		2. Help define and communicate the Landcare ethic to our partners and community.	BLI Exec	2016
		2. Continue ongoing communication of BLI activities to the broader community (see activities above).	Staff	On-going
F. The NRM environment is constantly changing, creating new opportunities and threats for our organisation. BLI needs to	1. Keep up to date with developments in/ changes to funding programs.	1. Provide updates to the BLI Executive and membership on current and new funding opportunities.	Staff & BLI Exec	On-going

<i>SWOT Factors</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Who will do this?</i>	<i>When will this be done?</i>
be responsive to these changing needs of our community and partners while still maintaining our strong Landcare ethic.		2. Include BSC council and state members in newsletter list	Staff	2016
	2. Investigate alternative funding streams.	1. Investigate alternative funding streams such as fee for service, corporate volunteer days, crowd funding, and private benefactors.	Staff & BLI Exec	On-going

