



POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide transparency regarding the processing of Landcare group enquiries.
- To promote the establishment of Landcare sites in the Maitland Local Government Area (LGA).
- To outline expectations and requirements for all stakeholders involved in the establishment of Landcare sites including site selection, public liability, approval process, tenure agreements and ongoing maintenance of sites.
- To support community members with the process of establishing Landcare sites.
- To increase the number of Landcare sites across the Maitland region.

POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to internal stakeholders involved in the decision-making process of granting the use of Council owned or managed land for the purpose of Landcare. It also serves as a guide to community members wishing to establish Landcare sites on land under Council's care and control.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. BACKGROUND

Conservation-based land management is a great opportunity to connect the community to its local environment and achieve positive ecological outcomes. In late 2021, Maitland City Council and the Hunter Region Landcare Network (HRLN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the purpose of bringing together the resources and complimentary skills of the respective organisations to strengthen the delivery of local natural resource management projects by volunteers.

The aim of Landcare is to empower the community to become stewards of its local environment through the maintenance of high-quality bushland and the restoration of degraded ecosystems. The activities undertaken on Landcare sites by volunteers involve on-ground work using best practices in the bush regeneration industry in areas such as invasive species management, revegetation work and erosion control. Activities can also include:

- Threatened species recovery
- Flora assessment
- Fauna monitoring
- Weed mapping
- Training and education

2. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LANDCARE GROUPS?

The history of Landcare within Maitland and Australia-wide has demonstrated that community-based land management provides numerous benefits for the Maitland LGA including

- For its community
 - Improving the community's connection to nature;
 - Increasing neighbourhood pride and developing a sense of ownership within the community for the local environment;
 - Improving cohesion and creating a strong knit community where residents get to bond around shared values and common goals;
 - Providing additional outdoor recreational opportunities that contribute to health and well-being while exhibiting a strong educational facet; and
 - Providing a space for learning new skills.
- For the environment
 - Maintaining the ecological integrity of remnant bushland;
 - Providing habitat for native fauna and linking isolated patches of bushland to reestablish landscape connectivity and create functional wildlife corridors;
 - Remediating land degradation including land clearing, weed invasion, salinity, erosion and sedimentation within our local waterways;
 - Improving the resilience of our communities through storing carbon, decreasing the heat island effect, providing wind breaks and flood mitigation; and
 - Supporting the citizen science movement and providing ongoing ecological monitoring to help make informed decisions on natural area management.
- For Council
 - Decreasing the financial burden associated with the management and maintenance of natural areas; even when compared to providing financial and logistical support to Landcare groups;
 - Improving council's relationship with the community through an ongoing partnership; and
 - Decreasing incivilities and issues such as vandalism as well as embracing the concept of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) through place activation and increased use of the space and the passive surveillance that accompanies it.

3. WHAT IS COUNCIL'S ROLE?

Council is responsible for approving the establishment of Landcare sites on Council owned land or Crown land under Council management. Additionally, Council aims to support the establishment of Landcare sites through:

- Providing clear expectations and requirements surrounding the establishment and ongoing maintenance of Landcare sites;
- Identifying potential sites for Landcare through a careful preliminary constraints analysis including considerations of flooding, bushfire, contamination, drainage and other environmental considerations;
- Providing support to community members wanting to establish Landcare sites;
- Coordination and direction of activities on land within Council's care and control to the extent provided for in Council's budget and operational plan;
- Provision of access to funding to assist with environmental management of land under Council's care and control, including providing resources such as seedlings and other materials to the extent provided for in Council's budget and operational plan;
- Continuing to seek funding for environmental initiatives through grants;
- Provision of a team that will visit sites to assist Landcarers in their work to the extent provided for in Council's budget and operational plan; and
- Consulting the local community that live around the area where the Landcare activities are occurring.



4. LANDCARE STRUCTURE

Council will work with Hunter Region Landcare Network and the Maitland community to form a single overarching Maitland City Landcare Incorporated Association to oversee Landcare sites on land within Council's care and control. On establishment, Maitland City Landcare will become a member of Landcare NSW. Each of the individual Landcare sites approved by Maitland City Council will nominate a minimum of one volunteer to form the committee of Maitland City Landcare Inc.

Each Landcare group will share the governance responsibilities, manage Work, Health & Safety requirements, gain access to insurance and apply for grants in the name of the Incorporated association, rather than forming separate associations for each group.

As more sites are added, one or two persons responsible for that site must join the committee of the association or become ordinary members. Other people involved or interested in Landcare may join as members of the group and have voting rights.

5. LOCATION AND NUMBER OF LANDCARE SITES

The location and number of Landcare sites on land within Council's care and control will be at Council's discretion.

6. LANDCARE SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

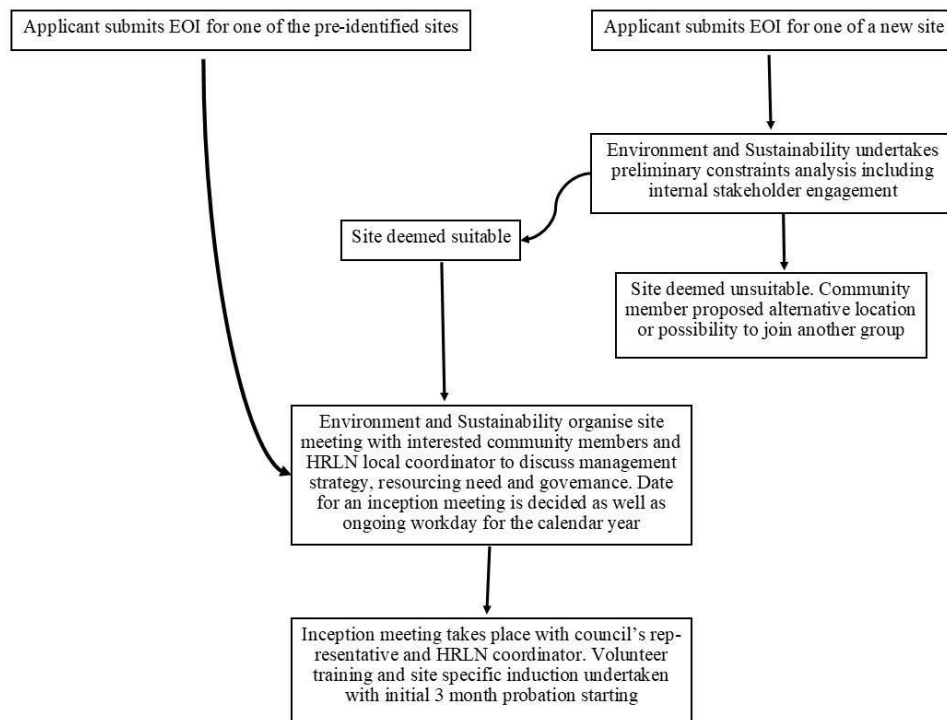
The following table provides criteria to be used when considering potential sites for the establishment of Landcare groups on council owned or managed land.

Landcare Site Selection Criteria	
Ownership, zoning and land title	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sites should be located within land owned by council or under council's care and control (Crown land)• Sites should be zoned Conservation or Recreation under the LEP (C2 or RE1)• Sites should be categorised as Community land under the Local Government Act 1993 (subcategory bushland, wetland or waterway)• If Operational, sites should be re-classified as Community prior to the establishment of Landcare groups• If zoning does not reflect its purpose, the land use zoning should be amended to reflect its use as Landcare site/biodiversity conservation
Infrastructure considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sites should consider bushfire mitigation including be located outside of Asset Protection Zones (APZs)• Sites should take into consideration existing infrastructure including roads and footpaths, drainage, water and sewer, powerlines. As such, revegetation work should be kept clear of these• Sites should not be on land identified for future community infrastructure• In turn, adopted locations for Landcare sites should be made clear to all Council departments as to the purpose of the space and the need to maintain the site for biodiversity conservation in the long term
Environmental considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sites shall be in or near remnant bushland or in open areas that do not contribute to active recreation area network• Sites shall be in areas that require weed control or revegetation including areas suffering from erosion and/or edge effect• Sites shall be in areas that are overgrown, considered unsightly or are difficult to maintain (slopes)

Landcare Site Selection Criteria	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites shall be in or near areas identified as core habitat or wildlife corridors Sites shall not be in areas possessing soil contamination
Community consideration and potential conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites must be considered in consultation with the community and be located where residents have expressed the desire to have a Landcare site or more trees planted Sites must not conflict with other community use of the space such as active recreation Sites shall consider the principles of CPTED and be located away from night time thoroughfares Sites must not block view corridors Sites must be located away from adjoining properties Sites must be located in areas that are underutilised by the community

7. LANDCARE SITE ENQUIRY FRAMEWORK

Maitland City Council has pre-identified a number of locations for Landcare sites across the Maitland region. The pre-identified sites have already been assessed against the “site selection criteria” (Section 6 above) and meet these considerations. There is opportunity for other sites to be considered for new Landcare sites, however the applicant will need to provide evidence of why the site is suitable (including an assessment of the site in line with the “site considerations”). The below outlines the process for establishing a Landcare site, for both pre-identified and applicant identified sites.



*Key internal stakeholders comprised key staff in: Culture, Community and Recreation; Planning and Environment; Strategy, Performance and Business Systems, Infrastructure and Works and/or any other relevant internal groups dependent on the specific site.



7. ESTABLISHMENT OF LANDCARE SITE

1. Landcare sites must have the support of the local community evidenced through a community consultation process. An initial Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be evaluated by the Environment and Sustainability department to ensure the site meets the initial criteria. The EOI shall include contact details of a minimum of five (5) local community members willing to commit to the site, with at least one member agreeing to sit on the Maitland Landcare Committee.
2. Key internal stakeholders from Culture, Community and Recreation, Planning and Environment, Performance and Business Systems and Infrastructure and Works shall give advice on the appropriateness of the proposed site location.
3. Council develops a site plan delineating areas of responsibility between Council and the Landcare group, and a licence agreement for non-exclusive use of the area delineated in the site plan.
4. Council develops a site-specific risk assessment and induct volunteers into the site.
5. Site is handed over to the Landcare group for ongoing management.

8. LICENCE AGREEMENT

A licence agreement shall be established between Council and Maitland City Landcare for use of each Landcare site. The licence will provide a non-exclusive agreement for the permitted use of “environmental land rehabilitation and associated activities”. The initial term of the agreement will be set to one year. Future licence terms will be set at the discretion of Council, noting that the intent of establishing Landcare sites is to provide for environmental rehabilitation and conservation for the long term.

9. WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INSURANCES

Upon establishment of a new Landcare site, work health and safety (WH&S) will be managed through the implementation of an initial period of supervision by Council staff to ensure that appropriate WH&S training for volunteers has occurred. After the initial establishment period, Landcare groups will be required to establish their own supervisor responsible for the day-to-day administration of WH&S. General Landcare WH&S procedures and documentation will be provided by the Hunter Region Landcare Network.

Council requires all groups working unsupervised on Council land to maintain their own insurance. Insurance requirements for each Landcare site will be covered centrally by Maitland City Landcare through its Landcare NSW membership.

10. SITE PLANNING, REVIEW AND MAINTENANCE

Upon establishment of a new Landcare site, an initial site plan will be prepared delineating the area to which the licence agreement relates. The site plan will include broad objectives for Landcare activities agreed between Council officers and volunteers (e.g. weed management, revegetation of a particular ecological community etc.). Permissible infrastructure will be negotiated between Council and Maitland City Landcare.

Maintenance responsibilities within each licence area will be negotiated and documented within the licence agreement for each site and will generally be the responsibility of Maitland City Landcare. Council will undertake site inspections at the end of each licence term, with officers from Council’s Environment and Sustainability department available to provide support, advice and training to landcarers periodically throughout the licence term for each Landcare site.



11. RESOURCES

Council will work with Maitland City Landcare to provide resources to support Landcare activities on sites within Council's care and control. Resources may include access to marketing support, training, ecological advice, seedlings and other materials to the extent provided for in Council's budget and operational plan.

Council will also support Maitland City Landcare to seek grant funding for environmental rehabilitation activities on Landcare sites within Council's care and control.

12. REGULAR REVIEW

Council officers will meet regularly with Maitland City Landcare and the Hunter Region Landcare Network to support Landcare initiatives in Maitland and monitor progress towards shared objectives. Outcomes of the Landcare program will be reported through Council's standard reporting channels, including through Council's integrated planning and reporting framework.

POLICY DEFINITIONS

Biodiversity: Biodiversity is the variety of all living things; the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form.

Landcare: Grassroots movement dedicated to managing environmental issues in local communities across Australia from coast to country.

Asset Protection Zone (APZ): An Asset Protection Zone is a fuel reduced area surrounding a built asset or structure.

Edge effect: The various consequences on vegetation that occur as a result of remnant bushland sharing a border with another land use. These include but are not limited to weed invasion, disturbance, increased nutrients etc.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): Multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments.

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Business Group:	Planning & Environment
Responsible Officer:	Manager Environment and Sustainability
Council Reference:	Ordinary Council Meeting 24 January 2023
Policy Review Date:	Three (3) years from date of adoption
File Number:	55/2
Relevant Legislation	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (NSW) Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)
Related Documents	Code of Conduct Volunteers: Manual and Procedure

POLICY HISTORY

VERSION	DATE APPROVED	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES
1.0	24 January 2023	New policy adopted

