



# 2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October  
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

**Nominee: Sophie Robertson, NSW**  
**Category: Austcover Young Landcare Leader Award**

Hunter Intrepid Landcare (HIL) was formed in June 2016 following a weekend retreat coordinated by founding partner Lake Macquarie Landcare. Sophie Robertson naturally filled the role of team leader, due to her innate leadership qualities and experience Landcaring in rural Victoria.

Sophie has since led the Group through a very successful first two years, developing an engaging and varied program of conservation-based activities throughout the Hunter region. With the goal of connecting young people (aged 15-35) with a passion for Landcare and adventure.

Sophie's role in planning and delivering activities to support Landcare groups in the Hunter region, has led to the removal of 3.2 hectares of weeds, 1850 native trees planted, and 25 cubic metres of rubbish collected. The Group have formed a solid network of project partners in the region, working closely with founding partner Lake Macquarie Landcare Volunteer Network, as well as Landcare groups, local government, Hunter Region Landcare Network, Hunter Local Land Services, and Aboriginal stakeholders.

Under Sophie's leadership, HIL have helped ten Landcare groups within the region implement excellent Landcare practices by facilitating events aimed at recruiting young people to join regular working bees. HIL aim to help established Landcare groups with succession planning, recognising that many groups are lacking younger group members to follow through the ranks.

Sophie has displayed excellent leadership qualities since the inception of HIL, actively engaging with all committee members to build confidence within the Group. She proactively initiates regular meetings to ensure effective communication in a relaxed and social setting, making the event something that all members enjoy attending.

Sophie grew up within an active Landcare family, where it was the norm to plant hundreds of trees on their family property in order to create shelter belts and wildlife corridors. Her parents changed from conventional farming to a regenerative farming system after ten years of drought and pressure from her and her sisters after watching an eventful Landline episode about 2008 NSW Farmer of the Year Nigel Kerin.

During a gap year, Sophie travelled and worked on a number of sustainable, profitable and innovative farms in South Australia, Victoria, and NSW. She trained in livestock trading through KLR Marketing, which specialises in creating profitable productive landscape, livestock, and businesses. Sophie also undertook a Holistic Management Course and Low Stress Stock Handling Course.

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Sophie's active engagement as HIL's leader has resulted in 285 followers on HIL's Facebook page, with an average of 850 people reached on each event, and 12,800 people reached in total on the social media platform. As a result of this excellent engagement, the Group has been contacted by a number of Landcare groups within the region who want HIL to support their events.

Using social media and focussing on adventure is key to HIL engaging young people in on-ground works and awareness-raising activities. Since June 2016, 176 people have attended HIL events, with an average attendance of 22. In addition, Sophie has been interviewed on ABC Radio, and the Group has featured in National Geographic online and contributed articles to various publications.

The main challenge Sophie has faced since HIL's inception was creating and bringing together a group of excited and eager young adults. Strategies used to overcome this challenge included encouraging HIL committee members to take on leadership and responsibilities across the group to spread the volunteer workload. This resulted in the organisation and coordination of 16 successful events within their first year.

Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit [www.landcareaustralia.org.au](http://www.landcareaustralia.org.au)

## Ends

For further information, photographs or interviews contact:

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## Web Summary

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