



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Gwydir Shire Council, NSW

Category: Australian Government Partnerships for Landcare Award

The partnership between the Gwydir Shire Council and its local Landcare group, Northern Slopes Landcare Association (NSLA), has focused on community engagement to build a more sustainable future for the region.

Together, Council and the NSLA have transformed 150 hectares of degraded land on the edge of town into a state-of-the-art learning centre, showcasing regenerative agriculture and next-generation farming systems. The Living Classroom (TLC) gives students a chance to test land management techniques. Northern Slopes Landcare Association, North West Local Land Services and other local Landcare groups are able to use the purpose-built site to demonstrate natural resource management (NRM) practices.

Built as part of the Aussie Farm Dam Makeover Project, a six-megalitre dam on The Living Classroom site uses innovative design to minimise evaporation losses and stock pollution, issues that plague farm dams. The dam incorporates ecological features, edible plants and chinampas to grow produce.

Council and the NSLA have also collaborated on the Biolinks Project, planting trees and shrubs east and west of Bingara to link remnant vegetation tracts on the mountain ranges. The Biolinks plantings have resulted in tree regeneration across The Living Classroom and the surrounding area, linking the naturally wooded hills on either side of Bingara.

A five-hectare section of The Living Classroom has also been developed specifically to showcase the range of bush foods that can be grown across landscape types. The Nourish Bush Tucker Garden has involved both the NRM division of Council, the Bingara Central School and Pre-School, and the Gwydir Learning Region (GLR). The GLR is a Council initiative that aims to coordinate education about community capacity building and regeneration across Northern NSW.

Indigenous chef Clayton Donovan cooked a bush tucker dinner to mark the launch of the project, which aims to teach local school children about planting and produce. Native vegetation has been established across the site, providing a net habitat gain in the Nandewar bioregion and connecting with remnant native woodland to the east. This has also propelled wildlife movement along the predominantly cleared Bingara valley floor.

Gwydir Shire Council has also recently partnered with The Carbon Farm Group, handing the Group the ideal venue on which to demonstrate carbon-farming principles. A recent two-day workshop held on-site attracted around 70 attendees. Due to Gwydir Shire Council's awareness-raising, many producers in the Shire are now starting to implement rotational grazing, multi-species cropping, biological weed controls pasture treatments and tree planting.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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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

Ends

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Web Summary

Together, the Gwydir Shire Council and its local Landcare group, Northern Slopes Landcare Association, have transformed 150 hectares of degraded land on the edge of town into a state-of-the-art learning centre, showcasing regenerative agriculture and next-generation farming systems. The Living Classroom gives students a chance to test land management techniques, and acts as a purpose-built site for Northern Slopes Landcare Association, North West Local Land Services and other local Landcare groups to demonstrate natural resource management practices. Council has also recently partnered with the Carbon Farm Group, providing the Group with the ideal venue on which to demonstrate carbon-farming principles. Due to Gwydir Shire Council's awareness-raising, many producers in the Shire are now starting to implement rotational grazing, multi-species cropping, biological weed controls pasture treatments and tree planting.

Pull-out quote:

A six-megalitre dam built at The Living Classroom, as part of The Aussie Farm Dam Makeover Project, uses innovative design to minimise evaporation losses and stock pollution, issues that plague farm dams.

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