

## Global Landcare Article – June 2026

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For Australians, the continual and exciting progress of Landcare overshadows its importance overseas.

Actually, Landcare emerged in Germany in May 1986, separately from Victoria and six months before Winjalok. Bringing landowners, scientists and politicians together, Bavarian forester-turned-politician Josef Göppel promoted better management of private rural land for habitat, biodiversity and preserving traditional farming systems. The concept spread nationally – active today, as with Australia, its name in English is *Landscape Care*.

In contrast, a major factor in the evolution of Landcare in Victoria was a belief that extension support in rural regions should be multi-disciplinary.

In 1993, our first National Landcare Facilitator, Andrew Campbell, was invited to Iceland by Dr Andres Arnalds, the deputy head of its Soil Conservation Service, who had been inspired by Landcare on a sabbatical to Australia. Andrew ran workshops for farmers, soil conservationists and educators, sharing landcare ideas from Australia, and resources such as the excellent Landcare for Schools kit developed in Victoria by Fay and Terry White. His visit (the first of several over the next 30 years) concluded with a meeting with the President and the Ministers for Agriculture, Environment and Education, who committed Iceland to embrace Landcare. It remains vigorous today as a key plank of community engagement in environmental management in this most desertified country.

Don Ross and Mattie Wall brought landowners and public servants here from NZ's South Island in 1996; subsequently New Zealand Landcare Trust formed.

That year Clavaria Landcare Group started in the Philippines; ACIAR, the Queensland government and major NGO, World Agroforestry Center (WAC – also known as International Center for Research into Agroforestry – ICRAF), promoted expansion, with Landcare Foundation of the Philippines Inc (LFPI) eventually forming in 2003. Activities are largely centred on Mindanao, with impressive benefits to post-war reconciliation, and the Visayas.



*Junior Landcare school programme, Uganda*



After Churchill Fellow Sue Marriott and South African journalist Elaine Spencer-White met in South Africa, they gathered resources to bring a 12-person multi-sector delegation to WA, the Adelaide Landcare conference and Victoria in 1997. Via extensive AusAID support, several Australians, mostly from WA, then helped launch a national program. Over the next decade South Africa spread Landcare ideas to neighbouring Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia, and helped Kenya-based WAC under Prof Dennis Garrity establish Landcare in East Africa. The African Landcare Network evolved, formalised in 2006.

In 1998 the Secretariat for International Landcare (SILC) formed in Hamilton, Victoria. Founded by Sue Marriott, Victoria Mack and Mary Johnson and others, over the next 20 years it ran many tours of Australian Landcare projects for overseas resource managers.

DAFF briefly operated an International Landcare Clearinghouse in 1999. In 1999 SILC directors Mary Johnson and Christine Lever participated in a Mindanao Study Tour on potential Landcare initiatives, hosted by Dennis Garrity of ICRAF. This laid the foundation for a long-standing relationship with the Philippines and the Landcare movement, leading to many subsequent joint activities.

In Melbourne in 2000, 45 overseas delegates attended our first international conference.

In the early 2000s, Landcare entities formed in Virginia and North Carolina, thanks to agricultural scientist Jerry Moles, with his wide African and Asian experience. Interest from Washington brought several political and bureaucratic representatives to Australasia, notably the USDA secretary, a political appointee. Moreover, Toowoomba's James McKee completed a US speaking tour. Exemplary Grayson Landcare in southern Virginia remains very strong.

An informal entity emerged at the 2004 Darwin conference: Landcare International, brought together Landcare bodies from Reykjavik to Wellington to discuss progress via occasional casual teleconferences.



Community harvest, Uganda



Community training session, Kenya (HOYWIK)

In 2006, Melbourne's International Landcare conference attracted 85 delegates from overseas. SILC *inter alia* organised interstate and Victorian tours for the visitors. AusAID, ICRAF, Crawford Fund, with PwC and LAL support, financed a Melbourne master class, which involved Fiji, Kenya, Nauru, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, South Africa, the Solomons, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda and the UK and USA.

Emma Bennett completed an Australian Landcare post-tsunami project in Sri Lanka, and Rotarian Bob Edgar and the late Horrie Poussard developed Tongan Landcare projects. With international readers in mind, SILC and Rob Youl published the eighth version of *Landcare in*



*Australia.*

Rob and Horrie Poussard formed Australian Landcare International (ALI) in Melbourne in 2007-08, when it also made contact with rural co-ordinator Ikponke Nkanta in SE Nigeria. Over the next 4-5 years, ALI funded overseas travel for ten Landcarers to look at community activities and spread the concept of Landcare – the countries visited were NZ, USA, Kenya/Uganda, South Korea and Sri Lanka. Support for the Philippines continued, led by Noel Vock and later Mary Johnson. Landcare, in the Philippines, continues to grow with many distinct and effective features of its own.

Meanwhile, SILC fostered a community group near Yogyakarta, central Java for over a decade. SA Rural Solutions worked in the Middle East. At a global forum Australia's Environment Minister Tony Burke learned from his South African counterpart that she saw Landcare as one of Australia's best aid initiatives. An important partnership began when ALI encountered the late Prof Michael Seigel of Nanzan University, Nagoya, a Riverina-born academic bringing Japanese student groups annually to Australia to study governance and public policy, with Landcare high on the agenda.

Matt Reddy and Rob Youl ran a partnership workshop for NZLT in Hamilton, NZ. Josef Göppel, founder of German Landcare, visited Victoria in 2010. (Josef later steered Germany's program to dismantle its nuclear power stations. Sadly, he died in 2022.) In Alberta, Canada, Geoff McFarlane and Kim Nielsen formed a Landcare group. In Sri Lanka, Neosynth's Kami Melvani and Jerry Moles, with US academic Yvonne Everett, worked on many farming and water projects. Landcare projects started in Bangladesh and Pakistan under SILC's oversight.

In 2009, ALI and ICRAF published *Landcare: Local action, global progress* coedited by Delia Catacutan, Constance Neely, Mary Johnson, Horrie Poussard and Rob Youl. By now WAC-ICRAF, Nairobi employed Mieke Bourne, former WA catchment co-ordinator. Over a decade she helped numerous African countries and communities implement more sustainable farming techniques and integrate Landcare into primary and secondary schooling. Africa leads in junior Landcare. Coincidentally, Australians Tony and Liz Rinaudo promoted farmer-managed natural regeneration across Africa: agroforestry techniques to protect soils and crops and enhance biodiversity and fuelwood production.



*Young farmers, Zimbabwe*



*Landcare field project, Pakistan*

Activity intensified in the early 2010s; WWF and the South Pacific Community started a Fijian project. In 2011, South Africa, Crawford Fund, AusAID, ICRAF and ALI financed a Uganda master class involving Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and of course Uganda. ALI



ran a salinity tour of Victoria for Thai departmental staff. At the Sydney Landcare conference, SILC fostered 13 overseas delegates. ALI's Bob Edgar and Horrie Poussard worked in Fiji and Tonga, with Landcare groups and projects forming in each country, and Rotary and Crawford Fund playing major roles.

ICRAF, Nairobi employed Clinton and Alice Muller, following Mieke Bourne's footsteps. DAFF-RSA, Crawford Fund and ICRAF funded a Malawi master class involving Lesotho, Malawi (whose 26-year-old NGO Total Landcare works in four countries), Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland (Eswatini), Zambia and Zimbabwe. Japanese PhD student Tomomi Maekawa met many groups and networks during a year at CSU, Albury – her topic, Landcare's lessons for Japan. The Secretariat for the Promotion of Landcare in Japan (SPELJ) formed afterwards. In 2014 ALI and the Victorian Landcare Council (now LVI), inspired by Heytesbury's Ben Roberts' work in Ecuador, initiated an overseas Landcare fund to support small community projects – generally in the range \$500-1000. Now called ALI Fund, it has raised c \$600,000 and stimulated wider networking, with Ikpongke in deepest Nigeria an early recipient.

In Kabale, Uganda Rowan Reid led Otway Agroforestry Network's first agroforestry and Landcare training overseas. (Later OAN tackled Timor Leste). Bernie Wonder delivered an ACIAR funded research project examining better marketing allied to conservation agriculture in Kenya and Ethiopia. In 2013, Ken Menz, Noel Vock and Mary Johnson, in collaboration with the Landcare Foundation of the Philippines and the University of the Philippines Los Baños and Mindanao, commenced a research project in the western Mindanao provinces of Zamboanga Sibugay, Maguindanao and South Cotabato. The eight-year ACIAR-funded project aimed to improve farmer livelihoods while addressing the need for effective agricultural extension support in conflict-vulnerable areas. Community engagement was facilitated by the Landcare Foundation of the Philippines.

In 2014, Landcare personnel from Merapi region, central Java visited their Mindanao counterparts exchanging ideas, especially reducing erosion in intensively farmed tropical landscapes. Crawford Fund, ALI and SILC financed this visit. Some of us were privileged to attend South African conferences, which are spectacular. Malachy Tarpey and Rob Youl went to Durban in 2014, later running a project development workshop in Langsberg in the Great Karoo.

Landcare became a national program in Uganda in 2015. Four Landcare facilitators operated in central Honshu, Japan. ALI helped Wolverhampton Link Project from the British Midlands run a four-day training course in Hanover Parish, Jamaica, centred on Knockalva agricultural college. Crawford Fund financed a five-day training course in Fiji – trainers were Andrea Mason and Ian Oxenford. Victoria Mack and Malachy Tarpey visited central Java and western Sumatra to help develop projects. Rotary, via its Royce and Jean Abbey Scholarship, brought Kabale Landcare Network's Jimmy Musiime to Victoria. Liaison continued with Japan via Tomomi Maekawa and others, and further Japanese student visits.

In 2016 SILC visited Timor Leste and ALI assisted Dr Jo Millar in Bhutan. Melbourne's Landcare conference publicised overseas Landcare, although a crowd-funding experiment flopped. Landcare's important role after disasters was now well recognised at home and abroad. Forester Metchie Arnaiz from Masbate in the Philippines, another Abbey Rotary Fellow, looked at Landcare. Uganda and DAFF-RSA organised a week-long ALN meeting in Pretoria.

Clinton and Alice Muller returned after four years in Nairobi with ICRAF-WAC. Misato Imase completed a six-month induction in Landcare via a Tokyo Olympics initiative to promote



volunteerism. ACIAR, Crawford and ICRAF supported training in Zambia led by Andrea Mason, Jason Alexandra and Keith Bradby – part of ACIAR's innovation platforms for smallholders project.

A landmark year: 2017; Australia-Japan Foundation, World Business Council for Sustainable Development and Nanzan University supported the first overseas international Landcare conference at Nagoya in November – led by Michael Seigel, 80 people from 12 countries participated. ALI also assisted a young Japanese student run three SE Australia Landcare tours.



*Tree seedling distribution, Pakistan*

In 2018 there was further Caribbean training in St Kitts and Nevis, with ALI's Andrea Mason, Hank Tyler and Rob Youl. High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago, Hon John Pilbeam, provided funds to bring students from Antigua, St Vincent and Barbuda. ACIAR and Crawford funded three instructors, Belinda Brennan, Jason Alexandra and David Curry, to conduct Landcare training for eastern Uganda smallholders. Kamy Melvani was awarded a PhD from CDU, Darwin, and Mary Johnson a PhD from RMIT University. ALI, Leigh Catchment Group and Ballarat NGO, Aussie Action Abroad, provided Landcare experience for a young Nepalese graduate who would advance sustainable farming on his return. Landcare Australia helped overseas visitors attend the Brisbane conference.

A European Landcare Network was launched. Its website indicates a current membership of national and project-oriented groups from Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Romania, Ireland, Belgium, Lithuania, France, Italy, Croatia, Luxembourg, Spain; surprisingly, Iceland is unmentioned.

With Nagoya's cosmopolitan spirit in mind, ALI, SILC and Landcare International amalgamated into Global Landcare, with a board from six countries under Andrea Mason, a logo and the required governance. Covid blunted momentum, but brought Zoom technology, ideal for such a group. Since then, GL's main activities have been:

- expanding the ALI Fund
- continuing support for Africa
- promoting Asian projects
- developing a Pacific network, and
- improving communications within Australia



GL has been guided by the ACIAR 2019 Johnson-Muller study of the potential of international Landcare overseas. Two years ago, Andrea Mason handed over the reins to NZLT's Nick Edgar, who quickly enlisted staff member Tracy Roose to provide very professional and welcome coordination, a first in our sector. Thanks, Kiwis!

ALI Fund has now raised Au\$622,000 for 264 projects in 27 countries; two major supporters, both keenly interested in Africa, are the Kain Foundation and NGO Beyond Subsistence. GL has also helped with Ugandan Landcare conferences.

In 2021 the ACIAR funded Fiji Landcare research project commenced. The project is led by RMIT University in collaboration with the Fiji Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji National University, TeiTei Taveuni and local farmer groups. The initiative is strengthened through a tri-national partnership with the Philippines, drawing on that nation's experience in integrating Landcare approaches into agricultural extension via the Livelihood Improvement through Facilitated Extension (LIFE) model. Key project activities include study exchanges between Fiji and the Philippines, as well as a Fiji Queensland Study Tour supported by project partner Global Landcare.

Larger Asian projects have included promoting organic vegetable growing, especially in Vietnam; liaison with Aussie Action Abroad in Nepal; and an agroforestry information exchange with Japan in 2023 via the Australia-Japan Foundation. The latter delegation included two Dja dja wurrung women from central Victoria.

Working towards a Pacific-wide network, GL and ACIAR brought overseas Landcarers to the Sydney conference in 2022, where the two bodies also launched the Nagoya proceedings. The book *Building global sustainability through local self-reliance: lessons from Landcare* edited by Allan Dale, Jayne Curnow, Andrew Campbell and Michael Siegel, is a free download on the ACIAR website.

As a Fiji Landcare project partner, GL is delivering Landcare training and supporting attendance at the International Conference on Landcare and Sustainable Agriculture, Nadi, Fiji in July 2026. It is also exploring opportunities in Papua New Guinea. GL has also backed efforts to adapt NZLT catchment management training to Pacific situations. And lately, Nel Smit's Hobart group has connected directly with a Rarotonga, Cook Islands project.

Seeking greater recognition in Australia, GL has:

- liaised with national and state Parliamentary Friends
- organised a pilot excursion in the ACT and hinterland that could be adapted on a regular basis for politicians and diplomats
- run webinars, and
- promoted soils textbooks

Why look overseas? The reasons are obvious: climate change, war and peace, biodiversity loss, social cohesion, jobs for graduates – here and abroad, superpower influence, corporate/managerial excesses, post-colonial responsibilities, food supplies, human dignity, education, the universality of English, and more.

More formally, firstly, we are a wealthy, much travelled and responsible society with a reputation for generosity. Secondly, Australians contribute to and share many global environmental problems. Thirdly, as we want to be good neighbours, we should take a pan-Pacific, if not a cosmopolitan, stance.



Fourthly, engaging with overseas communities is a two-way process – we learn from each other. For example, the exemplary attention to Landcare education in African schools, and contour farming on Mindanao. A fifth factor is that Landcare philosophies blend well with indigenous knowledge and communal economies.

Sixth: as Landcare embodies democracy, there are surely political benefits. Finally, as this essay outlines, scores of Australian Landcarers, highly experienced in environmental rehabilitation in their own regions, have also invested in and worked across the global arena for three decades.

*Join us now. Let's work closer together. Give what you can to continue cultivating this fertile field.*

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*Rob Youl and Andrea Mason – June 2026*

*In 12 years the ALI Fund has raised Au\$622,000 for 264 community projects in 27 countries*

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