

Capacity building

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The Natural Flow of Landcare Group Life

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc



Knowing when to step in and when to step back as a coordinator in navigating the natural cycle of Landcare Groups

The issue

Landcare groups, like any community-driven initiative, experience phases of growth, consolidation, and reflection. As a result we can see Landcare groups become quite disheartened when they reach low points in the adaptive cycle. Making it harder to boost morale and progress forward into a new chapter of growth.

Understanding when to actively support a group's development and when to allow organic momentum to take its course can be a tricky question for Landcare Coordinators. Knowing when to step in and guide a group through the highs of growth or step back and allow a group to cycle through the lows of reflection and rebirth.

The solution

Using insights from the Adaptive Cycle "progress and downturn loop" presentation at the Landcare NSW State Wide Gathering in August 2024, we better understand what the cycle stages mean and can gauge where each group currently sits within the loop cycle.

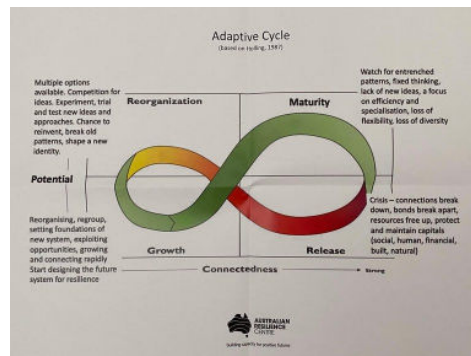
One example is the 20 plus year, long-standing, Combaning Dirnaseer Landcare Group. They are currently in a reflective, networking phase after years of active planting and restoration work. Rather than seeing this as a negative, we recognise this stage as allowing space for new inspiration to emerge when the time is right.

In contrast, the newly formed Temora Landcare and Sustainability Network Group, after an initial burst of activity, faced challenges maintaining momentum. Within a year, the group travelled full cycle and is now sitting in the reorganisation stage. Upon reflection, the previous attempt lacked planning and structure, making it difficult to sustain that energy long-term. With this understanding, we can now move forward with the group in planning meetings as they begin to move from reorganisation into the growth stage.

The impact

Recognising these cycles has informed when to act as a Landcare Coordinator with our groups. As a result, the Combaning Dirnaseer Landcare group are happy for me as a Coordinator to step back, allowing the group space and giving me more time to meet and plan with the Temora Landcare and Sustainability Network Group. By putting in some basic planning, reassessing the vision, setting clear objectives, and refining the constitution, we are focusing the Temora groups efforts on achievable goals, that harness that enthusiasm more effectively.

This approach tailored to each Landcare group needs, ensures Landcare remains dynamic, responsive, and sustainable for the future. In addition, understanding the opportunities that different stages of the adaptive cycle bring, helps to change perspectives and keep morale amongst the group high.



Key facts

- Four phases in the adaptive cycle
- Phases of growth and release are never negative
- Different phases provide unique opportunities

Project Partners



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