

Successful Climate Change Forum held at Yass

Post event Newspaper article as at 17/6/2018

“Another great initiative and superb performance by the Landcare community.”

“It was wonderful to see such focus on such serious issues”.

It would seem that there is nothing a well-resourced, skilled and capable Landcare community can't achieve. Empowering individuals and communities, providing solutions to improve agricultural profitability and productivity, supporting natural ecosystems, all the while sequestering carbon

It was standing room only at a forum entitled 'Join the Climate Conversation – Rural Communities making a difference' held on May 25th, 2018 at Yass in Southern NSW. Organisers were thrilled with the public interest. Right from the outset they knew they were addressing a topic concerning a quiet majority of people, who wanted to know how they could help to constrain global warming. Ticket sales were strong and organisers were taken by surprise as attendance topped 220 at the Yass Memorial Hall. The event was attended by local landholders and members of the public with an interest in rural land management and climate issues.

Seed funding for the event was provided through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program Regional Delivery, via the South East Regional Landcare Network. The event was organised by 7 local Landcare groups, from 3 different Council areas who each contributed additional funding, time and in kind support. Working collaboratively and supported by two local Landcare Co-ordinators, they were able to bring four high calibre speakers to the forum. The aim was to discuss climate change and its impacts, provide participants with land management solutions within their reach and to inspire the community to act.

Question time after each presentation and an expert panel convened at the end of the day allowed the conversation to progress.

A diverse range of environmental focused community, businesses and government agencies were invited to attend as stall holders. They provided a wealth of information, excellent networking opportunities and were busy in the breaks between sessions answering questions.

Invitations were also extended to local and regional politicians. VIP's who attended included Member for Eden-Monaro Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, former federal senator Dr Ursula Stephens, Hilltops Councillor Wendy Tuckerman, Local Land Services Acting Chair Richard Bull and Peter Pigott from Local Land Services South East. Senior students from Hennessy Catholic College Young and Boorowa Central School also attended, kindly subsidised by Murrumbateman Landcare Group.

Genevieve Jacobs, Master of Ceremonies, created an enthusiastic atmosphere for both speakers and attendees to commence an empowering Climate Conversation. Wally Bell, a Ngunawal man, provided his first Welcome to Country in Yass, the town of his birth.

Wally explained that a Welcome to Country was not only to welcome visitors but also to protect them while on country and used his message sticks to summons the spirits for this purpose. He suggested that we all be kind and courteous while on country.

Dr Bradley Opdyke, paleoclimatologist from the Australian National University, spoke about his most recent project which involves coring the sediments of Lake George to understand how the region's climate had changed over the last few thousand years. This work supported his view that a warmer climate due to higher atmospheric carbon may result in a wetter South-East Australia. Bradley emphasised that climate change is not linear and that as the atmosphere and sea warm, the amount of energy rises exponentially. This leads to more extreme events; rainfall, storms and typhoons will all more intense.

Dr Charles Massy, woolgrower and author spoke about regenerative agriculture. In his latest book, *Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture – A New Earth*, he sets out to tell how industrial agricultural methods have caused considerable environmental degradation and malfunction. Charles gave examples of how innovative farmers, including locals, are restoring important landscape functions and seeing amazing transformations. He gave many examples of solutions for resilience in these times of global warming. He advised farmers to work with natural systems and landscapes wherever possible in our role as land managers. His final message was that people lead and the politicians will follow, thus we hope that this event is a local trigger for greater conversations on our climate.

Dr Christine Jones, founder of Amazing Carbon outlined some of the changes that have occurred in the soil and herbaceous layer since the introduction of European agriculture. She encouraged graziers to establish a diverse mix of plants, including short and tall herbs, grasses and flowers in their paddocks as this provides diversity for grazing animals and increases the photosynthetic rate converting solar energy into plant material which will help build soil carbon. Importantly, Christine said actively growing green plants support the soil microbes that create well-structured, friable topsoil with a higher nutrient status and high water-holding capacity. The organic carbon content of the soil is the key determinant of water-holding capacity and soil microbes are key to nutrient cycling. She encouraged people to review her www.amazingcarbon.com web site for detailed information on soil carbon.

Dr Siwan Lovett, Australian River Restoration Centre provided an empowering closing session by encouraging people to bring about change by sharing knowledge and inspiring collaborative action. Siwan stated that people and nature are inter-dependent. We can effect change if we focus on people as much as environment. Siwan's Prospectus for hope: Accept uncertainty; Keep learning; Work with nature; Value natural and social capital; Empower and educate women and girls; Share knowledge and experience – as Churchill said "make a living by what we get, but make life by what we give"; Be the leader you want to follow – we don't have to wait for politicians; Seek connection with people and place – think locally act locally; Use stories to inspire.

If you would like to talk to one of the regional Landcare Co-ordinators on this or other Landcare related issues our contact details are as follows:

Yass Area Network 0459 352 892 <http://yan.org.au/>

Boorowa Community Landcare Group 0459 681018

<https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/boorowa-community-landcare-group/>

Hovells Creek Landcare Group 0459 681018 <http://hovellscreeklandcare.org.au/>

Written by Heather McLeod, Kath McGuirk & Chair of Yass Area Network of Landcare Groups and Chair of Boorowa Community Landcare on behalf of the Climate Conversation steering committee.