ACN: 099 357 454

November 2026 Member Muster (General Meeting) Minutes

7.30 pm Wednesday 11th November 2026
Uralla Community Centre, Hill St Uralla

CEO Karen Zirkler introduced Steve Harvey as the chair for the AGM as the chair and deputy chair are apologies for tonight.

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

The chair opened the meeting at 7:31 pm, welcoming everyone and noting that the Apologies and Acknowledgment of Country used for the earlier AGM still apply to this meeting, as follows:

Acknowledgement of country – the chair acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Anaiwan people, and paid respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledged their enduring connection to Country, culture, stories and community.

Present – Beatrice Bashford, Rowena Childs, Michael Colvin, Margaret England, Struan Ferguson, Brian Ferris, Steve Harvey, Justin Hoad, Janet Hodge, Agness Knapik, Andrew Lawson, Daivd Mailler, Peter Metcalfe, Bill Perrottet, Julian Prior, Elizabeth Rosser, Robert Sieben (online), Emily Sims (guest speaker), Bev Stubberfield, Keith Walker, Helen Webb, Dave Widders, Karen Zirkler (minutes), Craig Zirkler, Michael Taylor, Garry Bashford, Gordon Williams, Carolina Dutre (online).

Apologies – Don Hardman, David Steller, Bryan Johnston, Bruce Whan, Angus Adair, Richard Daugherty, Frank Bell, Lucie Street, Nick Reid, Sara Schmude, Roy Robertson, Henry King, Michael Taylor, Maxine Ross, Roy Robertson, Kate Boyd, Tom Fisher, Brooke Kennedy, Ben Evans, Annette Kilarr, Shane Andrews, Jill Moore-Kashima, Arleen Packer.

Item 2: Around Our Groups

The chair invited each Landcare group representative to speak briefly about what's been happening or is about to happen in their group/area.

Arding – Brian Ferris –the group reformed as a sub-group under Southern New England Landcare Ltd this year, giving up its incorporated status. Not much going on at the moment.

People's Park Group – Helen Webb – have been focussed on the HiCUB sites along Dumaresq Creek in Armidale. Funding from Council is allowing contractors to use mulch for maintenance of those sites. Following the Closing the Gap project by SNEL several years ago, Helen has downloaded the Merlin App and using it to see how fauna responds to the restoration work along the creek. Helen shared a sonogram of bird calls and noted how she can use this as a

visual cue to get better recognition of the birds present. The app doesn't recognise some bird calls. Lots of different species are now present along the restored areas.

Justin Hoad – noted significant dieback is occurring at Mihi and on the way to Walcha. Concerned on a local and government level about what we will need to do, given we have planted so many trees already.

Retreat Landcare Network – Margaret England – ours is a small group of landholders who have conservation areas on marginal country. Had a walk on Monday and discovered we have a resident ecologist, Michael Sommerville! We aim to have four meetings per year with a walk or a talk. Grass ID is the next one. We have several wildlife carers in the group. We are trying to get to know where live better.

Harnham Landcare – Beatrice Bashford – having a Christmas event on 26 November at Uralla Top Pub. Thinking of buying pig traps with some of the funds the group has (significant). If they bought some, is SNEL prepared to look after them, hire them out? The group would appreciate if SNEL staff/board could have a discussion about it.

Struan Ferguson – Local Landcare Coordinator – Struan introduced the PONDI for measuring emissions from farm dams and noted that they are available to share around the region and contribute to the Farm Dams project SNEL is doing in partnership with RMIT. It is possible to get data for your property. Book in with Struan if you want one.

Beth Rosser – Local Landcare Coordinator – Beth introduced the SNEL Christmas party at the Welders Dog in Armidale on 16th December. All members, friends and collaborators are welcome. Beth also mentioned the latest FRRR resilience grant which is supporting groups with up to $400 towards Christmas events. See newsletter or call Beth for more information.

Armidale Urban Rivercare – Rowena Childs — have done three community working bees in the second half of this year at two sites: a koala planting off Kennedy St and one opposite the Armidale pool. They have generated 200+ volunteer hours including from TAS students. The group's 25th Anniversary is next year. Started at Ken Jones Park 25 years ago and another community planting there in March 2026. The group was contacted by Ausfish recently (NFP) to undertake a project in Armidale working with AURG to remove large willows from the creek. Last month had a picnic lunch there under the trees that were planted 25 years ago. The group has 110 members, 3-40 of those active. Several funding applications in the last 6 months have been unsuccessful. Significant staff changes at Armidale Regional Council is making things a bit difficult. Mayor Sam Coupland is very supportive and approached the group to be a priority partner in some of the EnergyCo funding available. Contractors worked at 8 sites (185 contractor hours and 125 volunteer hours) over the last few months. The group is seeking younger members to continue the great work. Bruce Whan is no longer able to physically assist but still supports the group. Rowena acknowledged Bryan Johnston's contribution over the last 11 years on the board. Angus will attend the Bugs and Birds day next week. Rowena attended the LNSW Conference virtually and found the speakers engaging and interesting to hear common themes and positivity.

Guyra Landcare Network – Michael Colvin – recognised Bill Perrottet's 25 years involved in the Guyra Landcare Network. Recently ran a soils workshop with Graeme Sait, receiving an ARC grant to assist with the cost of 25 attendees for 4 days. Guyra Seasonal Update event was also well attended. It's a matter of time for Cane Toads to enter New England. The front runners are the dangerous ones because they are moving slower and can adapt as they progress. Campbell Wolfenden has a biochar specialist coming to Guyra next Wednesday. Contact Campbell if you are interested. Bill has been doing a lot of Mulloon Institute work which has been very

interesting – ponds, slowing dry creeks. Had a bootcamp in 2023 and been pottering with it since. Ben Evans also hosted a Mulloon Day recently through SNEL.

Dumaresq Landcare – Peter Metcalfe – Bushfire near Dumaresq Dam has recovered very well. Seeing lots of small herb species coming back. Bird Group went to the dam and found/heard 100 species. Witnessed young people birding on the Atherton Tablelands. Get on with it!

David Widders – NELN Regional Aboriginal Liaison Officer – Born and bred in Armidale as an Anaiwan man. Background roles have been mainly dealing with people. Family has purchased a block on the Gwydir River and is very interested in soils, habitat, native vegetation. Also wants to learn about what landholders in the region are doing. Dave is running a Cultural Awareness training program for all the Landcare staff across the NELN region, as well as preparing a cultural awareness booklet, and seed collection training for mob in Armidale and Tenterfield. Dave attended State Landcare conference in Corowa recently. Very positive experience with great energy. Took away that healthy country is what we all want and it creates healthy people and healthy environment.

NE Agriwoodland Network – Michael Taylor – not much going on with the group. Privately has been doing a lot of advocacy work with Farmers for Climate Action – there will be some events in New England early next year. The organisation has over 80,000 community members and about 5000-6000 farmer members. Attended COP in Brazil last year. Michael has also been part of a program made up of 50:50 non-indigenous and indigenous farmers. There is a campaign to free up nature finance to get out to farmers more easily. Program was training up front line voices for speaking with media. Woolmark have had a big project nationally, connecting brands that want to connect nature positive growers to directly pay farmers for projects on farms. Slow moving but significant.

Agness Knapik – Lived in the NE for 6 years, and prior in Mudgee, environmental chemistry degree, Landcare coordinator in Mudgee area for 7 years. Hope to have a valuable and positive contribution as a SNEL Guarantee Individual member.

Craig Zirkler – spotted 9 red necked wallabies in one small area at home recently – seems to be an influx. Virtually none 20 years ago. Feral pigs are a growing problem. Shot an 80 kg boar last weekend. Also now catching numerous 40 cm yellow belly in farm dams which were fingerlings 3 years ago.

Andrew Lawson – works at the UNE Law School, worked for Holbrook Landcare in southern NSW in 2000-2004. Then at Land and Water Australia in Canberra, and at the time worked on the Land, Water & Wool Project as a project officer. Legal background and training and delighted to put that to good use helping SNEL. The chair thanked Andrew for joining the board during the year.

Uralla Rivercare Group – Bev Stubberfield – planned a recent meeting but it didn't eventuate. Lots of interest in the group but finding meeting times is tricky. No recent work.

Carolina Dutra – CEAP Community Energy Officer – background in environmental law and community engagement and excited to bring that experience to the role which is a 3 year project to help communities navigate the REZ transition and energy efficiency. The role will provide practical information and support in both urban and rural areas. Thanked the guest speakers. Congratulated the new board.

Karen Zirkler – spoke on the Enco collaborator proposal, a co-design being led by SNEL over the last month or two. More on this in the coming months.

Item 3: Guest Speakers

Speaker 1: Emily Sims, Uralla Shire Council - The Uralla Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan (RESAP)

Steve welcomed Emily Sims to the meeting.

For better or worse, the State-led development of new transmission infrastructure is likely to be the most significant economic and social change-driver Uralla has seen in a century. When it is all done and dusted, we want a thriving rural Shire where the renewable energy transition has strengthened community life, supported local livelihoods, and protected the Shire's unique identity. In a context where Council's influence is limited, change is coming fast, and priorities compete, the Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan (RESAP) gives a clear basis to act on things like Regional Water Security, Heavy Vehicle Routes, Land Use Planning and Biodiversity.

Emily noted it is a privilege to be here. She was a school kid a Rocky River where she was involved in tree planting at the school. Enjoys seeing the fruits of that labour now that she is home.

Emily's training is as a town planner. Emily spoke to her role with USC, leading USC's approach.

The three key issues in their RESAP are centred around:

1. Biodiversity concerns – competing land use, especially between good quality biodiversity on the ridgelines and wind farm developments.
2. No water, no REZ – there are different opinions from key organisations/departments about how much water will be required for the build and the maintenance. So hard to know how to deal with that. The Oaky Dam pipeline proposal is the region's biggest opportunity to secure a water future.
3. Community is an asset, not an audience! – EnergyCo's roll out of engagement has been less than ideal. Getting them to realise the community is an asset rather than an audience has been challenging. But we are seeing it evolve for example with the Biodiversity Reference Group that SNEL is part of.

Landcare provides the exemplar of what we need to do to work in this space right now.

Speaker 2: Keith Walker (Regional Landcare Coordinator) & Julian Prior – A Natural Capital Accounting Feasibility Study for Landcare in New England

The chair introduced Keith and Julian.

Keith spoke to the handout provided outlining that New England Landcare Network Inc (NELN) is developing a natural capital accounting feasibility study for Landcare in the New England region. Hear from Keith Walker (Regional Landcare Coordinator) and Dr Julian Prior (to be confirmed) about this project and how it stands to benefit Landcare farms, groups and networks in our region.

Keith congratulated the new board elected this evening. Phase 3 funding through the state Landcare program. An Innovations and Partnerships grant has funded this project. The feasibility study aims to set up for the future and is a regional pilot study designed for the New England looking at how to build natural capital accounting processes in our region, but that could then be used across the whole of NSW. Good work happening in other regions as well. DCCEEW has a lot of mapping – what are the constraints? Modelling, pathways for implementation. Michael Drielsma is leading our work in DCCEEW – 6 work groups that no one knows about even within the same department. Now getting them together to speak – will now

have a working team across the whole of DCCEEW across the state. Advocating to the Department that Landcare is a great opportunity to leverage the policies and procedures of state government.

Julian paid credit to Keith and Nick Reid for the idea. Julian gave a little of his history working in NRM, policy, rangeland assessment program. He noted it is a small project, feasibility study only. Natural Capital is the term being used – used to refer to Natural Resources. Using the term capital gets the economists to realise they need to invest in it. The data and the maps sit with DCCEEW even from years ago. They are now producing ecosystem service maps – i.e. what is the biodiversity conservation value? Ecosystem services value? All this modelling is happening. When the nature strategy comes together the govt may bring these teams together. At the moment, we are the only driving force to get them working together. Will run some workshops with landholders to ask questions about the usefulness of these maps and how. Nature Plan coming out this month supposedly. No body knows when though. They don't have an implementation strategy. They don't think about who is going to do the work – farmers. Local government is an important partner as well.

A few short questions were fielded.

Item 4: Award Announcements

Coordinator's Choice Award

Each year, the staff at Southern New England Landcare nominate someone they think deserves some recognition for the assistance they provide to the team as a volunteer throughout the year.

This year, the Coordinators Choice Award was presented by Struan Ferguson and Awarded to Janet Hodge, Receptionist at SNEL, for her outstanding commitment to keeping the staff 'sane' this year. Struan spoke to Janet's ability to take things in her stride, never get flustered, and always ready to be helpful.

Congratulations Janet!

John Winter Irving Memorial Bequest announcement

The chair noted that the Board of Southern New England Landcare Ltd is honoured that the Winter-Irving family continues to make available a bequest to allow John's unfailing commitment to Landcare to be continued.

The bequest is to be used as a study grant in an activity of the recipient's choosing, in the field of sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, rural or regional development or leadership.

In recognition of John's quiet, unassuming manner the Bequest is not openly advertised, but instead is merit based – a case of where actions really do speak louder than words.

The chair announced that the board of Southern New England Landcare has selected **Elizabeth Rosser** as the recipient of the 2026 John Winter-Irving Bequest.

Southern New England Landcare Ltd is proud to recognise Elizabeth's outstanding commitment to sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and community leadership.

Elizabeth's contributions to Landcare and the broader community are extensive and significant.

She exemplifies the values of Landcare and continues to grow as a leader in the field.

A four-day training event with Graham Sait from Nutritech Solutions is among the projects and capacity-building events Elizabeth has successfully coordinated in the Guyra district in her role as a Local Landcare Coordinator with Southern New England Landcare.

This work has helped reinvigorate the Guyra Landcare Network, previously the Malpas Catchment Group.

Over the last two years in her role, Elizabeth has also:

1. Supported Uralla Rivercare group to deliver numerous events across the region. The events formed part of the group's 2025-2026 FRRR Water Resilience and Sustainable Management for Homes & Villages project.
2. Delivered a range of capacity-building events for farmers across the region within six months in partnership with the Mulloon Institute. The events were supported by the Armidale Regional Council and Uralla Shire Council Regional Drought Resilience Program.
3. Supported Jeogla Feral Animal Control group to roll out their Wild Dog Management Plan, and
4. Assisted with delivery of a series of Cyber Security workshops across the region.

Elizabeth also spent 12 months representing staff on the Southern New England Landcare Risk Management Committee.

Outside Landcare, Elizabeth works for equity of access to education for all students living in rural and remote Australia by representing isolated students through her role on the NSW State Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association NSW.

Mrs Ona Winter-Irving, wife of the late Mr John Winter-Irving, offers her warmest congratulations to Elizabeth, saying she was exactly the type of person the family hoped the award would support.

"We're delighted to recognise and encourage Elizabeth's passion and involvement in sustainable agriculture," said Ona.

She said, "Johnno would be delighted to hear of her involvement with natural resource management and her work with and support for Landcare and her generous commitment to community as well."

Ona and her family hope John's bequest can help Elizabeth further her passion and commitment to community and sustainable agriculture, even in a small way.

Ona also thanked the Southern New England Landcare board for its ongoing work in supporting John's bequest.

Southern New England Landcare congratulates Elizabeth on this well-deserved recognition and looks forward to the continued impact of her work.

Steve thanked everyone for their attendance, congratulated SNEL on 25 years and closed the meeting at 9:08 pm.