

# Celebrating Nell Chaffey: Champion of Landcare and Conservation

We are excited to introduce Nell Chaffey, the amazing winner of the NSW Women in Landcare Award. Nell's down-to-earth dedication to caring for our land and environment has made her a true gem in our community. Let's take a closer look at Nell's story, her journey, and the incredible work she's done in landcare and conservation.

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## From Farm Life to Landcare Advocate

Nell's love for nature began at an early age. Born in Moree, Nell grew up near Gravesend, where her days were filled with outdoor adventures. Her fascination with the natural world was nurtured by her father, with whom she spent countless hours exploring the land, and along the banks of the Gwydir River collecting critters, and immersing herself in the wonders of nature.

"My fascination with nature has always been there," Nell recalls. "Mum liked a tidy house, so we children were encouraged to be outside. I spent a lot of time in the natural world, observing, engaging with, and collecting critters in glass jars."

The seeds of Nell's passion for the Australian bush and its flora and fauna were sown through her early experiences mustering cattle, walking miles to bring home milking cows, and learning from a neighbouring farmer about the biodiversity around her. These experiences instilled in her a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living things.

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## A Lifelong Educator and Conservationist

Nell's journey as an educator began as a Kindergarten-Infants teacher, where she found joy in igniting the curiosity of young minds. She later became a teacher-librarian, fostering critical thinking skills and encouraging students to explore the natural world.

"Curiosity is such an overlooked trait," Nell says. "Becoming a teacher gave me the perfect opportunity to share the magic of nature with children and to foster their curiosity."

Nell's childhood memories are filled with vivid recollections of observing wildlife, from orb weavers and willy wagtails to tadpoles and red-back spiders. These early encounters with nature laid the foundation for her lifelong commitment to conservation.

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## **Making a Difference Through Landcare**

Nell's involvement with Landcare was driven by a desire to make a difference and connect with like-minded individuals. Over the years, she has been an integral part of numerous projects, always emphasizing teamwork and community collaboration.

Among her many contributions are the Jeffries Gully Rehabilitation Project, the Klori TSR, woodland units for primary students, and the Nest Box Project. Nell's efforts extend to supporting the TRLA, hosting on-farm workshops, and organizing community presentations on the importance of woodland understory and native shrubs.

Winning the NSW State Landcare Award is a testament to Nell's dedication. "Receiving this award is very humbling," she says. "I hope it brings attention to Landcare's work and represents all those who have inspired and mentored me along the way."

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## **Family and Community: The Heart of Landcare**

Nell's family, especially her husband Wayne, plays a vital role in her landcare activities. Together, they have worked on numerous projects, Nell is particularly glad that Wayne does all the fencing. Their efforts have made a lasting impact, and their children and grandchildren have been involved in corridor plantings, witnessing firsthand the growth and success of their work.

"Being able to discuss and work on ideas with Wayne is really important," Nell notes. "We've tried to be role models for our children and grandchildren when it comes to the environment."

For Nell, community is at the heart of successful landcare projects. She believes that caring for our world is a collective responsibility and that everyone has a part to play in preserving our planet.

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## **Looking Ahead: A Vision for the Future**

Nell's personal philosophy on land stewardship is centred on balance and management. She strives to leave the land in better condition than she found it, promoting biodiversity and creating habitat corridors across the landscape.

"To balance and manage," Nell emphasizes. "To keep the ecological integrity of a 'high value' area, or to leave a degraded area better than you began your stewardship of it."

Nell's future goals include continuing to promote the importance of biodiversity and modelling the notion that everyone has a role to play in conservation. She hopes to

inspire future generations to view our planet's biodiversity as something precious and worth preserving.

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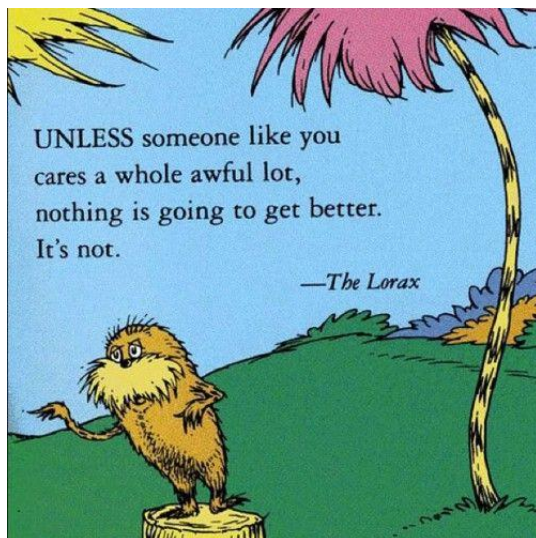
## A Legacy of Stewardship and Inspiration

The most rewarding aspect of Nell's work in landcare is seeing the positive changes on their farm, particularly the increase in wood and grassland bird species. Despite the challenges posed by extreme weather events and the demands of farming, Nell remains passionate and committed to her mission.

"Just keep going," she advises. "There are always small moments of joy, where you see a result, no matter how small, and you realize it's a special, precious achievement."

Nell's journey is a testament to the power of perseverance, community, and a deep love for the natural world. As we celebrate her achievements, we are reminded of the profound impact one person can have on the environment and the lasting legacy they can leave behind. Nell Chaffey is not just a winner of an award; she is a beacon of hope and inspiration for all of us committed to landcare and conservation.

When Nell was asked for some words of advice for those of us that are interested in conservation but might be just starting out, she shared the following from Dr Suess



In her usual humble fashion Nell has best summed up her philosophy for life,

I care and I'm loyal, ... I guess that is why I mostly sign off my emails with a sunflower, (although they are not native) because sunflowers are associated with happiness and positivity, life and growth, ... they are also symbols of loyalty, because they track the sun across the sky. Longevity is another quality they demonstrate, living for up to two years uncultivated. In some cultures, sunflowers are seen as symbols of healing. All important aspects of being a Landcarer.

