Agroecology Land Trust Report

Since the opening of Stage 1 in June 2025, the Agroecology Land Trust (ALT) Steering Committee (SC) has been shaping what will become the first initiative of its kind in so-called Australia.

Informed by a Landscape Review delivered by former project coordinator Michele Sabto, whose excellent coordination work also shaped the project, guided by the Economic Principles drafted by Antoine Lenique and Tammi Jonas, and drawing on growing momentum for community-led and First Peoples-led land rematriation, the SC has developed a governance and business model, projected financial needs, and engaged with what will be the ALT's first case study: a farmer eager to secure their land for perpetual agroecology-oriented use.

Early July 2026, AFSA received news of a farmer willing to donate 141 hectares of regenerative farmland near Kilkivan, Queensland. This offer has catalysed our discussions, including yarns with AFSA First Peoples Focal Group members, about using the Kilkivan donation as a flagship case study for the ALT. In fact, the Kilkivan case strengthens the priority of establishing the ALT, and could include a cooperative made up of diverse agroecology-oriented farms, potentially focusing on First Peoples agroecology formation.

After three in-person workshops and a great deal of hard work, we are now entering Stage 2 of this much-needed work. The following sections set out our latest developments.

Governance

- *Economic Principle 1 - Collective land ownership*
- *Economic Principle 3 - Value First Peoples' custodianship of Country*
- *Economic Principle 8 - Democratic governance*
- *Economic Principle 10 - Embedded decolonial, ecological and social covenants*

Following our second workshop on 16 November 2025 and thanks to Antony and Clare from Co-operative Bonds, the SC set out a nested co-operative model designed to keep farmers front and centre while safeguarding the Trust's mission over time. Underpinned by the economic principles, we're aiming at the following structure:

- **Regional Co-ops**: Democratically governed, non-distributing co-ops whose members are farmers and regional supporting members. Each Regional Co-op is a member of the Coordinating Co-op. We are exploring alternative ways of designing Co-op boundaries on stolen land, respecting Traditional Owners and State boundaries, and/or water catchments. The "one member, one vote" principle enshrines collective choice under Australian co-operative law. First Peoples are decision makers at the national and regional levels.
- **Coordinating Co-op**: A national, non-distributing, not for profit, asset locked, peak co-op with enshrined economic principles and strong governance that holds the land. Farmers obtain secure tenure through long-term access-and-use agreements with Regional Co-ops. The Coordinating Co-op also supports the Regional Co-ops (administrative costs, solidarity funds, land management costs) and prevents reprivatisation or speculative use of land.
- **Foundation / revolving gift fund (charity)**: Sits alongside the co-ops to assist with funding.

- **AFSA**: Works closely with the Coordinating and Regional Co-ops on policy advocacy and movement building to support land reform for food sovereignty and agroecology, with emphasis on the need to advance the 4Rs declared at the ICARRD+20 in January 2026, Colombia (see AFSA International section of this report). While the ALT builds the foundations for our vision, AFSA fights for regulatory reform and system change to enable it.

More specific governance questions including the role of non-member experts, and how supporting members might participate will be considered.

Financial modelling and funding strategy

- *Economic Principle 2 - Value reproductive labour*
- *Economic Principle 5 - No land rent charged*
- *Economic Principle 6 - Zero interest and debt avoidance*
- *Economic Principle 7 - Non-extractive return models*

On 26 September 2026, the Steering Committee held its third in-person workshop, to advance financial modelling for ALT running costs, explicitly excluding land acquisition costs. Opening with the Kilkivan donation news, the workshop enabled frank discussion of risks, opportunities, challenges and next steps.

Key outcomes included:

- Drafting questions for tax and legal advisers
- Estimating funding needs for the next start-up phase
- Identifying mechanisms to reach those targets, including a revolving gift fund
- Confirming the aim to hire a project coordinator
- Kilkivan Farm visit: Tammi (AFSA Focal Point for Farmers and SC member) and Antoine (AFSA General Coordinator and SC Chair) will travel to Queensland at the end of October to join FPFG Coordinator and SC member Tyá and FPFG local member Jacob to walk Country and meet the farmer

The Kilkivan opportunity has also opened space for AFSA to organise an Agroecology Dialogue in the Gympie region, linking movement building with concrete land-custodianship.

Land acquisition is expected to be funded through philanthropic grants and donations, crowdfunding, member subscriptions, entry fees and the potential use of a revolving gift fund. Co-operative securities (shares, debentures, CCUs) have not been ruled out but will probably not be explored at the early stages.

Next steps

The Steering Committee's work over the past year has laid strong foundations: a farmer- and First Peoples-centred governance model, a clear separation between operational and acquisition funding, and an opportunity to test and demonstrate the ALT model in action. With financial modelling underway, legal and tax advice being sought, and relationships deepening on Country, the Agroecology Land Trust is moving from blueprint to grounded reality: locking land for agroecology to secure the

material conditions needed to accelerate the transition towards a socially, environmentally and economically just, food sovereign agri-food system.

Gratitude to all Steering Committee members for their serious, considered engagement and generous time. The movement is growing, and the ground is ready.

Further information:

- Agroecology Land Trust - Overview document
- Agroecology Land Trust - Economic Principles
- Agroecology Land Trust - Landscape Review
- Agroecology Land Trust - AFSA website
- Agroecology Land Trust - Vision and Mission