



AGENDA

A meeting of the **Environment Reference Group** will be held on Cammeraygal Land at the Ros Crichton Pavilion Council Chambers, 200 Miller Street, North Sydney at 7:15 PM on Monday 21 November 2022. The agenda is as follows.

Joseph Hill
A/GENERAL MANAGER



North Sydney Council is an Open Government Council. The records of Council are available for public viewing in accordance with this policy, with the only exception being made for certain confidential documents such as legal advice, matters required by legislation not to be divulged, and staff matters.

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1. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Nil

3. Committee Reports

3.1. RecycleSmart Trial Update

AUTHOR: Emmaline Callaghan, Waste Operations and Education Officer

ENDORSED BY: Peter Massey, Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the progress of the RecycleSmart trial which commenced July 2022 for an initial period of three months and extended for a further period of three months to 30 December 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In the Council meeting on 28 March 2022, Council resolved to offer RecycleSmart a three-month trial to enable difficult to recycle items to be collected and transferred to local recycling infrastructure. Council also resolved that an agreement be sought with the Community Recycling Centre (CRC) member Councils, about engaging with King Cotton to provide a textile recycling collection bin at the CRC.

RecycleSmart offers a household pick up service for difficult to recycle items such as soft plastics, textiles and e-waste. Residents can subscribe for free and get up to 2 bags (the size of shopping bags) picked up per month. Additional bags cost the resident \$5 each. Alternatively, the resident can book a single pick up for \$10 for 2 bags.

Materials are delivered to local infrastructure such as Coles and Woolworths Redcycle bins (for soft plastics), charity shops (textiles) and the CRC (e-waste and hazardous household waste).

During the first three months of the trial an average of 295 bags per month was collected. The trial has been extended for a further three months to the end of December 2022 to ascertain whether there will be an increase in the uptake of the program in the lead up to the holiday period.

The cost of the first 3 months of the trial was \$15,000 plus GST for an unlimited number of bags. There is no additional cost for the extended 3-month period, however if the number of bags collected exceeds 1000 per month, then Council will be charged \$7 per bag thereafter. Based on the current data, it is unlikely that more than 1000 bags will be collected per month.

For the three months from 5 July 2022 – 30 September 2022 the results are as follows:

- 421 bookings
- 884 bags collected
- 1,446 kilos collected
- 49% soft plastics, 25% textiles, 16% e-waste, 10% other (batteries, printer cartridges and x-rays etc)

Council has received positive feedback from the local community about the RecycleSmart service. One issue encountered was that some bags have been collected inadvertently as an illegal dumping.

The service is growing and there has been an increase in the uptake, however at this stage the number of bags being collected is below the 1000 bag threshold, which have kept costs to the minimum.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The extension of the trial to December 2022 has been offered at the same rate as the initial trial, at a cost of \$15,000 plus GST for 3 months. However, if more than 1000 bags are collected, each bag over 1000 will be charged at \$7 per bag.

If Council decides to engage RecycleSmart on ongoing basis after the trial period ends, the costs will be as follows:

Bags collected per month	Monthly Cost to Council
0-1000	\$7,000 (base)
1001-3000	\$7.00 per bag
3001-5000	\$6.50 per bag
>5000	\$6.00 per bag

If Council wishes to proceed with a 12-month collection agreement with RecycleSmart, this will be at a minimum cost of \$84,000 plus GST per year. This can be funded from the Domestic Waste Management Budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the report be received.
- 2. THAT** Council continues to provide the RecycleSmart program for Council residents for an additional twelve months after the trial period ends.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
- 1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

BACKGROUND

In the Council meeting on 28 March 2022, Council resolved to offer RecycleSmart a three-month trial to enable difficult to recycle items to be collected and transferred to local recycling infrastructure.

An initial 3-month trial with RecycleSmart commenced on 5 July 2022 and was extended to 31 December 2022.

This trial has provided a collection service to the members of the community who do not have a vehicle or are less mobile and helps divert recyclable resources from landfill and promote sustainability.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

RecycleSmart is a program that enables problematic recyclables to be collected from residences within the North Sydney LGA. It aims to make recycling more accessible to residents. RecycleSmart drivers' collect the pre-booked materials directly from households and deliver the material to local infrastructure.

Residents can book a pickup via the RecycleSmart App and/or website. Residents can subscribe for free and get up to 2 bags picked up per month. For an additional bag, residents pay \$5 per bag to RecycleSmart. Any grocery shopping bag can be used.

Materials collected by RecycleSmart is dependent on available infrastructure and falls under five major categories, including:

- Soft plastics
- Non-recyclable clothes
- Recyclable clothes and other textiles
- E-waste
- Misfits (for example batteries, printer cartridges and x-rays)

Soft plastics are taken to local Coles or Woolworths Redcycle bins.

RecycleSmart divide textiles into wearable and unwearable categories. Wearable textiles are dropped off at Vinnies, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Whereas unwearable textiles go to clothing retail outlets such as Zara and H&M.

E-waste and misfits which includes batteries, light globes, printer cartridges and x-rays are taken to the CRC in Artarmon.

E-waste collected by RecycleSmart must be able to fit in a standard shopping bag, therefore only small amounts of e-waste are accepted by RecycleSmart. Oversized items will be rejected for collection.

RecycleSmart collection drivers weigh and assess the contents of each bag and report back to Council monthly.

The report includes:

- Quantity of materials collected
- Number of booked collections
- Number of bags picked up
- Visual volume assessment of each waste type

RecycleSmart offers the RecycleSmart App to book a pickup service. This app informs residents about recycling locations and provides a variety of information on how to correctly dispose over 250 household items. The RecycleSmart App is included at no extra charge.

RecycleSmart Trial Costs

RecycleSmart offered a 3-month trial with a capped cost of \$15,000 plus GST. The initial trial offer was for unlimited bags collected. The app was included for the trial period.

The extension of the trial to December 2022 has been offered at the same rate as the initial trial, at a cost of \$15,000 plus GST for 3 months. However, if pickups increase beyond 1000 bags, Council will be charged \$7 for each additional bag.

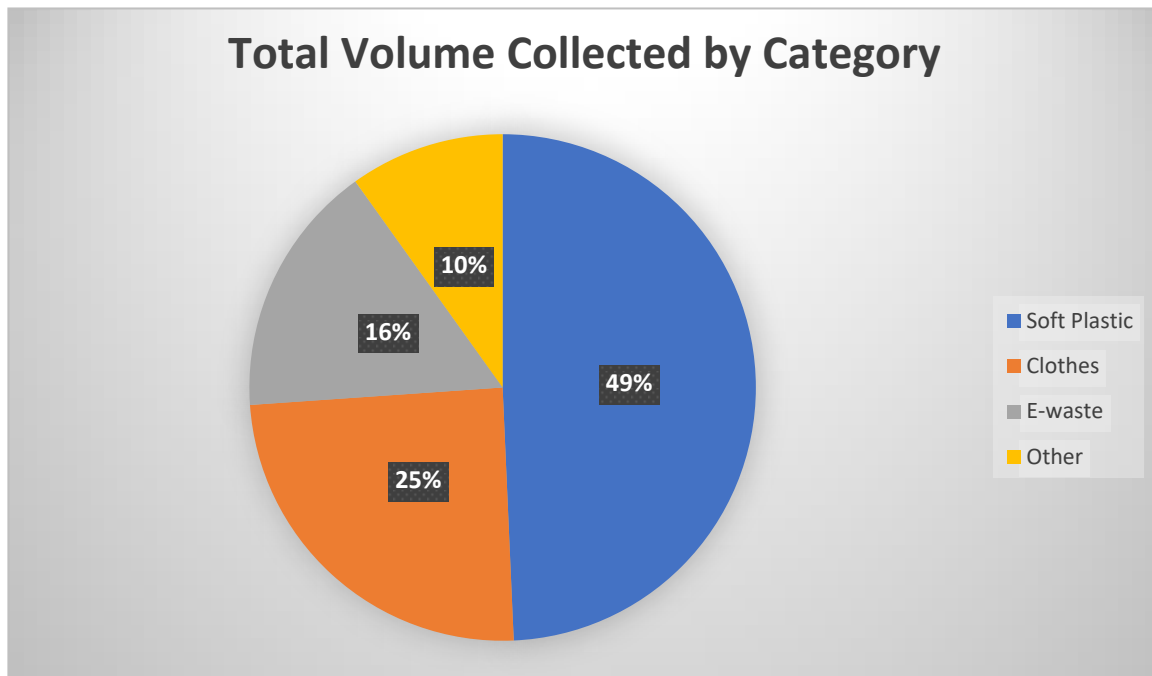
If Council decides to engage RecycleSmart on an ongoing basis after the trial period ends, the costs are as below:

Bags collected per month	Monthly Cost to Council
0-1000	\$7,000
1001-3000	\$7.00 per bag
3001-5000	\$6.50 per bag
>5000	\$6.00 per bag

If Council wishes to proceed with a 12-month collection contract with RecycleSmart this will be at a minimum cost of \$84,000 plus GST per year.

Interim Trial Results

A total of 1748kg was collected between 5 July 2022 and 17 October 2022, and includes items such as soft plastic, clothes, e-waste, and other misfits.



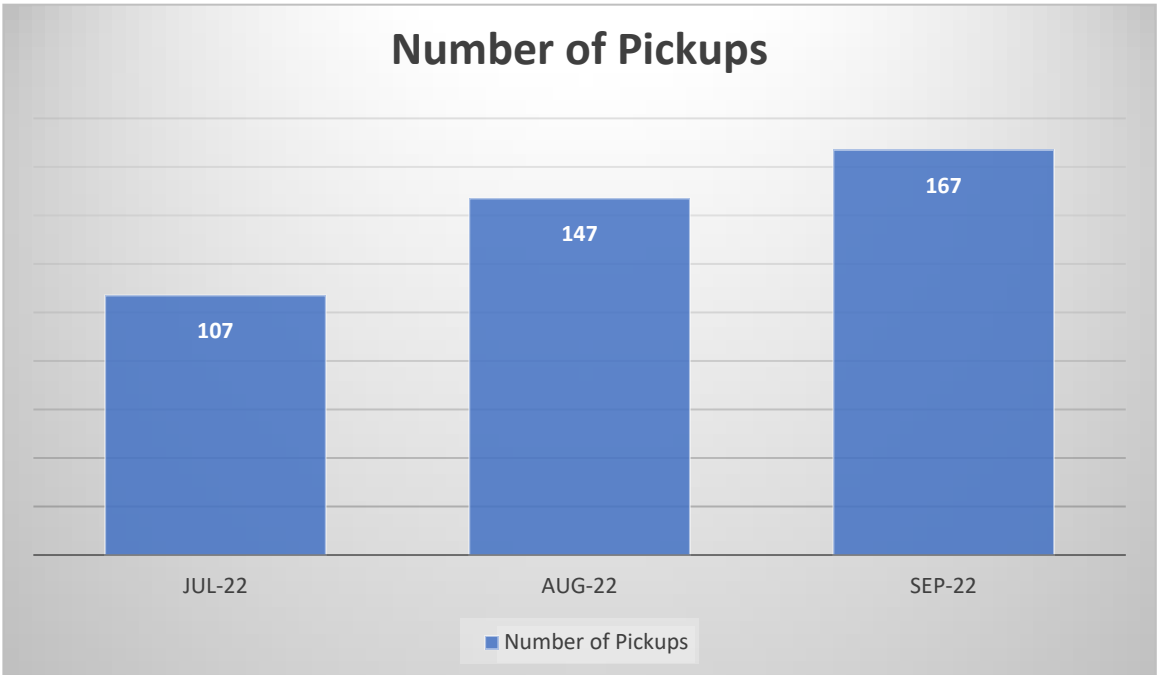
Three quarters of the items collected in North Sydney includes soft plastics and clothing, which makes up 74% of the total items collected. Wearable clothing makes up about 55% of the total clothing collected.

Items taken to the CRC makes up 26% of the total which includes light bulbs, printer cartridges, batteries, e-waste, CDs and DVDs, smoke detectors and x-rays.

Out of 421 bookings and 884 bags collected over three months from July 2022, an average of 295 bags per month were collected.



The number of household bookings increased from 107 when collection commenced in July to 167 in September 2022.



Categorisation by suburb has found that Wollstonecraft, Cremorne, Cammeray and Neutral Bay had the highest number of bookings.

In terms of feedback, Council has received positive feedback about RecycleSmart and the convenience of the service. However, it has been brought to attention that some RecycleSmart bags have been collected inadvertently as illegal dumping.

King Cotton- Textile Recycling at the CRC

The CRC member Councils have engaged King Cotton to provide a textile recycling collection bin at the CRC. The CRC is now accepting wearable textiles as part of a 5-month trial with King Cotton. The trial commenced on 31 October 2022. Residents from the six partner councils will be able to drop off up to 20kg of textiles that are in good condition including clothing, shoes, manchester, accessories such as handbags, belts, scarves, and hats. A review of the service will be undertaken at the end of the trial to determine whether to continue the service and, if so, under what terms and conditions. The trial is expected to end on 31 March 2023. King Cotton have advised the textiles are sold to ethically compliant offshore communities in the South Pacific and Africa where the demand is strong.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the RecycleSmart program has been well received by residents of the North Sydney community as evidenced by the positive comments on social media and phone calls to Council and the uptake is growing.

3.2. The Case for Carbon Offsets to Achieve Carbon Neutral

AUTHOR: Danielle Birkbeck, Snr Sustainability Programs Coordinator

ENDORSED BY: Peter Massey, Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report provides a background to carbon offsets and the role they have in achieving Councils 2030 carbon neutral target.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has a target to become carbon neutral by 2030 and predicted modelling shows carbon offsets will need to be purchased to cover our residual emissions profile. Carbon offsets are used as a tool for organisations to achieve carbon neutrality after implementing all other operational measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This report provides information on Councils emissions profile, carbon offsets, carbon neutral certification and proposes a pathway to achieve carbon neutrality before 2030.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for the purchase of carbon offsets will come from existing funds in the Environmental Levy.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report is received and noted.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.1 Protected, enhanced and biodiverse natural environment

1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

BACKGROUND

Council has been proactively reducing our operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and potable water usage for many years. We set our first targets in 2002 as part of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program and established the Greenhouse Action Plan and Water Management Plans to achieve them.

These plans have now been superseded by the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) 2030 which was adopted in 2021 and list targets and actions in 7 key areas. The ESS 2030 carbon footprint target has been set for 100% carbon neutrality by 2030.

To date, Council has achieved a 55% reduction in emissions (based on 1996 levels) through the implementation of energy efficiency measures and the purchasing of renewable energy and renewable energy systems.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Whilst much has been done over the past 10 years to reduce operational GHG emissions, including energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy generation and purchase, predicted modelling has shown Council will not become carbon neutral purely through these measures alone.

Modelling in 2019 showed Council was predicted to achieve a 68% reduction in our Scope 1 (gas) and transport) and Scope 2 (electricity and streetlighting) emissions compared to 1996 levels by 2030. Securing 100% renewable electricity through a power purchase agreement (PPA), set to come into full effect in Jan 2023, has increased this reduction, yet further measures are still needed to continue reducing emissions. These include investing in the electrification of vehicles (EVs) and charging infrastructure and including EV electricity our renewable energy PPA and investing in the electrification of small plant equipment (such as lawn mowers).

However, these carbon abatement measures alone will not achieve 100% carbon neutrality and in order to reach the target Council will need to purchase carbon offsets for any residual emissions. With the 100% electricity PPA in place, residual emissions are estimated as 1,375 t CO₂-e. Over time, it is expected that residual emissions would decrease as Council continues to decarbonise operations.

What are carbon offsets?

Carbon offset units are generated by projects that prevent, reduce or remove GHG emissions from the atmosphere such as renewable energy and energy efficiency projects or reforestation projects. These projects occur both nationally and internationally.

Over the years there has been some concern around the validity and transparency of carbon offset projects and the quantifiable emission reductions that these projects achieve. This was an issue when the offset market first emerged and as a result, certification and purchasing programs were launched that provided the market with requirements, rules and regulations that projects are assessed against.

In Australia there are 3 types of offset purchasing programs. Verified carbon standard (VCS), Gold Standard (GS) and Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUS). All have different price per units with indicative pricing of \$30 per tonne for ACCUS and \$10 per tonne for Gold Standard. ACCU's are issued by the Clean Energy Regulator and when purchased benefits go directly to Australian communities and our environment.

Carbon neutral certification

Whilst not necessary for the purchase of carbon offsets, carbon neutral certification is a tool for the verification of an organisations emissions profile and provides validity to carbon neutral status. In Australia, the most highly regarded standard to achieve carbon neutrality is the voluntary Climate Active Standard, which is administered by the Commonwealth Government.

To be certified, Climate Active members are required to use offsets that result in genuine emissions reduction and certification allows them to show their community that carbon neutrality has been achieved in a credible and transparent way.

Other Councils in greater Sydney who are Climate Active certified carbon neutral include City of Sydney, Woollahra and Bayside City.

Why carbon neutral now?

Modelling has shown that Council will have residual emissions that will decrease over time as further abatement measures are implemented yet may never be completely mitigated.

It is agreed that offsets will play a role in becoming carbon neutral and necessary if Council wants to achieve their 2030 target.

However, Council doesn't have to wait until 2030 to achieve carbon neutrality. By becoming carbon neutral now, Council can show the North Sydney community that we are acting on climate change and reinforcing our commitment to reaching net zero.

Proposed Way Forward

For Council to position itself as a carbon neutral organisation it is recommended that this is recognised through a formal certification process such as Climate Active. Accreditation of which requires the purchase of verified carbon offsets.

To establish a framework for purchasing carbon offsets it is recommended that Council write and adopt a carbon offset policy that will cover the procurement process and list criteria for offset selection.

An excerpt taken from Moreland City Councils Carbon Offset Policy states the objectives as:

- *Guide Council's own decision making in maintaining carbon neutral certification;*
- *Demonstrate leadership in Council's own decision making in responding to climate change on a corporate level and continue to lead the community towards carbon neutrality.*

It is anticipated that if Council follows this proposed way forward it could claim carbon neutrality by 2024, 6 years ahead of our target date.

3.3. North Sydney Bushcare’s 30th Anniversary

AUTHOR: Gareth Debney - Bushland Management Coordinator

ENDORSED BY: Peter Massey, Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to advise on Council’s plans to recognise and celebrate the 30th anniversary of the North Sydney Bushcare Program in 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

2023 will mark the 30th Anniversary of North Sydney’s Bushcare Program. To celebrate this milestone, the Bushland Management Team have partnered with Council’s Communications Team to undertake video interviews of five “Bushcare Champions” – volunteers who have been involved in the program since it’s beginnings in 1993. These five long-serving volunteers will share their recollection of Bushcare’s origins, it’s growth over the years and how they have seen the bush change in response to volunteer bush regeneration work. They will also be asked why they volunteer, what they get out of the participating and what they would say to other prospective volunteers.

Each Bushcare Champion video will be edited with drone footage, to be recorded over several iconic North Sydney bushland areas – highlighting the natural beauty of these areas and their irreplaceable value as community assets.

A number of other 30th anniversary initiatives have been suggested by our Bushcare Groups Convenors. These will be considered by the Bushland Management Team and incorporated (where possible) into the overall plan for 2023’s celebrations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for this project will be sourced from existing allocations in the Environment Levy.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report be noted.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.1 Protected, enhanced and biodiverse natural environment

BACKGROUND

The roots of bushland rehabilitation in North Sydney date back to the early 1980s, when Council engaged The National Trust to assess the condition of remnant bushland areas in the LGA and commence regeneration work. By the early 1990's, small groups of residents who were concerned about the condition of their local bushland areas had begun removing weeds and applying the principals of relatively new science called "assisted ecological restoration", or in other words; bush regeneration. Council staff were aware of these groups, and with the support and encouragement of Precinct committees, the decision was made to officially support their efforts going forward through the formation/facilitation of a Bushcare program. In 1993, Council sought and received grant funding to employ its first Bushcare Coordinator.

This position promoted the growing convergence of Council and the community's understanding around bushland conservation action, developing a framework for the Bushcare program, formalising Bushcare Groups and committing ongoing resources that have facilitated its successful implementation to this day.

2023 will mark the 30th Anniversary of Bushcare in North Sydney and Council's Bushland Management Team are planning several initiatives to commemorate this milestone.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

North Sydney Council's Bushcare Program formally began in 1993, following the employment of an initially grant-funded Bushcare Coordinator. This position helped to facilitate the transition of some existing, unofficial community groups undertaking weed control in Council Bushland into Council-supported Bushcare Groups; providing uniforms, tools, training and strategic direction in ecosystem restoration. New groups were formed and by 1997, Council was supporting eleven core Bushcare Groups working across the majority of Council's bushland reserves.

The 25th “silver” anniversary of North Sydney Bushcare was celebrated in 2018 with a number of events and activities, as well as the production of a special (comprehensively researched) edition of the Bushcare Newsletter. This publication documented the birth and development of Bushcare in North Sydney and provided a fitting legacy to commemorate the major 25-year program milestone.

Plans to mark the 30th anniversary of Bushcare next year build on the 2018 theme of documenting the program’s history and quantifying its appeal in the community. Rather than written accounts however, this time the plan is to invite five “Bushcare Champions” – people who have been involved in the program since it began – to be interviewed on camera and provide their own personal accounts of the inception, establishment and growth of Bushcare in North Sydney.

The Bushland Management Team has partnered with Council’s Communications Team to progress this initiative. Utilising both in-house and external expertise in videography and production, we hope to capture each of these ‘foundation volunteer’s’ motivations and experiences over the past thirty years; gaining an understanding of what they get out of Bushcare, why they continue to do it and how their perception of the bushland has changed over this period of time.

The interviews will be edited together with planned drone footage of several North Sydney Council bushland reserves to produce five separate short video clips, to be hosted on Council’s website and shared via our social media platforms during April 2023 (Bushcare’s anniversary month) and again during National Volunteer week (15 to 21 May 2023). These videos will then form part of Council’s ongoing promotion of the Bushcare program, aimed at increasing the profile of this program in our local community, raising awareness of biodiversity conservation and encouraging greater volunteer participation.

Council’s Bushcare Officer has contacted and confirmed involvement of the following five “Bushcare Champions” including:

- Nicole Bannister and Don Melrose (Smoothey Park Bushcare Group)
- Heather Robson (Tunks Park East Bushcare Group)
- Mary Lyn Lawrence (Harry Howard Bushcare Group), and
- George Barbouttis (Cremorne Reserve Bushcare Group).

Filming the interviews has been scheduled to occur throughout November and early December 2022.

Bushcare Convenors are volunteers nominated by each of the twelve Bushcare Groups to be their representative when dealing with Council. Twice a year, Convenors meet with the Bushland Management Team to discuss the program’s implementation, address management issues and plan for future initiatives. Other ideas for how to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Bushcare were discussed at the Bushcare Convenors meetings held in March and October, 2022.

Suggested raised included the following:

- A commemorative badge/pin/patch for the Bushcare uniform, or a KeepCup
- Bushcare site signage updated and installed in each reserve

- Special projects, such as a commemorative planting or an activity at Balls Head Reserve, the first area where volunteer bush regeneration is thought to have occurred in NS
- Creation of a new Bushcare site/group – subject to local community interest
- A guided tour of North Sydney’s Bushcare sites
- Publicity in local newspapers (i.e. Mosman Daily) and media outlets that service surrounding Council areas
- Approach Gardening Australia and suggest a feature article with Costa Georgedis
- North Sydney News article
- Talk to the local Member of Parliament about Bushcare
- Before and after photographs of Bushcare sites and bushland reserves. Seek photo contributions from volunteers and residents; ex-staff and the local Historical Society etc
- Create a section in the Library for Bushcare / environmental restoration including back issues of the Bushcare newsletter, Bushcare Guidelines, Bushland Plans of Management and other texts / research papers on bush regeneration ecological restoration.
- A display in the Library, featuring the “Battlers for the Bush” video developed as part of the 2022 National Landcare Conference
- Portraits of Volunteers and/or Bushcare Groups

The Bushland Management Team are evaluating all of these suggestions and will incorporate those that are feasible and can be resourced appropriately. Those suggestions that involve the cooperation and support of other sections of Council (i.e. Community Development – Library Services) will be discussed with the relevant Teams and progressed where possible.

4. Closure