

3.3. North Sydney Bushcare’s 30th Anniversary

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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.