



# 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 6:00 PM on Monday 11 April 2022.

The agenda is as follows.

Ken Gouldthorp  
**GENERAL MANAGER**



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## **1. Confirmation of Minutes**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 May 2021, copies of which had been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

## **2. Disclosures of Interest**

### **3. Committee Reports**

#### **3.1. Council's Waste Management Services**

**AUTHOR:** Shivaan Kumar, Waste Management Officer

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Council's waste management services.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Council provides the residential waste and recycling collection services to 36,000 dwellings under contract with URM. The Waste Collection Contract expires 30 June 2026 with an option to extend the term for a further 3 years. Collection services include weekly garbage and commingled recycling, public place recycling collections, illegally dumped rubbish collections, pre-booked fortnightly garden organics and household clean-up services.

Waste disposal and processing is currently contracted to Cleanaway. The Waste Disposal and Processing Contract expires 30 June 2024 with an option to extend the contract for a further 5-year term. The waste stream is delivered to the Artarmon Transfer Station where it is bulked up and transferred to the Lucas Heights Landfill. The Greenwaste Processing and Bulky Waste Disposal Contract expires 30 June 2026 with an option to extend the term for a further three years. Greenwaste is delivered to the Ryde Transfer Station where it is bulked up and transferred to an Organic Resource Recovery Facility at Eastern Creek. Bulky Waste is delivered to Artarmon Transfer Station where it is bulked up to be landfilled at Lucas Heights.

An adjunct to the waste collection and disposal services is the Community Recycling Centre (CRC) located in Artarmon. It is a drop off facility for problem household waste. North Sydney Council operates the facility on behalf of the City of Ryde and the Councils of Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, and Willoughby. Residents can safely dispose a number of household problem waste including paint, motor oil, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, e-waste, light bulbs, batteries, smoke detectors, x-rays, printer cartridges and mobile phones.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There is no financial implications for this report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the Waste Services Report be received

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

5. Our Civic Leadership

5.4 Council's service delivery is well supported

### **BACKGROUND**

From 2006-2018, under contract with SUEZ, Council sent its waste for processing at an Alternative Waste Treatment (AWT) facility known as the UR3R, located in Eastern Creek. The waste was delivered to the Artarmon Transfer Station where it was bulked up for transportation to Eastern Creek. The UR-3R Process incorporated a range of process steps that resulted in the recovery of dry recyclable materials from incoming mixed waste, the production of Mixed Waste Organics Outputs (MWOO) and the generation of electricity. The UR3R facility extracted the food waste and other organics from the red bin to generate compost. Recyclables such as paper, plastics, glass and metals were also extracted from the red bin. As a result of this system, Council achieved a resource recovery rate of 65% from the red bin. Council's total waste diversion rate was 71% when combined with the kerbside collections from the commingled recycling bin and greenwaste clean up. Council surpassed the State Government's previous waste diversion targets and was consistently placed in the top three performing Councils in NSW.

In 2018 the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) banned the application of the Mixed Waste Organics Outputs (MWOO) to land due to risks associated with chemical and physical contaminants. Given the State Government's ban on the application of MWOO on land Council's waste diversion opportunities are significantly compromised as waste is now landfilled under the current Waste Disposal Contract and the Waste Collection Contract.

### **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

### **DETAIL**

There are five waste collection zones servicing 36,000 residential properties in the North Sydney LGA with medium and high-density housing making up 89% of the dwellings. The area is characterised by difficult to access collection points, tight streets due to on-street residential parking and limited on-site waste storage capacity. Rear truck compactors are used for the collection services. URM are Council's waste and recycling collection contractor. Cleanaway are Council's waste disposal contractor.

The summary of waste collection of the various streams are provided in the table below.

Waste Stream	2020/21 Tonnage .	Arrangement for Disposal/Processing
Mixed Solid Waste (MSW) ( red bin, illegally dumped rubbish)	13195	Disposal at Lucas Heights Landfill via Cleanaway's Artarmon Transfer Station.
Recyclables (Contamination level approximately at 9%)	5932	Material is owned by the Collection Contractor and processed by Visy at Smithfield Facility.
Green Waste (Contamination level < 3%)	1918	Processed by Cleanaway at Eastern Creek Organics facility via Ryde Transfer Station.
Household Bulky Clean-up Waste	2332	White goods are recovered for Scrap Metals. The rest is disposed at Lucas Heights Landfill via Artarmon Transfer Station.

## Current Contracts in Place

The current contracts with the respective Collection and Waste Processing Contractors are summarized below.

Contracts	Contractor	Expiry Date/Options
Waste Collection Contract Collection Service includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste</li> <li>• Recyclables</li> <li>• Green waste</li> <li>• Household Clean-up</li> <li>• Illegally dumped rubbish</li> </ul>	URM	30 June 2026 Option to extend 3 more years
Waste Disposal and Processing Contract	Cleanaway	30 June 2024 Option to extend 5 more years
Greenwaste and Bulkywaste Disposal Contract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Waste</li> <li>• Household Clean-up Waste</li> </ul>	Cleanaway	30 June 2026 Option to extend 3 more years

## General Waste Service

Council has a volume-based garbage charge system. Residential mixed solid waste (MSW) is collected weekly with the standard service being an 80 litre capacity per property. An increase in bin size to 120 and 240 litre is permitted subject to an increase in the Domestic Waste Management (DWM) charge. The Local Government Act requires each property to be levied a Domestic Waste Charge irrespective of whether waste services are utilised

Residents in multi occupancy buildings predominantly utilise 240 litre MGBs which are shared on the basis of one (1) bin per every 3 units, service to which is provided on a weekly basis; however, some smaller unit blocks utilise 80 litre MGB bins.

## **Recycling**

Recycling is collected weekly with residents typically presenting a yellow lid mobile bin of 140 litre capacity as is the case with most single dwellings or a mobile bin of varying capacity on a shared basis as is the case with most residents who occupy medium density or high-rise developments.

Recycling material is co-mingled and includes paper/cardboard, glass bottles/jars, plastic bottles/containers, aluminium, and steel cans. Ownership of the recyclable material is vested with the collection contractor, URM. Additionally, the contractor is required to service public place recycling bins. Contamination of the recycling bins is problematic and requires ongoing monitoring and education.

Recycling is sent to a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Visy at Smithfield where the recycling streams are separated and baled for recycling into new products.

The amount of recyclables collected per annum since 2016/17 is steadily decreasing, largely attributed to a decrease in paper usage (replaced with digital communication and internet usage) and bottles, glass, plastics, and cans are increasingly manufactured with lighter weight material.

### **Paper**

Paper is considered a valuable recyclable material because it is able to be converted into recycled cardboard and other paper packaging.

### **Metals**

Steel and aluminium are reprocessed into steel and aluminium to be used in new products such as cans.

### **Glass**

Glass is separated out from other recyclables at the Visy MRF. Bottles and jars are broken into glass cullet and large residual contaminants removed. Glass cullet is sorted by colour and small contaminants removed by optical technology. Recycled cullet is mixed with sand, soda ash and limestone and heated to melting point. The molten glass is formed into a mould and new glass bottles and containers are made.

### **Plastics**

Approximately eight percent of the yellow bin is made up of PET (1) and HDPE (2) containers as well as other mixed plastics (numbers 3 -7). Visy is one of Australia's largest manufacturers of PET containers and PET plastic is generally recycled into new PET containers. HDPE (2) plastic is also largely recycled by Visy. However, mixed plastic is expensive to process, and it is mainly exported. Mixed plastics are turned into recycled resins which are used in construction products, landscaping products and street furniture.

## **Greenwaste and Household Bulky Waste Clean-up Services**

The garden organics and clean-up services are managed via an on-call booking system that has a cut off time of 4.00 pm Sunday evening prior to the scheduled Monday collection. There is a limit of 2m<sup>3</sup> for houses and 0.5m<sup>3</sup> for units. Garden organics and household bulky waste

clean-up services are provided on an alternating fortnightly basis (26 services each per year). A large number of non-booked green waste and bulky household clean-ups are presented for collections. A sticker is left on the non-booked pile reinforcing to the householder the requirement to book for the service. A letter is also sent directly to the property for single unit dwellings and to the Strata/Body Cooperate and Building Manager in multi-unit dwellings to advise that all items are to be pre-booked.

### **Green Waste**

On average 5000 greenwaste bookings are made per month. Residents use several different types of containers to present their greenwaste. Small container types used include 60L carry bins, flexible tubs, old recycling crates and other rigid reusable containers. Residents can also present a tied-up bundle of branches.

However, residents are encouraged to use 240L greenwaste bins with a lime lid in accordance with industry best practice. Greenwaste is processed into a compostable product.

### **Bulky Waste Clean Up**

Council offers a fortnightly collection of bulky waste household clean-up material. On average 4200 householders book are made per month.

Accepted items include clothing, furniture, floor coverings (bundled with string in rolls no greater than 1.2 metres in length) and whitegoods. E-waste is not accepted in the household clean-up and must be taken to the Community Recycling Centre (CRC). Other items not accepted include car parts, building waste and large pieces of glass which can be disposed at licensed waste management facilities and fees may apply.

Bulky household waste is transferred to Cleanaway Artarmon Resource Recovery Centre and is sent on to Cleanaway Lucas Heights Landfill. Whitegoods are delivered to scrap metal dealers for recycling.

### **Community Recycling Centre (CRC)**

The Community Recycling Centre (CRC) is a drop off facility for common household problem waste that cannot be collected via Council's kerbside waste and recycling collection services. Household problem waste items are processed to recover a number of materials and resources which are later recycled and reused in various other products. The North Sydney CRC was established after NSROC (Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils) received a grant from the NSW EPA through the NSW Environmental Trust with funding from the waste levy. The centre is operated by North Sydney Council on behalf of the City of Ryde and the Councils of Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, and Willoughby.

The CRC was opened on 12 April 2017 and is available to receive materials on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday between 8am and 2pm. It also remains open on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) between 8am and 4pm with no bookings or appointments needed. With more residents dropping off problem waste each year, and limited room at the CRC for storage of waste, restrictions apply on the maximum quantity of waste dropped off per visit. A maximum



limit of 20 litres or 20kg per customer per drop off is allowed. The free drop off service allows residents to dispose a number of household problem waste including paint, motor oil, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, e-waste, light bulbs, batteries, smoke detectors, x-rays, printer cartridges and mobile phones.

Household problem waste items dropped off at the CRC are recycled and made into other valuable products.

#### E-waste

The first stage of the e-waste recycling involves dismantling, shredding, and sorting the device into various usable parts and materials including glass, metals, plastics, batteries, and printed circuit boards. Later the items are processed into new products. Given the availability of infrastructure and end market to recycle, almost 90% of the materials recovered from e-waste are reintroduced as raw materials which are used in other new products.

#### Paint

Paint is mixed with other waste solvents and used as an alternative to fuel in cement kilns. The metal containers are recycled.

#### Lead acid batteries

The batteries are sent to recyclers where the lead, acid and plastic are recovered and recycled.

#### Fluorescent tubes and globes containing mercury

Recyclers crush the tubes to separate the phosphor powder from the glass. They feed the powder through receiving containers, where it is filtered to capture fugitive mercury emissions. The mercury is then separated by distillation and sold for a range of industrial uses. The metals are also recycled.

#### Gas bottles

Undamaged bottles are retested, restamped and entered into the hire industry. Damaged bottles are punctured and recycled as scrap metal.

#### Used household and motor oil

Oils are processed to product lubricant to be used in cars/machinery or to be used in waste to energy combustion.

### **Waste and Recycling Education**

Council provides a variety of waste education material to residents. Together with waste avoidance messages on Councils website, social media platforms, workshops at the Coal Loader, Council also provides waste and recycling bin stickers, bin room signage and letterbox flyers are produced and made available to residents, building managers and Strata Managers informing them of acceptable items and household clean up procedures. A waste calendar is distributed annually advertising the greenwaste and general household clean-up dates for the year ahead. This is normally distributed to all residents in December.

Reject stickers are provided to the contractors for use during collection if a bin is to be rejected due to contamination, unauthorised excess waste, if the bins is a hazard and/or if the bin is not a standard regulation bin.

In addition, a CRC sticker is also placed on rejected household problem waste that is presented within the household clean-up. This sticker informs the resident to recycle the items at the CRC.

Illegal dumping flyers are distributed in hotspot areas where residents place green waste and/or bulky household items out on the kerb without any booking. The distribution of these flyer aims to inform and educate the residents that clean-up and green waste collection items must be booked before they are placed out on the kerb. Council Rangers also play an important role by investigating and taping illegally dumped items which is later reported to the collection contractor for removal. Council's website and social media platforms are kept updated with new waste and recycling information.

### **Resource Recovery Targets**

North Sydney Council has a long history of demonstrating leadership in waste management. Landfill diversion rates have consequently been amongst the highest in the state exceeding the State Government's resource recovery and landfill diversion targets.

When Council was processing the kerbside red bin via the previous Alternative Waste Treatment (AWT) Processing Contract, Council achieved a resource recovery rate of 61-65%. The total diversion rate was around 71% when combined with the kerbside collections from commingled recycling bin and greenwaste clean up. Given the State Government's ban on the application of mixed waste organic material on land, Council's waste diversion opportunities are significantly compromised as waste is landfilled. The processing of the materials is no longer an option under the current contracts.

Councils' current diversion rate is approximately 37% of the total waste collected from kerbside recycling and the greenwaste collections. Bulky waste clean up is landfilled.

Food organics make up 35 % of the red bin, unless there is a 100% participation rate of every single household, and 100% correct presentation of materials and 100% recovery of the materials at the composting facilities then Council could achieve a much higher diversion rate. The 6 months Food Scraps Trial involving 410 dwellings across 10 Multi Unit Dwellings (MUDs), commencing in May will inform long term strategic direction in food organics collections.

The EPA supports Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection and services to reduce the volume of organic material in mixed waste. However metropolitan Councils with increasing numbers of multi-unit dwellings are rightly concerned that there would be high levels of contamination. The EPA would need to demonstrate a collection and processing mechanism to create a viable product for which there is an identifiable end market. The addition of food waste into a bin requires a more advanced form of processing.

At present, the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030 aims:

- 10% reduction in tonnes of waste generation per household from 2019/20 levels before 2030
- 80% recycling rates for municipal solid waste before 2030
- 70% waste diversion from landfill before 2030

### **3.2. Bushcare Community Nursery Update**

**AUTHOR:** Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Coordinator

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides an update on the operations and achievements of Council's Bushcare Community Nursery during 2021.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Council's Bushland Management Team coordinates and delivers a range of community engagement and education programs aimed at increasing community awareness of urban ecology and the importance of natural area conservation.

Commencing in the mid 1990's, Council's Bushcare Program is the primary vehicle for community participation in bushland conservation. There are currently 12 Bushcare Groups, working within eleven different reserves around the North Sydney LGA. Formed in 2011, the Bushcare Community Nursery Group is unique, in that the fruits of their labour – local provenance tubestock plants – are grown to support the work of all other Bushcare Groups, as well as Council's Bush Regeneration Team; bushland contractors and Native Havens program participants.

Whilst the past two years have seen significant disruption to Council's volunteer programs, plant production in the Bushcare Community Nursery has been maintained through the combined efforts of volunteers (when permitted to attend) and the dedicated work of Council's Bushcare Community Nursery Supervisor Clare McElroy.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the Community Nursery report be received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

1.1 Protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity

1.2 North Sydney is sustainable and resilient

## **BACKGROUND**

In the context of North Sydney Council, “Bushcare” is a catch-all phrase that encapsulates most of our community education and engagement activities focussing on biodiversity conservation. Bushcare incorporates 12x active Bushcare groups working across 16x bushland sites within eleven reserves. The Bushcare Community Nursery produces the vast majority of Council’s native plant needs for both on-ground rehabilitation works, as well as community plant give-aways at markets; Citizenship Ceremonies; Schools Tree Day and the popular Native Havens home habitat gardening program. In addition to the above, Bushcare includes an annual program of workshops, events and activities provided for the general community, pre-school to primary school aged children and for volunteers. The Bushland Team also delivers other, related programs including Adopt-a-Plot; Native Havens and Wildlife Watch.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

Since March 2020, the global COVID pandemic has seen unprecedented disruption and adjustment to Council’s Bushcare volunteer programs. Lockdowns, COVID-safe protocols, limits on volunteer numbers and seemingly continual changes to these requirements has resulted in frustration and ultimately, some reductions in program participation.

In spite of the challenges, plant propagation and general nursery business continued – albeit with fewer volunteer work sessions and more hours spent at the propagation bench by Council’s Bushcare Nursery Supervisor.

The result was the cancellation or scaling down of most community and volunteer events, such as citizenship ceremonies, National Tree Day, Trees for Mum, Nursery Open Day and community markets/giveaways. National Tree Day used 1,794 plants in 2019, but the event was cancelled outright in 2021 and only 124 plants were planted in 2020.

The Native Havens program provided 2,309 plants to program participants during 2021, a significant reduction compared to both 2019 (3,365) and 2020 (2,975) due mainly to the extended lockdown that prevented staff from visiting residential properties and suspended engagement with new participants. Conversely, Council’s Bush Regeneration Team and contract bush regenerators nearly doubled the number of plants used in 2021 (4,676) compared to 2020 (2,661). This was achievement was aided by highly favourable rainfall throughout the year.

The total number of plants used in 2021 (11,957) is notably more than 2020 (8,603). Of these, 7,028 (82%) were grown in the Bushcare Nursery and 1,575 (18%) were supplied by other nurseries to be used in the Native Havens program and for community events and giveaways.

**Figure 1.** Comparative plant supply 2013-2021

<b>Year</b>	<b>Plants supplied by Bushcare Nursery</b>
2013	9,513
2014	11,107
2015	9,170
2016	11,767
2017	12,382
2018	11,382
2019	11,209
2020	8,603
2021	11,957
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>10,787</b>

**Figure 2.** Plant supply by Program, 2021

<b>Council Program</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Native Havens	2,309
Bushland Rehabilitation	4,676
Other (i.e. Community Events)	2,095
Streets Alive/Parks & Gardens	1,847
Adopt-a-Plot	215
National Tree Day	0
NSC Tree Planting Team	29
Dead stock	460
Unaccounted stock (i.e. theft)	139
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>11,957</b>

Historically, we use delivered (D) plants for non-bushland destinations such as Native Havens (NH), Streets Alive (SA), Parks and Gardens and “Other” programs (community events, markets and giveaways). This ensures that our bushland provenance plants, which come from a finite local source, are available for bushland projects where we can achieve the best conservation outcomes. In 2020, the nursery grew 58% of plants used for Native Havens.

However, in 2021, this percentage grew to 74% of Native Havens plants originating from the Bushcare Nursery. These plants were not necessarily bushland stock - many of the popular species were propagated in bulk from non-provenance or nursery stock plants, representing a saving to council with fewer plants bought from external suppliers.

**Figure 3.** Percentage of plants grown at the Bushcare Community Nursery (NSC) or delivered from external nurseries (D) across all programs during 2021.

Origin	Quantity	Percentage
NSC Bushcare Nursery	9,705	81%
External Nurseries (D)	2,253	19%

**Figure 4.** Percentage of plants grown at the Bushcare Community Nursery (NSC) or delivered from external nurseries (D) for the Native Havens program.

Program	Origin	Quantity	Percentage
Native Havens	NSC Bushcare Nursery	1,704	74%
	External Nursery (D)	605	26%

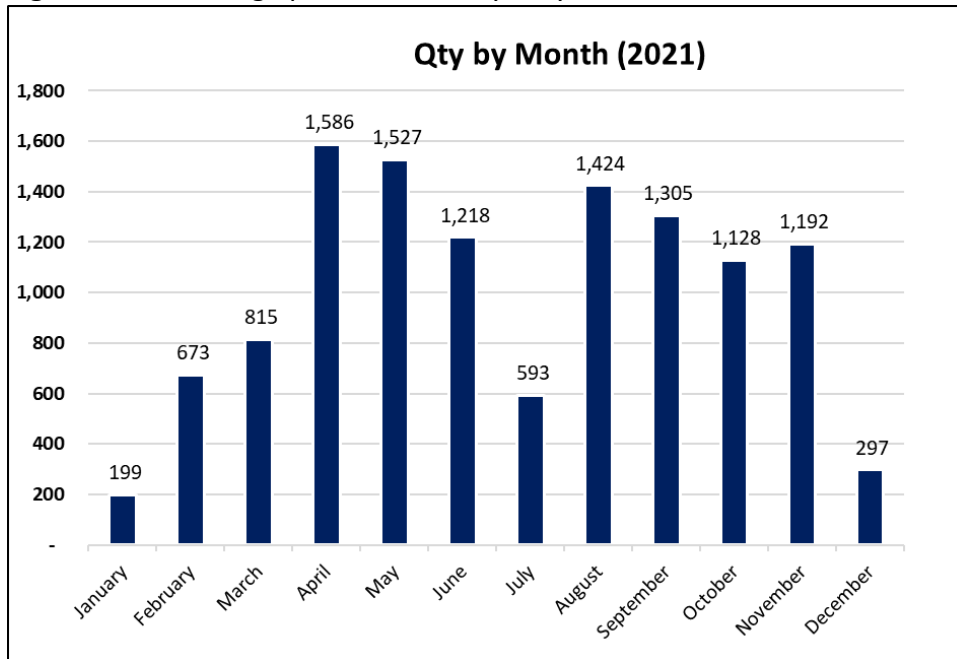
Across both delivered and home-grown stock, 168 different native plant species were supplied by the nursery in 2021, which is comparable to previous years and slightly higher (+8) to 2020.

Excluding (D) delivered plants, the estimated value of outgoing NSC stock grown by volunteers and staff was over \$33,000 (28% increase over 2020). Most plants comprised tubestock (8,428 @ \$3.00) with the remainder being larger pots and trays. The value of plants has been estimated and averaged from prices charged at equivalent wholesale/retail suppliers. Most of these nurseries have a sliding scale of prices depending on species and quantity ordered, so the prices below can only be considered an estimate. Trays and flats have not been assigned a value as there is no comparable commercial product.

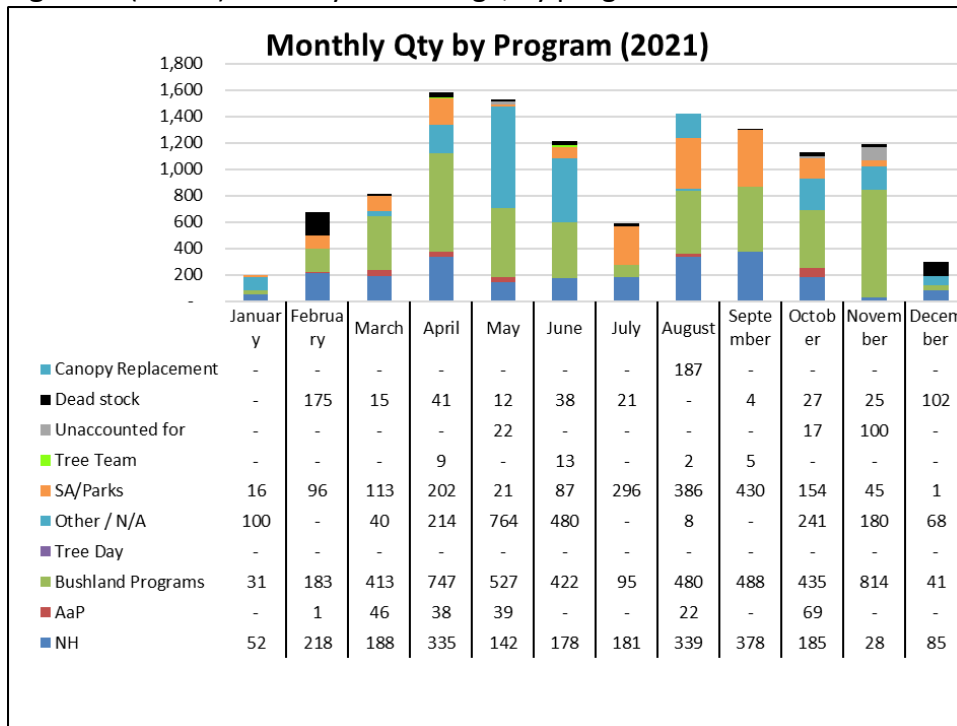
**Figure 5.** Estimated value of plants grown in the Bushcare Community Nursery in 2021.

Size	Quantity	\$ Each	\$ Total
Forestry Tube	8,428	\$3-	\$25,284-
Mega Tube	158	\$8-	\$1,264-
Round Tube	764	\$6-	\$4,584-
4" Square Pot	94	\$6-	\$564-
6-8" Pot	31	\$15-	\$465-
Hiko	167	\$2-	\$334-
Rocket Pot	27	\$25-	\$675-
Tray/Flat	36		
			<b>\$33,170 (ex GST)</b>

**Figure 6. Stock usage per month and yearly total**

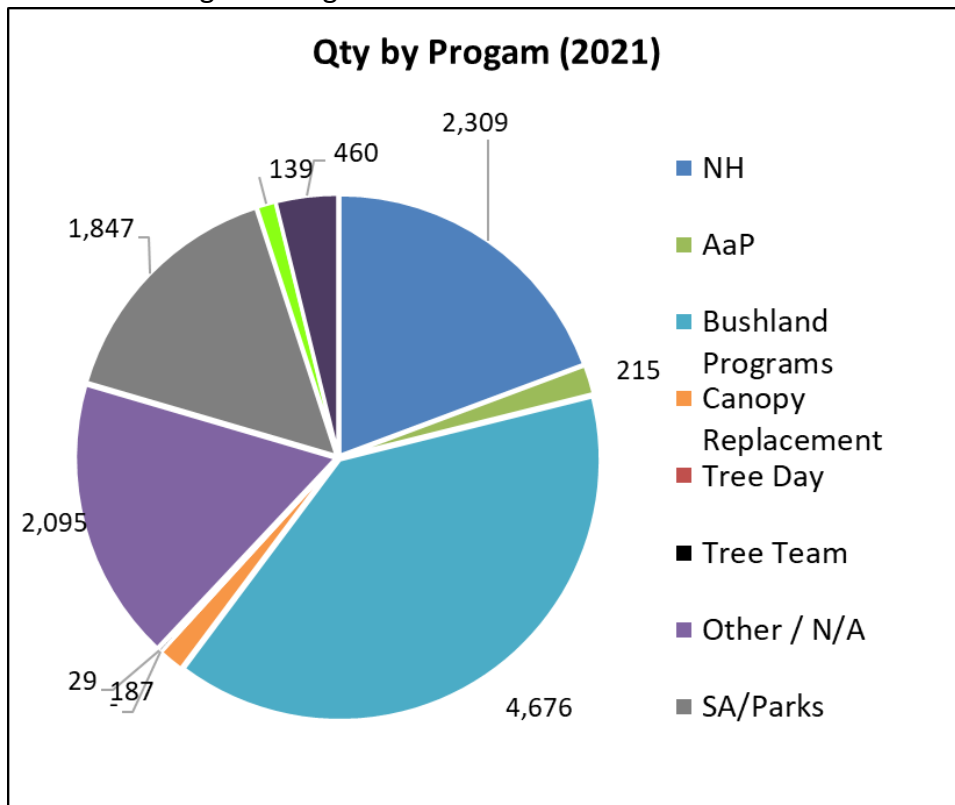


**Figure 7. (above) Monthly stock usage, by program.**





**Figure 8.** (below) Annual Stock usage by program, showing Bushland Programs and Native Havens with highest usage.



### Bushcare Community Nursery Volunteers

The Bushcare Community Nursery Group meets fortnightly on the second and fourth Thursday morning of the month, from February to November inclusive.

Due to the pandemic lockdown, there were no volunteer meetings from June to December 2021. A special Christmas gathering was arranged in December, and the group enjoyed lunch and each other’s company at the Coal Loader Café. Meetings resumed in January 2022 with COVID-safe protocols in place, including no shared morning tea, strict sanitising procedures and a rostering system whereby volunteers attend on alternate fortnights to keep numbers within manageable limits for physical distancing. Group numbers remain steady with around 5-8 regulars.

With the current trend of relaxing COVID health regulations and very high vaccination rates in the community, it is anticipated that 2022 will see a return to greater stability in the Bushcare Community Nursery volunteer program and potentially, a further boost in plant production levels.

### **3.3. Regional Grant Project Proposal - Urban Rewilding**

**AUTHOR:** Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Coordinator

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

#### **PURPOSE:**

This report details North Sydney Council's support for a regional, multi-partner grant application that seeks to quantify environmental management practice in urban bushland and test the feasibility of urban rewilding.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Habitat loss and introduced pest species are major threats to Australia's unique wildlife, however to date, conservation efforts with respect to reintroducing wildlife populations have not focused on urban areas, despite the biggest biodiversity losses happening in the green spaces that intersperse our cities. In the northern Sydney region, more than 30 years of restoration effort has been invested by public land managers and local community volunteers to improve the plant-based biodiversity of urban green spaces, upon which our native wildlife species depend. Furthermore, over the past 20 years, public bushland managers including councils, National Parks and Wildlife and other agencies have worked together to implement landscape-scale pest animal management programs, including the Sydney Northern Regional Fox Baiting Program.

Over this period of time, tangible improvements in species diversity and ecosystem health have been observed and documented. However, the level of improvement varies across the region and barriers remain to the ability of particular native wildlife species to recolonize and sustain viable populations in suitable habitat areas.

North Sydney Council has joined with other public bushland managers north of the harbour to support a University of Sydney grant application with the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Program. The grant-funded project seeks to determine whether a bold new approach to conservation – restoring missing fauna – can help bring back local native wildlife and engage local communities to support this form of 'urban rewilding'. New knowledge generated will inform national and global conservation priorities in urban areas and provide a tangible opportunity for community engagement and education in urban conservation.

If funded, the project aims to address the decline and loss of wildlife in urban Sydney, by creating a blueprint for ecological restoration of wildlife in these fragmented landscapes.

Working with seven Councils and three State government agencies in northern Sydney, the project will experimentally assess a new approach to conservation by restoring regionally-present but locally-missing wildlife species. Expected outcomes include the restoration of ecosystem services provided by wildlife, evaluation of community attitudes towards urban wildlife restoration, and targeted community engagement with restoration and nature more broadly.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Funding for this project is included in the adopted 2021/22 budget.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report be received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
  - 1.1 Protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity
  - 1.2 North Sydney is sustainable and resilient

## **BACKGROUND**

North Sydney Council has been an active member of the Sydney North Vertebrate Pest Committee (formerly the Urban Feral Animal Action Group) since 2000/01. The regional committee is made up of public land managers, including 11 councils, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other State Government agencies extending from the harbour northward to the Hawkesbury River, east to the northern beaches and west to Parramatta.

Over the past twenty-two years, the committee has planned and undertaken coordinated pest animal control programs targeting a range of species including the European Wild Rabbit; European Red Fox; feral cats; Common Mynas and new incursion species (i.e. Cane Toads).

The ARC Linkage Grant Project proposal was conceived and supported by the committee in cooperation with academics from Sydney University and ecologists from Taronga Zoo.

If successfully funded, the grant project will be delivered over a three-year period.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

The Sydney North Vertebrate Pest Committee have coordinated annual control programs for the European Red Fox across much of the Sydney-north region's public bushland reserves (including National Parks) since the late 1990's/early 2000's. Initially, fox control programs were carried out four times per year, however this was later reduced to twice annually in order to balance the impact of bushland reserve closures (to leashed dog walking) with efficacy of fox population suppression, which can be achieved through coordinated control programs timed to occur during autumn and spring – critical times in the biology of fox behaviour as well as for native species vulnerable to fox predation.

North Sydney Council has consistently participated in these fox control programs since 2007, with twice-annual baiting programs in Balls Head Reserve (Waverton) and Berry Island/Badangi Reserve (Wollstonecraft). Our neighbouring Councils of Willoughby and Lane Cove also participate in these programs, contributing to the ongoing suppression of fox density in the lower north shore area.

Since the mid 1990's, North Sydney Council (along with many other LGAs) began supporting the development of Bushcare programs – engaging local communities to care for their bushland reserves and contribute to the rehabilitation of these invaluable assets. The growth of these volunteer programs helped to broaden the profile of bushland conservation at the local level, as well as increase community understanding and valuing of urban bushland remnants.

This in-turn drove continued investment in the rehabilitation management of Council's bushland reserves, setting them on a course of careful ecosystem restoration that has seen the health, condition and species diversity of North Sydney's bushland reserves steadily improve.

Anecdotally, we know that this ongoing commitment to bushland rehabilitation, combined with landscape-scale pest management, is having a positive environmental outcome for vulnerable native wildlife species. For example, over the past decade there has been a gradual recolonisation of bushland reserves in Cammeray/Cremorne by Long-nosed Bandicoots; Swamp Wallabies and Superb Lyrebirds moving southward through the Middle Harbour green belt, from their population strongholds in Garigal National Park and beyond. More recently (2018/19), Long-nosed Bandicoots were also recorded for the first time in Badangi Reserve, Wollstonecraft, indicating natural migration through the Gore Cove wildlife corridor from habitats in the Lane Cove LGA.

However, these observed fauna recoveries and their connection to sustained bushland rehabilitation work/regional pest management over the past 20-30 years have not been formally quantified to-date through vigorous scientific research. This data-gap provides an opportunity to investigate and quantify the influence of landscape-scale, cross land-tenure coordinated environmental management on the natural recovery of certain wildlife species.

In order to address this knowledge gap, as well as investigate the feasibility of enhancing fauna recovery in urban bushland, The SNVPC have partnered with the University of Sydney to apply for grant funding under the Australian Research Council's ARC Linkage Program. The grant application, which has been led by a team of academics working in collaboration with the SNVPC member organisations, seeks to identify the relationship between bushland rehabilitation; fox control and wildlife recovery within the Sydney-north region as well as identifying suitable locations for – and trialling – the reintroduction of specific native wildlife species that are missing from the landscape, but known to occur historically.

If successful, the 3-year grant-funded study will focus on 4 main objectives:

- 1. Learning from the past** – researchers will consolidate historical fauna records held by participating SNVPC member organisations (including NSC) as well as those in public databases such as the Atlas of Living Australia and BioNet in order to quantify where species have declined, disappeared or returned to particular areas. This information will be compared against fox control data held by SNVPC members, as well as details of bushland rehabilitation activities carried out by the member organisations over the past 20-30 years. Lastly, in looking at this data at the landscape-scale, researchers will seek to identify suitable sites within the Sydney-north region for potential native species reintroductions.
- 2. Design of Restoration Plans** – based on the outcome of the above research phase, targeted ecological surveys will be undertaken at selected urban reserves predicted to be suitable for species reintroductions (also known as “rewilding”). During ecological surveys, researchers will identify threats to rewilding, by assessing habitat complexity, reserve size, presence of native versus introduced plant species, presence of red foxes and/or feral/domestic cats, level of connectedness, and level of human activity/development. Consideration will be given to ecosystem services that are likely missing from the surveyed reserves e.g. pollination, seed dispersal or soil digging, to inform what role rewilding wildlife could play in restoring ecosystem services that humans cannot replicate.

The research team aim to engage with traditional owners and local residents living near five urban bushland reserves in order to gain an understanding of perceptions, values and expectations of urban biodiversity, conservation management priorities and the concepts of rewilding.

Based on the above findings, species restoration plans will be developed for five native species that are regionally common but have been lost from much or our urban green-web of remnant bushland. The species are likely to be selected based on their suitability for translocation/reintroduction; habitat requirements/sensitivity; role in ecosystem functions and population response to predator management etc. It is expected that the species candidates will include the native Bush Rat; Eastern Pygmy Possum; Long-nosed Bandicoot; Eastern Water Dragon; Eastern Blue-tongue Lizard and the Superb Lyre Bird.



- 3. Experimentally test the reintroduction plan** – following the approval pathway for translocating native species, the reintroduction theory will be tested for each of the five selected species in specially selected recipient sites located within the SNVPC member agency region. Monitoring of the reintroduced individuals will occur immediately post-release and at regular intervals thereafter. Citizen scientists will be engaged to assist with passive field monitoring and data analysis, whilst follow-up surveys of local residents/bushland reserve neighbours to measure any change in perceptions, values and expectations that are attributable to the project.
- 4. Empower the future** – twelve months after the initial species releases, targeted trapping and tracking surveys will be conducted to check all caught individuals for microchips to determine whether they are part of the original release cohort; are juveniles resulting from successful breeding; or reflective of changes in movement patterns. DNA testing of trapped individuals will provide an insight into the breeding characteristics of the translocated cohort and whether genetic variation is sufficient to form the basis of a viable, robust population.

A detailed analysis of the data gathered, both in stage 4 of the project and in the earlier stages, will guide the development of evidence-based policy advice for urban bushland managers. This advice will take shape through specific, targeted evidence-based recommendations for the rewilding of self-sustaining populations of locally missing species, and to guide ongoing community engagement with local biodiversity conservation. Importantly, the results and experiences will provide protocols to communicate with the public about future rewilding opportunities and develop repeatable surveys that can gauge the impact of rewilding on community knowledge and conservation values. The expected outcome; an ecologically-informed communication and community survey strategy for SNVPC member organisations to help guide rewilding efforts into the future, providing a pathway to embed evidence-based wildlife restoration approaches into relevant bushland management and biodiversity recovery policy.

Should the grant application be successful, North Sydney Council's Bushland Management Team will provide in-kind support through the provision of monitoring data; access to ecological reports and a cash contribution of \$5,000 per annum funded from existing wildlife monitoring budget allocation under the Environmental Levy.

### **3.4. Future Directions of the Green Events Program 2022**

**AUTHOR:** Jordan Moy, Sustainability Education Officer

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the future direction of the Green Events program in 2022.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Green Events program comprises of a suite of sustainability related workshops, webinars and events offered to the North Sydney community free of charge. The program is designed to engage, encourage, and foster behaviour change in North Sydney residents and workers by giving them the knowledge and skills to act. The program will shift its core focus in 2022 to an all-electric future and electrification of homes.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The Green Events program is funded through Council's Environmental Levy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the report on the Green Events Program be received.



## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

#### **1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Green Events program has been running since 2008 and has continued to gain in popularity since its commencement. Each year there are approximately 30 webinars, workshops and events and the attendance numbers have increased year on year.

The Green Events program aims to capitalise on the latest research and trends and the annual program has been designed to reflect this. In recent years there has been a shift towards electrification and decarbonisation as a viable and focused solution to reduce household emissions which will feature prominently in the 2022 program.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

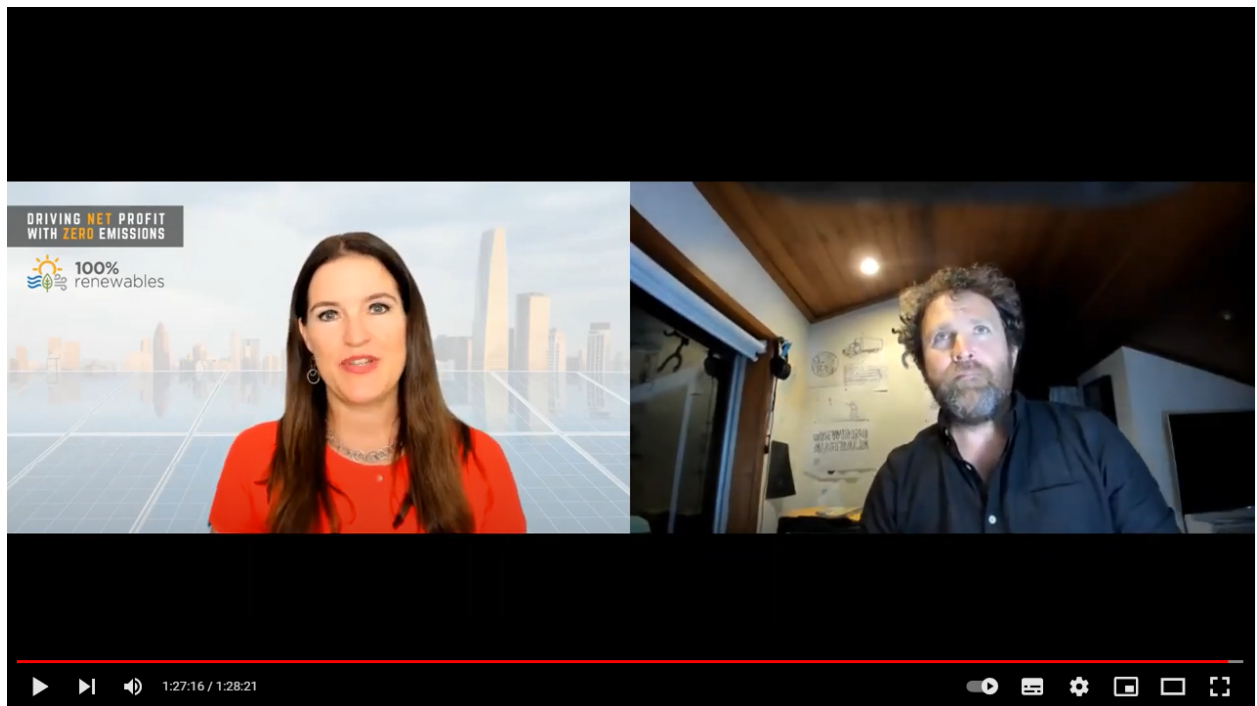
The Green Events Program, run by the Sustainability Team, consists of over 30 free workshops, webinars and events that are run each year for the North Sydney community. The program focuses on current topics and themes of environmental sustainability with workshops designed to engage, encourage, and foster behaviour change by giving North Sydney residents the knowledge and skills to reduce their carbon footprint.

The program is informed by feedback from participants which is gathered through evaluation surveys after each workshop. In 2021, over 1300 participants attended the Green Events program and formal feedback from participants across the program was excellent, with 90% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied with the event, venue, and facilitator, and 90% of respondents being motivated or highly motivated to make a sustainable change in their lives. As part of the evaluation process participants are also asked for suggestions on topics for future events. Increasingly, the program has seen a strong residential shift towards electrification and decarbonisation as a way residents can take meaningful action, on an individual and household level, to reduce their emissions and become part of the climate change solution. The shift in thinking and behaviour towards electrification is also reflected in [Council's 2030 Environmental Sustainability Strategy](#), with stated targets of 100% of Council's electricity needs to be met by renewable energy by 2030 and 65% greenhouse gas reduction of 1996 levels before 2030.

In 2022 and beyond, the Green Events Program will continue to look at strategies to support households to electrify their homes. The program will focus on the household level as residents are best placed to take advantage of existing and affordable technology and have the ability to make the biggest carbon emission savings.

The first major event held in 2022 as part of the Green Events program was with Dr Saul Griffith, who discussed his most recent book, [‘The Big Switch’](#) and who listed the strategies we can all use to better prepare for electrification and to take advantage of the opportunities when they arise. North Sydney residents can watch the event on the [Council’s Sustainability You Tube channel](#).

Future electrification events in 2022 are currently in the planning stage and will include such topics as demystifying green power, virtual tour of all electric homes, electric home mythbusting, hot water heat pump basics, solar pv for apartments/homes, electric vehicles and electric bikes and hands on all electric demonstrations.



**Pic Above: Barbara Albert from 100% Renewables in conversation with Saul Griffith as part of The Big Switch webinar held on March 23, 2022.**

### **3.5. Sustainable Business Programs Report**

**AUTHOR:** Ali Devlin, Sustainable Business Officer

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

The report provides an update of program reach, major focus areas and recent and upcoming events for each of the business programs.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides an overview and update of North Sydney Councils Sustainable Business Programs - CitySwitch and Better Business Partnership.

The programs exist to support both small local businesses and large corporate tenancies with their efforts in reducing their energy, water, and waste consumption.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Sustainable Business Programs are funded through the Environmental Levy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report on North Sydney's Sustainable Business Programs be received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
  - 1.2 North Sydney is sustainable and resilient
  
3. Our Future Planning
  - 3.1 Prosperous and vibrant economy

## **BACKGROUND**

North Sydney Council has been a partner to two successful sustainable business programs since 2005. The Better Business Partnership and the CitySwitch program engage over 60 small businesses and large corporate tenancies in improving their environmental performance through the provision of environmental audits, recommendation of sustainability upgrades and initiatives and education and engagement programs.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Nil.

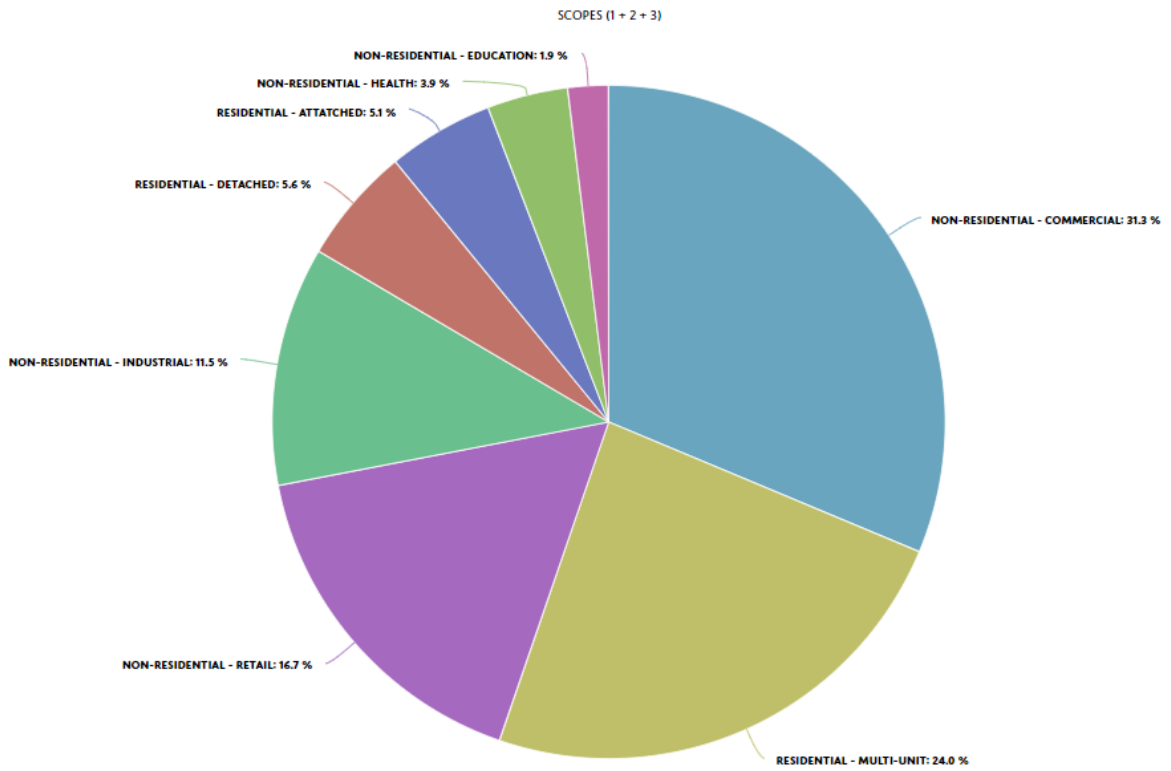
Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

North Sydney Council supports two sustainable business programs, the Better Business Partnership (BBP) and City Switch. BBP is aimed at small to medium sized organisations including shop fronts, small offices, and childcare centres, whilst CitySwitch works with corporate tenants in large office towers. Both programs aim to assist businesses and tenancies identify opportunities to reduce energy and water use, improve waste diversion, and assist with sustainable procurement and staff engagement. The programs assist businesses and tenancies achieve local and national recognition through social and environmental sustainability initiatives, with both programs celebrating and rewarding environmental leadership and achievement through annual awards.

The need for the sustainable business support programs is highlighted in recent data from Resilient Sydney that shows that 48% of all the greenhouse gas emissions for North Sydney in 2019/20 were from the commercial and retail sectors (see fig 1). A major focus of the business programs going forward will be to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via promotion of electrification, provision of energy audits, waste reduction programs and implementation of organic waste streams and incentives such as rebates and subsidies.

NORTH SYDNEY LGA: GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS BY SECTOR - 2019-20



Above: Fig 1: Report from the Resilient Sydney platform - Kinesis

### Better Business Partnership (BBP) Program

The BBP program currently supports 41 businesses in North Sydney, by assessing the environmental impact of the business through audits and subsequent sustainability recommendations. Once implemented these recommendations provide financial savings for the business and accreditation for steps they have taken. Business partners have seen the benefit of the program by reducing overall running costs as well as the opportunity to connect and network with other members.

Usual methods of engagement with program members included regular meet ups and networking events, however, over the last 2 years due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the program switched to running online webinars. Topics have covered a range of subjects including community recycling hubs; carbon offsets; how to make your business more sustainable; and what is net zero. Upcoming events in the BBP online Program include the NSW Plastics Ban for Businesses - What you need to know! This event will be held online, Wed 6 April, 2pm – 3pm. These member events have also encouraged new businesses to join the program and start their sustainability journey.

The most recent networking event was held at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in February 2022. This was the first face to face event since the Better Business Awards back in June 2021. Over 60 attendees enjoyed a warm sun-drenched afternoon on the Coal Loader Platform, with the event using members of the BBP program to supply the food, drinks and entertainment: Trolley'd, Agape Organic and Kristen Fletcher from Studio K Music. In keeping with the ethos of the sustainability centre and the focus of the BBP program, the event was zero-waste using repurposed and recyclable materials, RUZI reusable plates and glassware and composting of all organic waste.





*Above photos: Better Business Partnership networking event – The Coal Loader*

The program has recently embarked on a new partnership with Green Caffein (<https://greencaffein.com.au/>) a swap cup program providing an alternative to single use coffee cups. Recent reports from Best Bagel Co located in Cremorne suggest that in just the first two days of the initiative running they have reported a diversion of over 100 single use coffee cups which would otherwise have been destined for landfill. Averaging this out over a year, this is a saving of 368.44kg of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>e), 33kgs of plastic and A\$2,000 saving to the business for not having to purchase single use cups.

## CitySwitch

CitySwitch works with commercial office tenants to reduce their environmental impact. There are currently 22 signatories in the program for North Sydney.

Reporting for this program happens in September and the 2021 Annual Report and State Award winners have recently been released to signatories and stakeholders. The report provides a review of up-to-date building and office space energy ratings, and business sustainability achievements over the last year. In 2021, program signatories across Australia saved 762,341 tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere through energy efficiency, carbon offsets and renewables (See Fig 2).

The postponed 2021 Awards (due to COVID-19 and Local Government election delays) will be held on Thursday 28 April at Town Hall, City of Sydney. This is the first face to face networking event that signatories have attended in NSW since 2020 and all signatories are encouraged to attend. Both the Lord Mayor of City of Sydney and North Sydney are attending and will talk about how the program benefits their respective LGAs. State Award winners and the National and overall winners will also be announced.

A major focus for CitySwitch in 2022 will be the transformation of the program based on signatory feedback and evaluation. It is hoped that by refreshing the program and creating a less arduous and more streamlined approach to reporting, engagement levels by signatories will increase.

Upcoming events in the CitySwitch Program include:

- CitySwitch Lunch and Learn: Resource recovery solutions for the hybrid workplace, Thursday 31 March 12:30 – 13:30pm
- National Awards: In person City of Sydney and Melbourne, and an option to dial into the live broadcast to those who can't make it in person. Thursday 28 April 2022 5:30pm



## 2021 ACHIEVEMENTS



**19%**  
of all Australian office space  
signed up to CitySwitch<sup>1</sup>



**\$62.6**  
million avoided this year by  
tenancies combined action  
since first rating<sup>5</sup>



**227,023 sqm**  
NLA joined in 2021



**106**  
tenancies with an accredited  
NABERS Energy Rating  
of 4-star and above



**762,341**  
tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> saved<sup>2</sup>



**9**  
tenancies with an accredited  
6-star NABERS Energy Rating



**557,670**  
tonnes of carbon offsets  
purchases<sup>3</sup>



**4.8**  
stars weighted average  
accredited NABERS Energy  
Rating with GreenPower<sup>6</sup>



**204,671**  
tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse  
gases saved through  
energy efficiency<sup>4</sup>

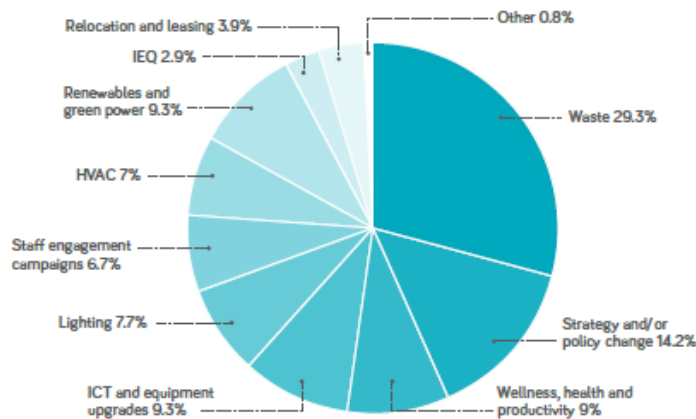


**99%**  
program satisfaction rating

1. Based on 26,037,495 million sqm total per Property Council of Australia, Office Market Report 2021
2. Avoided and abated emission this year through a combination of energy efficiency projects and carbon offsetting.
3. There has been a change in the methodology for counting offsets since last year. Only offsets that were retired during the CitySwitch reporting year were counted.

4. Derived from accredited and indicative National Australian Built Environment Ratings and third party verified savings comparing latest emissions to their highest ever emissions.
5. Based on calculated energy consumption at average rates per state.
6. The rating in 2020 annual report was incorrectly reported as 4.8 which should have been 4.6.

### Breakdown of 796 environmental projects carried out by CitySwitch signatories in 2021



All figures accurate as at 18 February 2021. Prepared for CitySwitch by Strategy Policy Research

Fig 2. 2021 CitySwitch Program Achievements.

### **3.6. Towards Net Zero Emissions**

**AUTHOR:** Danielle Birkbeck, Snr Sustainability Programs Coordinator

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview on how North Sydney Council and the community are tracking on the carbon footprint targets and how we propose to assist as we work towards net zero emissions.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In July 2021, North Sydney Council endorsed the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030 (ESS 2030) that sets out community and council targets and action plans across seven areas including carbon footprint.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The program will be funded through the Environment Levy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** this report on Net Zero Emissions be received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
- 1.2 North Sydney is sustainable and resilient

## **BACKGROUND**

North Sydney Council has long been a leader in environmental sustainability, setting ambitious Council and community targets for the reduction of energy, waste and water consumption since 2004.

However, over the last decade it has become increasingly evident that in order to tackle climate change and contain warming to 1.5deg C, previous targets and efficiency efforts have not been strong enough to yield the dramatic drop in greenhouse gas emissions that are required.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

In July 2019, North Sydney Council declared a climate emergency with Councillors unanimously voting to acknowledge that climate change poses a threat to the future of our cities, including the North Sydney LGA. This was followed in July 2021 with the endorsement of the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030 (ESS 2030). The strategy sets out twenty-two community and council targets and an action plan across seven areas including carbon footprint, water conservation, water quality, engagement in sustainability, urban ecology, resource recovery and sustainable transport.

Together, the declaration and strategy embody Council's commitment to sustainability and shows the North Sydney community that we are serious about addressing climate change. To reinforce this commitment, Council has also become a member of a national and international program - the Climate Councils Cities Power Partnership program and the Cities Race to Zero program. Pledge commitments we have made in these programs align with the ambitious targets set out in the ESS 2030 and will hold us accountable at a national and global level.

### Net Zero targets and achievements for Council

Council has set ambitious targets in the ESS 2030 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through a mix of renewables and electrification.

Targets include:

- 100% of Councils electricity needs will be met by renewable energy sources by 2030;
- Council operations will be 100% carbon neutral by 2030;
- 100% of Council's passenger and commercial fleet will be electric before 2030.

Whilst we are at the beginning of our decarbonization journey, significant achievements have been accomplished to date that have put us firmly on the path to net zero emissions. These include:

- By 2023, 100% of all Council electricity needs (including Council sites and streetlighting) will come from NSW solar farms;
- Ongoing energy efficiency upgrades at all Council facilities including lighting and HVAC systems;
- Increased rooftop solar electricity on Council facilities to 500kW, approximately 1500 panels;
- Installing heat pumps for hot water and air conditioning as upgrades are required;
- Electric vehicle chargers in five council car parks, with the ability to charge 10 vehicles;
- Removing gas and replacing with electric equipment powered by solar;
- Installation of three batteries for electricity storage.

Future projects to reduce emissions include investigating the feasibility of divesting Councils investments from fossil fuels and developing a fleet transition strategy to electrify Council fleet, operations and equipment.

#### Net Zero targets and achievements for the community

The ESS 2030 sets out a community carbon footprint target of 65% greenhouse gas reduction of the 1996 community emissions levels before 2030. This target is currently tracking at 18% which highlights the need for significant measures to assist the North Sydney community in rapidly reducing their emissions.

Indicators measured for North Sydney residents do show a downward trend of greenhouse gas emissions, albeit slowly, however there are several community achievements to date that are particularly promising. These include:

- the purchase of electric vehicles in North Sydney has increased five fold in four years;
- over 3703kW of solar PV has been installed on residential dwellings in North Sydney;
- over 1500 households diverting food waste from landfill through the Council subsidized compost revolution program.

#### Towards Net Zero Emissions

The research in the scientific community indicates that the strongest action we can take in tackling climate change is to switch to clean and renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and heat pump technology, and stop the use of fossil fuels including coal and gas. This is necessary in meeting our energy demands as well as our transportation needs and it is thought that by simply electrifying everything (with the source of the power being green power), Australia could cut its emissions by 80 % by 2035.

Supporting our residents to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through electrification will be the main focus of our sustainability programs going forward, as we work towards building a net zero community in North Sydney.

Going electric is possibly the easiest and fastest way to cut greenhouse gas emissions with relatively little impact on quality of life. For North Sydney residents it means an increase in the number of households with rooftop solar panels; electric vehicles instead of petrol/diesel; electric water heaters instead of gas; reverse cycle air conditioners; induction cooktops and household batteries to store solar power. It is anticipated that the average Australian would need to make about seven changes of new electric acquisitions.

However, electrification is not without its challenges, with possibly the biggest obstacle being the upfront expense. Currently there are government rebates for certain items including solar PV, heat pump hot water systems and reverse cycle air conditioners, however more could be done at a local level to incentivize the community to make the switch. Ku-ring-gai City Council is leading the way by offering additional rebates.

Key to engaging North Sydney residents on our road to net zero will be a comprehensive public messaging and communications campaign beginning in 22/23. Council website will be updated to outline our current targets and performance and we will refresh existing and create new content for a net zero community webpage. The net zero community pages will include information on how to take action; provide local and relevant case studies; promote local legends and advise on rebates and subsidies. Our key message of 'Electrifying Everything' will be the at the core of this messaging campaign.

Our existing residential and business programs will prioritize decarbonization through electrification and will aim to undertake the following:

- Green Events program will hold workshop and events to support residents to electrify their homes;
- Futureproofing Apartments program will focus on energy saving opportunities in strata common areas; the potential for solar PV sharing and centralised hot water system upgrades; electric vehicle charging infrastructure and installation of batteries for electricity storage.
- Sustainable Business Programs will focus on purchase of renewable energy and reductions in consumption; transitioning from gas to electric; waste reduction and diversion.

### **3.7. Water and Energy Management Programs Update**

**AUTHOR:** Ian Garradd, Sustainability Project Officer

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides an overview of Council greenhouse gas emissions, energy and water consumption data for the period of 2004-2021.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides an overview of Council greenhouse gas emissions, energy and water consumption data for the period of 2004-2021.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The water and energy programs discussed in this report are funded through a combination of Council's Environment Levy and property maintenance budget.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report on Council's Water and Energy Management Programs is noted.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs

### **2. Our Built Infrastructure**

2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet community needs

## **BACKGROUND**

Council has been monitoring energy, greenhouse gas emissions and water reduction and consumption since 2004. Data is used to track our progress in meeting our targets as outlined in our relevant strategies and plans. The current document that sets out these targets is the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030 (ESS 2030).

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement is not required.

## **DETAIL**

Following is a summary of greenhouse gas emissions and energy and water consumption data over the 18-year period from 2004-2021. Overall results show a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and electricity consumption coupled with a considerable drop in potable water consumption, and the increasing use of rainwater and stormwater harvesting and reuse.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Figure 1. shows a declining trend in emissions in all operations sectors. Improved environmental performance is due to the following factors including the purchase of electricity from renewable electricity sources, energy efficiency measures across the organisation; increasing solar electricity capacity and the transition away from gas to renewable heat energy systems.

### Annual Emissions - tCO2e

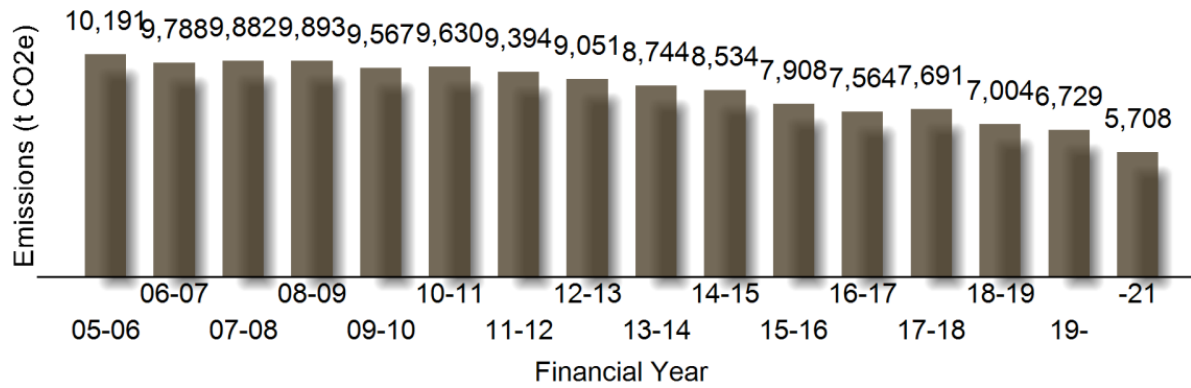


Fig 1. Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2005-2021

### Electricity

Highlighting the monthly consumption of electricity since 2004, Figure 2 shows a decreasing trend in consumption. Energy efficiency improvements and upgrades have limited the effect of rising electricity costs, and this is reflected in the decreasing costs associated with electricity usage in Council (Fig 3)

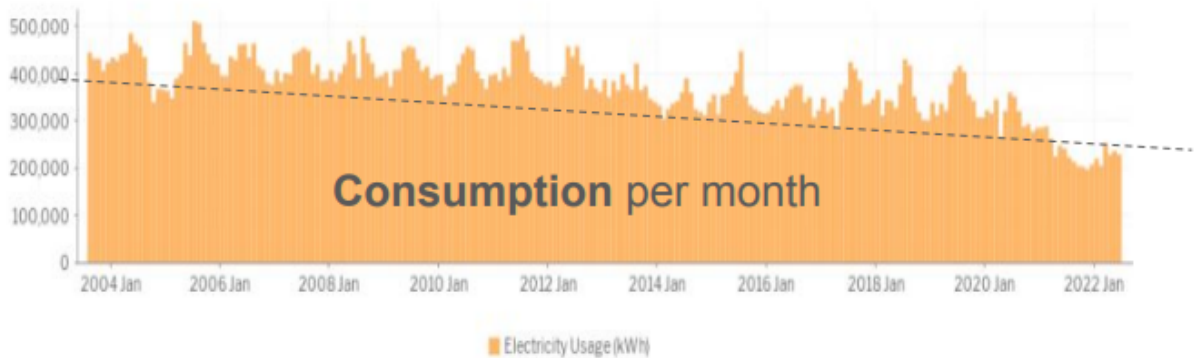


Fig 2. Electricity consumption 2004-2022

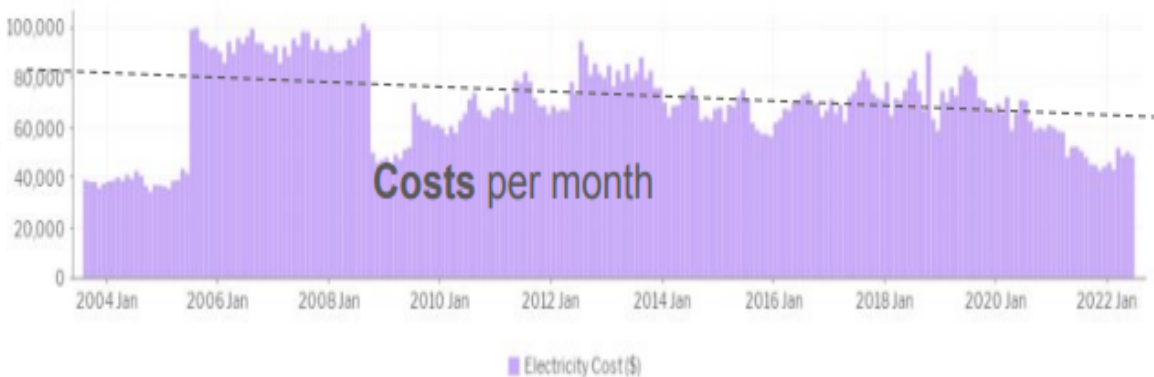
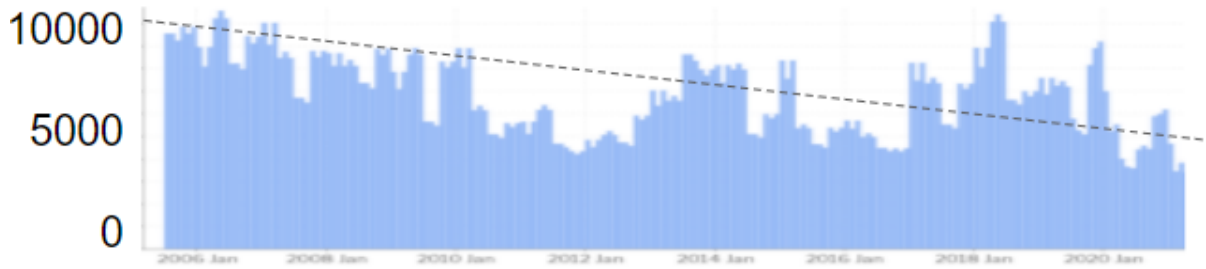


Fig 3. Council electricity costs 2004-2022

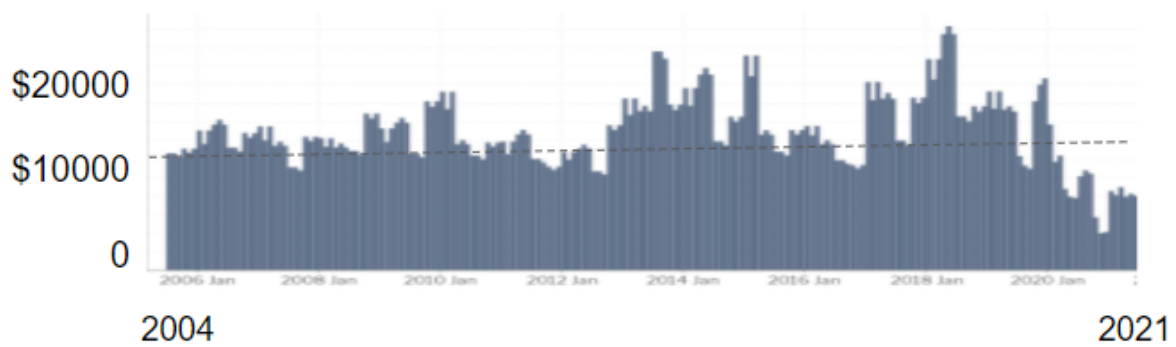


## Water

Potable water consumption has reduced considerably due to water efficiency projects and stormwater re-use via the Cammeray Dam System (see Fig 4). This is of value as potable water costs to Council have increased over the same time period (see Fig 5). However, even with rising water costs, stormwater and rainwater reuse systems have enabled us to save significant amounts of money (see Fig 6).



*Fig 4. Potable water consumption 2006-2021*



*Fig 5. Water cost per month 2006-2021*

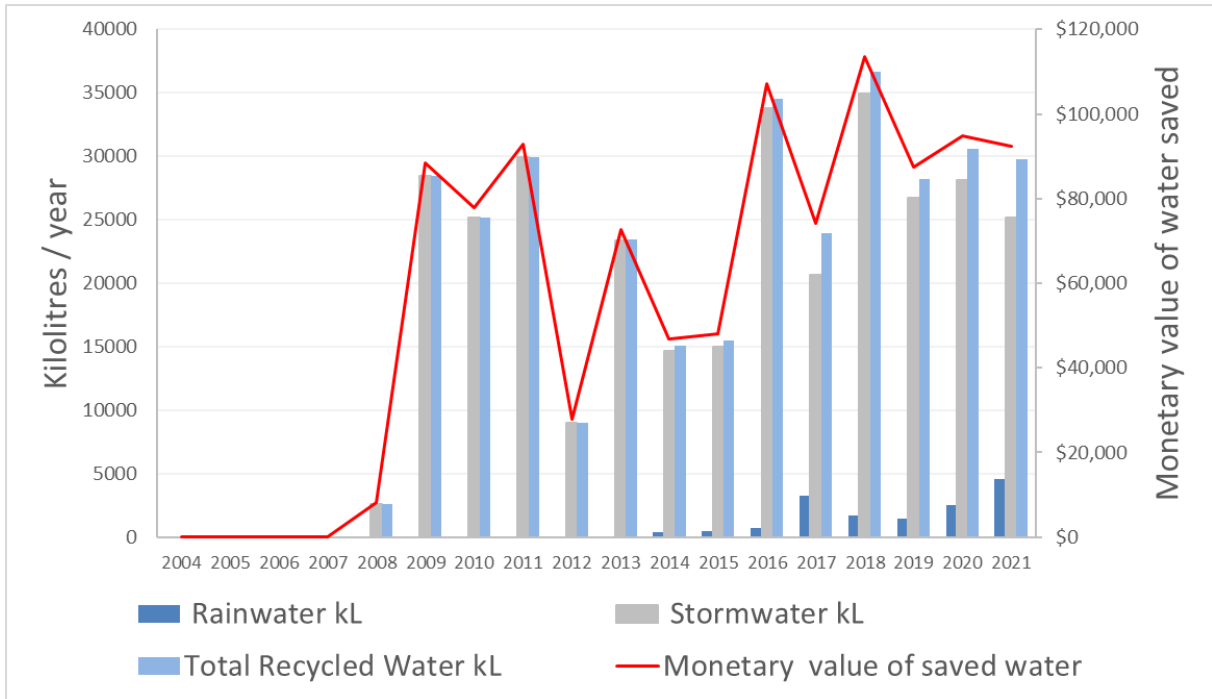


Fig 6. Monetary value of water saved from stormwater and rainwater re-use 2004-2021

Other

Whilst not currently a key performance indicator for Council, Figure 7 charts the installation of solar electricity and batteries on Council buildings from 2009.

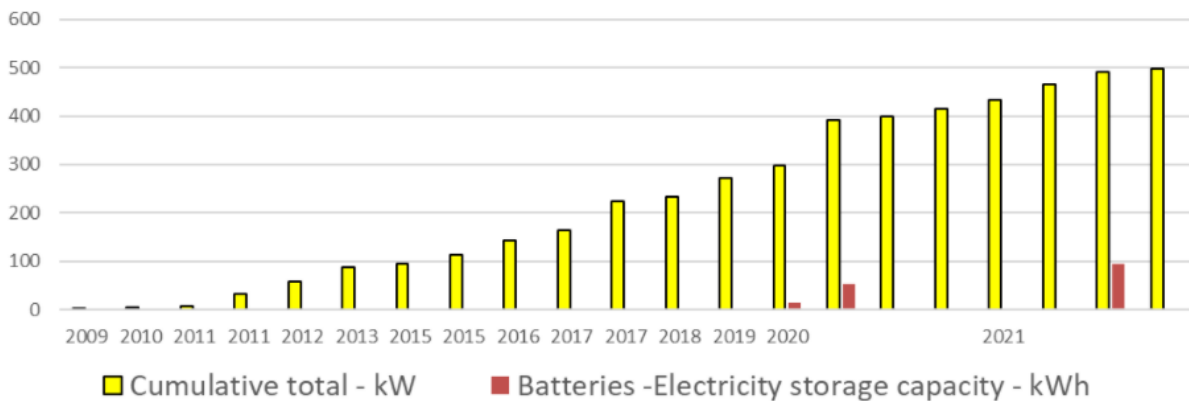


Fig 7. Solar electricity and battery capacity installed on Council buildings

Recently completed and current projects

Over the past 18 months a range of initiatives have been introduced and implemented to assist with achieving the ESS 2030 targets in the areas of carbon footprint, water conservation and sustainable transport.

- New solar power installations totaling 499kW at the following Council locations:
  - o Bradfield Park Community centre 31kW
  - o Council Chambers upgrade to 51kW + Battery installed.
  - o Ros Crichton Pavilion upgrade to 10kW

- Replacement of gas hot water & hydronic heating system at Coal Loader. The 'Cottage' heating system has been replaced by reverse cycle air-conditioning and the gas boosted solar hot water system has been replaced by an electric heat pump hot water system. Following gas disconnection, the space heating and hot water systems operate on a hybrid of onsite solar electricity & renewable heat that is harvested by heat pumps.
- Currently working with consultants to deliver a report on the feasibility of transitioning away from gas cooking for a café on Council-owned commercial property. We have found that Café owners are beginning to recognize the multiple benefits of induction cooking and having all-electric premises, but don't understand the economics of changing.
- Continuation of the Futureproofing Apartments Program. Outcomes of the program include:
  - o Approximately 200 buildings assessed. Many of those buildings currently undergoing upgrades including the following
  - o Lighting upgrades to LED with smart controls
  - o Transitioning from gas to heat pumps for hot water
  - o Solar PV installations
  - o Car park fan efficiency

### **3.8. Streets Alive, Community Garden and HarbourCare update**

**AUTHOR:** Hugh Goodman, Streets Alive Co-ordinator

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to update the Environmental Reference Group on the Streets Alive, Community Garden and HarbourCare programs.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report is to update the Reference Group on the various projects Council has been undertaking within the Streets Alive, Community Garden and HarbourCare programs. As of March 2022, Streets Alive has 408 registered volunteers covering approx. 160 sites within the LGA ranging from small verges to large open spaces within cul de sacs. The Streets Alive program helps promote a sense of ownership and encourages community participation / involvement through offering gardening opportunities for the local community.

Council has eight official Community Garden groups across the LGA which are maintained by community volunteers. They provide a place for volunteers to participate in gardening, help strengthen community bonds and contribute to the development of a sustainable urban environment.

HarbourCare comprises of 21 sites around the LGA. HarbourCare supports volunteers concerned about pollution in Sydney Harbour and its effect on marine and bird life, and who volunteer to cleanup and remove rubbish from our many small beaches.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Budget allocated in the 21/22 financial year

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report be received and noted

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

1.4 Public open space and recreation facilities and services meet community needs

### **4. Our Social Vitality**

4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

## **BACKGROUND**

Green spaces are an important component within an urban environment. They play an important environmental role (ie. reducing urban heat island effect), provide spaces for physical activity / relaxation and help improve the beauty and aesthetic of the local surrounds.

Council recognises that many of North Sydney's public gardens are already receiving input from adjacent property owners and acknowledges that gardening is a valid and important recreational pursuit.

Streets Alive provides recognition to those residents who already contribute in beautifying the area, while also giving opportunities for those residents to wish to participate in gardening. This is significant especially with the large areas of medium to high-density residential status (ie apartment blocks) within the LGA, where opportunities to partake in gardening are limited.

Both the Streets Alive and Community Garden program promote gardening as a valuable recreational activity which not only enhances Council's assets but provides a platform whereby the local community can form strong bonds and foster a sense of stewardship over public open space.

HarbourCare both formally recognises and supports those volunteers who voluntarily collect rubbish along Council's many small beaches.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol.

## DETAIL

### Streets Alive

As of March 2022, the program has 408 registered volunteers covering approx. 160 sites across the LGA. These sites range in size from small verges to large open spaces with varying number of volunteers.

The program encourages residents to partake in recreational gardening while also providing an opportunity for neighbours to meet each other, fostering a sense of community and stewardship. Care is taken to ensure new planting will maintain the existing character of the surrounding area, while also enhancing the aesthetics qualities to the immediate area.

### **Ernest St, Crows Nest**



Before



After – A new Streets Alive green space with perennials and herbs provides the community a place to partake in gardening and connect with neighbouring residents.

## Winslow St, Kirribilli



Before – An underutilised green space struggling to grow grass



After – Green space is transformed into a native themed garden by local residents, encouraging a sense of community whilst improving the street's aesthetic.

## Community Gardens

Council's Community Garden program plays an important role in fostering a sense of community and providing an educational platform for sustainable gardening practices. North Sydney Council has a total of eight groups across the LGA, with a total of 390 registered volunteers.

Volunteers meet weekly and assist in various gardening duties and tasks through the support of Council, offering an opportunity to learn fundamental gardening techniques whilst also meeting people through a shared interest.



Coal Loader Community gardeners sharing their harvest amongst fellow volunteers



## HarbourCare

Council's HarbourCare program supports and recognises volunteers who are concerned about pollution in Sydney Harbour and its effect on marine and bird life. The pandemic and the resulting lockdown / work from home saw a steady increase in HarbourCare volunteers joining the program.

Council has 21 official HarbourCare sites with a total of 65 registered volunteers dedicated in keeping our waterways clean.



A day's collection from a HarbourCare volunteer

### **3.9. Revision of Bushcare Program Guidelines**

**AUTHOR:** Andrew Scott, Bushcare Officer

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Revision of Bushcare Volunteer Program Guidelines - V 9 [3.9.1 - 36 pages]

**PURPOSE:**

To advise the Environmental Reference Group of the changes to the Bushcare Volunteer Program Guidelines.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Bushcare guidelines have been developed to support and manage volunteers who would like to be involved in Council's Bushcare program. A revision of the guidelines is required to reflect changes in government legislation and Council's policies and procedures.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Bushcare is funded under the Environmental Levy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the report on the Bushcare Program Guidelines be received.
2. **THAT** the draft guidelines be placed on public exhibition and volunteers consulted directly on the changes to the Bushcare Program Guidelines.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **1. Our Living Environment**

#### **1.1 Protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity**

## **BACKGROUND**

North Sydney Council Bushcare will celebrate its 30th Anniversary next year. The Bushcare program officially started in April 1993 as a one-year trial to improve environmental awareness and participation in the management of urban bushland reserves, it proved to be popular with the community and has enjoyed ongoing support from Council, having been largely funded through an Environmental Levy since 2000.

Bushcare is primarily a social activity open to all community members, volunteers learn about their local environment while weeding, undertaking light exercise in a natural setting with likeminded people.

Bushcare is an integral part of North Sydney's Bushland Plan of Management, which establishes management policy and direction for both council staff and the community and is closely linked with council's overall land management objectives, as described in the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028.

Today there are twelve Bushcare groups working in 11 bushland reserves each supported by a core of about 6 to 8 volunteers and a Bushcare nursery group located at the Coal Loader Sustainability Centre. Bushcare meetings occur most weekends and a few weekdays from February through November each year.

Volunteers are trained in bush regeneration, a land management practice primarily concerned with the control of weeds, mostly invasive exotic plants, to assist the natural regeneration of bushland and the management of other environmental factors such as habitat protection, urban run-off, and soil erosion. All tools, safety equipment, training and supervision are provided by the Bushland Management Team.

Volunteers may also work at one-off Bushcare events, such as National Tree Day and corporate volunteer days, or assist with administrative tasks such as entering data for the Wildlife Watch program or helping to organise and promote Bushcare on market days.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Protocol.

## DETAIL

North Sydney Council recognises the importance of community involvement in protecting and conserving the natural environment and landscape. The Bushcare program guidelines have been developed to support and manage volunteers who would like to be involved Council's Bushcare program.

The Bushcare program guidelines are printed as a hard copy booklet and posted to all new Bushcare volunteers after they have attended their first Bushcare meeting, it is a resource that volunteers can reference at their own convenience, when needed. Volunteers are asked to read the Bushcare program guidelines to gain an understanding of the objectives, organisation and operations of the Bushcare program and to confirm that they understand the conditions for participation (such as their rights and legal responsibilities) by signing the Bushcare volunteer agreement included at the rear the document.

The Bushcare volunteer agreement is registered in ECM (our Electronic Content Management System) and linked to the 'customer record', then a volunteer record is created in the Authority Register for Bushcare (Bushcare volunteer database). Reports can be called for volunteer records to ensure compliance, that volunteers have completed an agreement and any other condition for participation e.g., proof of Covid-19 vaccination and Bushcare Essentials training. The Bushland Team upholds Council's Privacy Management Plan by ensuring the volunteers personal information is always kept private and confidential.

North Sydney Council's Bushcare Program Guidelines were developed in 2010 and have not been updated since this time. A revision of the guidelines is necessary to reflect subsequent changes in legislation, specifically; the Work Health Safety Act 2011 and Council's policies and codes of conduct, most importantly, the Child Safe Policy (formerly called the Child Protection Policy) and Child Safe Code of Conduct.

This document has been prepared with reference to, and is consistent with, the following relevant Council documents that have been updated since 2010.

- Community Strategic Plan 2018-28, NSC
- Local Environmental Plan 2013, NSC
- Bushland Plan of Management 2021, NSC
- Natural Area Survey 2010, NSC
- Urban Forest Strategy 2019, NSC
- Bushland Rehabilitation Plans, 2019-29 NSC

Other changes include extracts from the Code of Conduct for Volunteers and the Volunteer Policy to ensure volunteers are aware of their rights and responsibilities. A short history outlining the development of bush regeneration practice and the Bushcare movement has been included for educational purposes. Additionally, a description of how the Bushcare program fits within in Council's Bushland Plan of Management and how it relates to North Sydney's Community Strategic Plan 2018-28. Information about Wildlife Rescue has been included, as enquiries to Council about injured wildlife are forwarded on to this totally volunteer run, not for profit organisation. New content was also developed to highlight Aboriginal sites awareness among program participants.

A consultative process was followed for significant changes to the Bushcare Program Guidelines. Updates to Council's Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct and their implications for the Bushcare Program were discussed at the most recent Bushcare Convener Meeting on 10 March 2022, a biannual meeting between the Bushland Team and representative for Bushcare and Nursery Groups. Feedback recorded in the Convener Meeting Minutes has been taken into consideration. A draft of the Bushcare Program Guidelines document (attached) will be circulated to Bushcare Volunteer Convenors ahead of the wider community consultation process.

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**Acknowledgement to Country**

We acknowledge the Gammaraygal/ Cammeraygal people, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we stand today. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waters of the Lower North Shore of Sydney and thank them for protecting this coastline and its ecosystems. We pay our respects to Elder's past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people present today.



### **The Intrinsic Value of Small Bushland Reserves**

Our small and mainly isolated bushland reserves are vestiges of the once contiguous bushland cover that characterised the North Sydney area and beyond. These bushland remnants are the result of a fragmented natural landscape caused by urban development.

Though once neglected, today our bushland areas are more widely appreciated for their intrinsic values, not least of which is biodiversity. Our small bushland reserves provide refuge for endemic fauna and flora with unique genetic lineage, some of these species being rare, threatened and/or endangered. The resilience of our small bushland reserves enables animals and plants to disperse from one area to another, assisting gene flow and the colonisation of suitable sites. The protection of native vegetation in our small bushland reserves is of particular importance as animals rely on these diverse resources for food and habitat. They also act as important refuge points within a wider (though disconnected) network of wildlife corridors. North Sydney's small bushland reserves enhance our connection to place, they are bastions of Aboriginal and European culture and heritage, that safeguard sites of significance in perpetuity. Given its Gondwana heritage, the Australian bush is unique and quite distinct from the natural environments found in other countries. It shapes our sense of national identity and influences our lifestyles choices; it is an important place for passive recreation (e.g., bush walking), for relaxation, and provides a multitude of benefits for our health and wellbeing.

Natural areas provide important environmental benefits to our society, by providing clean air and water, regulating water flow and soil production, providing shade and cooling the atmosphere to counter the urban heat effect, whilst sequestering carbon to buffer against the worst effects of climate change. Our bushland areas are beautiful, they improve public amenity and increase the perceived value of residential property, as well as the "desirability" of leafy suburbs.

Environmental pressures, including urban run-off and subsequent soil nutrient loading; invasive weeds; pests and disease; tree vandalism; rubbish dumping; inappropriate fire regimes and soil disturbance threaten the integrity of bushland in an urban setting and so need to be actively managed by local authorities in partnership with the community. The fate of our small bushland reserves lays within our hands.

### A Short History of Bush Regeneration

One of the earliest examples of assisted natural bush regeneration occurred at Broken Hill in far west NSW in the late 1930s. Botanist, Albert Morris and the Barrier Field Naturalists Club, with support from locals and the mining industry, devised a scheme to establish a series of natural regeneration reserves around the *silver city*. The reserves aimed to counter the effects of severe dust storms, caused by the loss of natural vegetation cover through mining, overgrazing, feral animals and tree clearing.

Albert would wonder the semiarid areas around Broken Hill and observe the way native plants recovered after natural disturbances, he concluded that if the town folk would remove their livestock from the town common, the area would recover. The resulting revegetation project focused on the exclusion of grazing animals and rabbits to encourage natural regeneration and the replanting of endemic native plant species best suited to the local conditions.

The green belt around the town was massively successful at stopping the dust storms and still remains until this day. It has served as a model for subsequent restoration of other degraded mining sites. During the next three decades, there was a rapid expansion in state and federal policies and actions to counteract land degradation.

Albert Morris was a local hero but received little national exposure, he came from an isolated community with specific problems, it took another 40 to 50 years before people were ready to receive the knowledge he had to share.

What has commonly come to be known as The Bradley Method of bush regeneration has its origins here on the Lower North Shore of Sydney. In the 1960s, two sisters, Joan and Eileen Bradley, both raised in Neutral Bay and students from Wenona school, Joan a retired industrial chemist, devised an approach for rehabilitating degraded bushland by assisting the natural regeneration of endemic (local native) plants, through the control of weeds (exotic and non-endemic plants) only, with minimal disturbance and without re-planting.

The Bradley sisters regularly walked with their dog (Velvet) from their home adjoining Ashton Park (now part of Sydney Harbour National Park), near Clifton Gardens and on to Chowder Head where they observed attempts to slash and burn weeds simply resulted in vigorous weed regrowth at the expense of native plants. They formed an alternate strategy, they observed, as they pulled the weeds away in good bush it started to look after itself.

The Bradley Method was developed through trial and error, published in Joan Bradley's "Weeds and their Control" (1967); "Bush Regeneration" (1971) and "Bringing Back the Bush" (2002), it featured hand weeding techniques with the application of three main principles:

1. Work outward from areas of native plants toward weed infested areas
2. Make minimal disturbance
3. Let native plant regeneration dictate the rate of weed removal

This process occurred over years of consecutive follow-up treatments that required a diminishing investment of labour over-time.

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The Bradley Method of bush regeneration spread through the leafy suburbs of Sydney, with volunteer bush groups springing up initially as community driven actions by individuals and groups (some without the permission of local authorities). In time, most of these groups were formalised with Council support. The earliest Bushcare groups were at Ashton Park, Mosman (1964), Beecroft Reserve (1965), Greenwich Point (1967) and Lane Cove Bushland Park in the 1970s. Joan Bradley and Tony May started the first bush regeneration company, Bradley & May.

The Bradley Method was well established by the 1970s and was provided momentum by the advocacy and support of the National Trust of Australia (NSW), conservators of our cultural, built and natural heritage. The Trust's Evelyn Hickey employed Joan and a team of bush regenerators to supervise a pilot scheme to regenerate a Blue Gum Forest in one of their properties, Blackwood Memorial Sanctuary in Beecroft and soon after adopted the Bradley Method and employed Joan to supervise work and to develop its training program. They offered to undertake bushland surveys of local Council areas, to assess ecosystems and how they should be managed. The Trust approached North Sydney along with Manly, Kogarah, Hurstville and Ryde Councils to carry out surveys of their bushland reserves in the 1980s and were subsequently commissioned to undertake bush regeneration work on a paid basis. By 1983, the National Trust were employing bush regenerators in nine municipalities and thirty reserves.

As attitudes toward the value of bushland changed, community and conservation groups formed in opposition to the development of bushland areas in urban areas and they advocated for their protection. Early examples include; the Battle for Ashton Park (1964) – opposition to a road extension through urban bushland on Bradleys Head; the Battle for Kelly's Bush – the planned development of a rare piece of bushland on Sydney Harbour at the mouth of Parramatta River - an alliance of 13 women and the Builders Labourers Federation of Australia (BLF) with their influential leader Jack Mundey, led to the world's first ever green ban (1971) and the fight by Lane Cove Bushland Park Association (LCBA) to prevent the destruction of bushland for the extension of a golf course amenity in the 1970s. The latter group, amongst others, lobbied government to protect bushland separate from open space as it was offered no protection as an urban land use in its own right at that time. In 1986 the State Government officially recognised the values of urban bushland with the introduction of State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPP 19) – Bushland in Urban Areas which placed the responsibility of protecting and managing bushland areas on local authorities.

The Wingham Brush Project was a pivotal moment in evolution of the bush regeneration movement. It was led by a dental surgeon, John Stockard a volunteer employed for a time by the National Trust in the early 1980s to apply the Bradley Method to restore the Wingham Brush, 10 hectares of Lowland Subtropical Rainforest at Wingham, famed for its colony of Flying-fox, just inland from Taree on the Mid North Coast of NSW. There was said to be less than 100 hectares of this vegetation community in the State at that time. Madeira Vine and Cats Claw Creeper were totally smothering the canopy, they thrived in the alluvial soils, the vines grew so rapidly it was at risk of disappearing altogether. John and the volunteers discovered the traditional bush regeneration practices, the limited use of manual techniques developed in sclerophyll forests of Sydney were not as effective in rainforest ecosystems and so developed an adaption of the Bradley Method that used herbicide to a greater extent, using foliate spray to great effect, the surrounding vegetation recovered, and the birds and bats returned. John had shown that methods can be adapted if the basic principles are understood and matched to the needs and scale of the site.

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The Australian Association of Bush Regenerators formed in the 1980s, it was born out of differing opinions on the use of herbicide, this professional organisation was interested to see the bush regeneration industry grow and evolve.

Bush regeneration continued to grow thanks to a publication of *Bush Regeneration – Recovering Australian Landscapes* published in 1989 and written by biologist and TAFE teacher Robin Buchanan, a onetime team member of Joan Bradley. The book introduced various practices of present-day natural resource management and became a manual for early students at TAFE. It was distributed in bookstores around Australia and established Bush regeneration as a legitimate industry, not just a fringe practice. As word spread, more people joined as paid workers and volunteers.

The use of fire as a restorative process for adapted ecosystems was the next milestone for the practice of bush regeneration. Fire is essential to the health of our remnant bushland areas, especially those growing on Sydney's sandstone-derived soils that require fire at varying intervals to sustain species diversity as many native species require fire to germinate their seeds and reproduce.

The interruption/suppression of natural fire regimes in urban bushland has shifted bushland vegetation towards mesic, broad-leaved, rainforest like plants such as pittosporum and cheese trees with leafy canopies, plants that typically outcompete other natives and through their micro-climate shifting character, reduce sclerophyllic biodiversity.

In recent decades, several Sydney Councils have started implementing bushfire management practices. In North Sydney, this started in 1996 with small pile burns that proved successful at stimulating regeneration of the bush and gave the Bushland Team the confidence to undertake broad area burns with the assistance of NSW Fire and Rescue. The use of fire has now become part of our normal bushland operations. Managed or prescribed burns are used to meet Council's obligation for statutory hazard reduction to adjoining assets, or housing, and for biodiversity management.

Bush regeneration is an evolving science, a practice fashioned initially through trial and error, though more recently through research and academic endeavour. Though there have been many adaptations to the pioneering methods overtime, the basic principle of preserving and promoting the resilience of the bush to maintain its ability to regenerate by itself remains today.

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**Welcome to North Sydney Council's Bushcare Program**

North Sydney Council recognises the importance of community involvement in protecting and conserving the natural environment and landscape.

The Bushcare guidelines which have been developed to support and manage volunteers who would like to be involved Council's Bushcare program.

This document provides an overview of most aspects of the North Sydney Council's program, including:

- A description of North Sydney Council's bushland assets and how the Bushcare program fits within Council's overall bushland management framework.
- How the Bushcare program is organised - Bushcare meetings, staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities.
- Workplace Safety - Duty of Care, what to wear and Hazards at Bushcare.
- **Child Safe Organisation – Responsibilities of Council and volunteers**
- Code of Conduct - A list of volunteer rights and responsibilities, references to relevant legislation, Council policies and procedures.

All Application of the Guidelines

These guidelines apply to:

- i. All North Sydney Council Bushcare program workplaces and activities
- ii. All Bushcare Program volunteers working for or on behalf of North Sydney Council
- iii. All North Sydney Council Staff involved in the Bushcare Program Management and/or on-ground support.

Please make yourself familiar with the Bushcare Volunteer Guidelines to gain a thorough understanding of our Bushcare program.

If you have any queries, please contact our team on 98368100 or [council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au)

### **North Sydney Council's Bushland Reserves and Biodiversity Assets**

North Sydney is a small, leafy municipality on the lower North Shore. A highly urbanised area covering 10 square kilometres and incorporating a significant CBD. Just under 5% (49 Ha) of the original bushland remains here, mostly within fragmented reserves along the foreshores of Port Jackson and Middle Harbour, including two main gully systems, one on the boundary with Willoughby Council at Tunks Park and the other with Lane Cove Council at Smoothery Park/Gore Cove Reserve.

North Sydney Council is responsible for bushland reserves located on community land (a combination Council-owned and Crown land). These areas are categorised as natural area – bushland, zoned E2 Environmental Conservation under Council's Local Environmental Plan 2013 (LEP 2013).

The active management of these areas is guided by a Bushland Plan of Management, which establishes management policy and direction for both Council staff and the community. The Bushland PoM is closely linked with Council's overall land management objectives, as described in the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028 (every local government in NSW needs a Community Strategic Plan (CSP) that outlines a shared long-term vision and aspirations for the community), specifically Direction 1: a protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity through the rehabilitation of bushland areas and through the implementation of community education programs regarding protection and enhancement of the natural environment. Additionally, Direction 4: to encourage Lifelong Learning through the promotion of volunteering and community and to draw on community skills and expertise.

The Bushland Plan of Management is underpinned by the Natural Area Survey (NAS 2010), commissioned by the Bushland Team in 2010, which established a baseline dataset for North Sydney's biodiversity and helps to strategically prioritise maintenance of the community's ecological assets.

Two biodiversity 'hot spots' were identified for the natural area survey; one for the Wollstonecraft cluster of reserves, that includes Badangi Reserve, Berry Island, Gore Cove/Smoothery Park and the other at Tunks Park Cammeray. North Sydney Council is home to over 350 native vascular plant species and more than 195 native terrestrial vertebrate species including 4 frogs, 20 reptiles, 148 bird and 18 mammal species. Several of these are listed as threatened species under State and Commonwealth legislation, including the Grey-headed Flying-fox, Powerful Owl, Fishing Bat, Large Bent-wing Bat, Little Bent-wing Bat, Yellow-bellied Sheathtail Bat and the Sunshine Wattle. Twelve native vegetation communities have been distinguished in North Sydney, three of these are Endangered Ecological Communities; Coastal Salt Marsh, Swamp Oak Forest on Coastal Floodplains and Forest Red Gum Foreshore Forest.

### **Bushcare in North Sydney Council**

Council employed its first Bushcare Officer in 1993, with financial support from the State Government, to coordinate a volunteer bush regeneration program. Eight groups were established from 1994 to 1996, some grew out of precinct committees while others revolved around passionate individuals like Charles Boyd, a National Trust bush regenerator at Balls Head Reserve. Charles founded the Friends of Balls Head with five friends who were inspired by preparations for the 1988 Bicentennial to clear African Olive, Lantana and native shrubs from the Aboriginal engraving in front of the Coal Loader. The Friends, along with Waverton Precinct Committee were represented on the Balls Head Management Committee at this time until it was superseded by a Bushland Management Team.

The original eight Bushcare groups grew to eleven over time and in 2011 this number grew to twelve with the establishment of a Bushcare Nursery group at the newly redeveloped Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability. The Nursery's important work includes the management of the seed bank to produce endemic plants for the rehabilitation of Councils' bushland reserves and various Bushcare programs.

There are now over 100 active Bushcare volunteers, mostly small groups composed of 6 to 8 people, each represented by a Convenor whose job it is to help coordinate attendance, disseminate information and represent the interests of group members at biannual Bushcare Convenor Meetings with the Bushland Management Team.

Each Bushcare Group works to an annual Bushcare Site Rehabilitation Plan that aligns with the objectives of Councils Bushland Rehabilitation Plans and Bushland Plan of Management.

The term Bushcare was coined by a Ku-ring-gai Council bush regeneration volunteer group working to protect Flying-fox habitat in the 1990s. They were inspired by the Federal Governments "Landcare Program" that originated in Victoria in 1986 and sought to assist farmers address environmental issues. The Landcare movement is one of the largest volunteer movements in Australia, there are 5,400 registered Landcare, Coastcare and Bushcare groups across the nation and the Landcare concept has spread to about 15 countries.

According to a survey conducted by the Greater Sydney Local Land Services, there were 950 active Bushcare and Landcare Groups in the Sydney Region with at least 13,000 volunteers for the 2015/16 financial year.\* This figure has almost certainly grown over the past 5 years.

### **What is Bushcare**

Bushcare is a local government supported environmental volunteer program that forms an integral part of Council's approach to bushland management. Bushcare represents a commitment to include the community in the conservation and rehabilitation of North Sydney's bushland reserves and biodiversity assets, as outlined in Council's Community Strategic Plan.

Volunteers are trained in bush regeneration, a land management practice primarily concerned with the control of weeds, mostly invasive exotic plants, to assist the natural regeneration of bushland and the management of other environmental factors such as; habitat protection, urban run-off and soil erosion.

Common tasks at Bushcare include hand weeding, planting, carrying weed bags and equipment. Nursery volunteers will be set specific tasks most of which revolve around plant propagation. Volunteers may also work at one-off Bushcare events, such as National Tree Day and corporate volunteer days, or assist with administrative tasks such as entering data for the Wildlife Watch program or helping to organise and promote Bushcare on market days.

Bushcare meetings occur most weekends and a few weekdays at eleven different Bushcare sites as well as the Bushcare Community Nursery from February through November each year. All tools, safety equipment, training and supervision are provided by a qualified bush regenerator. Bushcare volunteers are required to undertake Introductory training within the first 6 months of joining the program, to ensure safe and effective work practices are followed.

The Bushland Team also coordinates an annual Bushcare activities and events program that aims to educate the community about bushland management issues and to encourage interaction with our bushland and foreshore environs/assets.



**Bushcare Volunteer**

A Bushcare volunteer is an unpaid position, participants give freely of their time and service without coercion or financial incentive. Volunteers are not a replacement for paid staff or contract bush regenerators but are instead, a complimentary extension of these management approaches.

Volunteers are required to work less than 16 Hrs a week and more than one Bushcare session per year. Bushcare volunteers can expect to be treated with respect and dignity and to be rewarded by the knowledge that they are contributing to our community through the protection and improvement of our natural environment, with support and guidance of skilled bush regeneration practitioners.

Any member of the public between to ages of 16 and 90 years of age (for insurance purposes) with the ability to perform Bushcare activities is eligible to become a Bushcare Volunteer. Limitations may include mobility, health conditions and communication barriers however these factors may be accommodated where possible and will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, alternate activities will be suggested to applicants that are unable to contribute to the program in a safe and effective manner.

People younger than 16 years of age will be required to be accompanied by a parent or guardian at Bushcare. Volunteers must not work unaccompanied by a Council staff member on public land or outside the designated Bushcare meetings timetable.

### **Bushcare – Role and Responsibilities**

The Bushland Management Team (BMT) are Council employees, responsible for the conservation management of North Sydney’s remnant bushland and other natural areas including the operations programs, capital works improvements, contract management and the coordination and management of Council’s Bushcare and community engagement programs.

BMT staff members supervise all Bushcare meetings. They are qualified bush regenerators who assist volunteers to work safely and effectively in our bushland reserves and to meet the objectives of North Sydney Councils’ Bushland Plan of Management.

The Bushcare Supervisor is responsible for the provision of all tools and personal protective equipment at Bushcare. They will induct new volunteers to the Bushcare site to create awareness about site-specific risks and work through a Safe Work Method Statement for specific tasks, including weed control techniques. The Bushcare Supervisor is your reference for weed and native plant identification.

Bushcare Supervisors facilitate Bushcare meetings with the assistance of the Bushcare Convenor, a nominated representative for each North Sydney Council Bushcare Group. The Bushcare Convenor is the liaison between Bushcare Supervisors, the Bushland Management Team and Bushcare volunteers. They represent the views of volunteers at the biannual Bushcare Convenor meetings and relay requests on behalf of group members. They also convey important announcements and communications on behalf of the Bushland Management Team to their fellow volunteers.

Bushcare Convenors are responsible for coordinating volunteer attendance at Bushcare meetings, this is a non-disciplinary role. The Bushland Management Team requires a minimum of three volunteer confirmations for a scheduled meeting to go ahead as planned. The Bushland Team and Bushcare Convenor’s are required to abide by Council’s Privacy Policy regarding volunteers and staff contact details. Ideally, each group convenor should be nominated by the members of the same group on an annual basis and be appointed with the approval of the Bushcare Supervisor and Bushcare Officer. When no volunteers in a group are able to fulfil the Convenor role, these responsibilities will be carried out by the group Supervisor or the Bushcare Officer. Bushcare Convenors are encouraged to attend meetings regularly.

The position of Bushcare Convenor helps to facilitate a consultative approach to Council’s Bushcare Program. The Bushland Management Team appreciates this service to our community.

### Work Direction & Practice

While working on site volunteers are required to follow direction from Council staff for a number of reasons:

Care should be taken when removing weeds, as they may be providing habitat for a range of fauna, particularly small birds and possums. Please consult with your supervisor prior to any weed removal work. Please remember we are working to strategic long-term plans of management, the Bushcare supervisor will discuss the annual site rehabilitation plan with the group at the beginning of the Bushcare year to meet this end.

Natural regeneration is precious and having a qualified person on site will ensure that natives are not mistaken for weeds. To aid native plant conservation keep the following saying in mind, 'If in doubt, don't pull it out'. Call on your Bushcare Supervisor for plant identification when required. Rare or threatened species maybe protected by the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

Consult with your Bushcare Supervisor prior to any planting in or on the edge of bushland. Council has a responsibility to protect the genetic integrity of remnant bushland species and in doing so carefully selects provenance tube stock plants to closely match the original vegetation community and locally specific environmental conditions.

Volunteers need written approval from Council's Bushland Management Coordinator to pick flowers, foliage and/or seed from vegetation on public land. This is legally required under the Local Government Act but also protects the scarce availability of plant propagules in our bushland areas. Application can be made in writing to the Bushland Management Coordinator and should detail the purpose of collecting, required volume, target species and collection locations.

Be aware of the gradient of the slope that you are working on and the quantity and rate at which the vegetation is being removed. Please consult the Bushcare Supervisor about weed removal on steep slopes, along drain lines or near a water body where erosion can become an issue of pollution and is an offence that can see a fine issued from **the Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water (DECCW)**. Logs and terracing maybe required to stabilise soil on steep slopes, the implementation of this measure will be decided by the Bushland Team.

All Council staff and volunteers are required to comply with the Pesticides Act 1999, in particular the conditions of use on the product label and Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) made available from the product manufacturer. All spraying involving herbicides will be applied by the Council staff with current AQF 3 qualifications as required by the Pesticides Act. Volunteers are not permitted to spray on public land under any circumstances. Trained volunteers are only permitted to handle herbicides of any type and quantities consistent with direct application techniques for poisoning woody weeds and vines, under direction from a Bushcare Supervisor.

### **Suspension or termination of Bushcare Volunteer Registration**

The Bushland Management Coordinator reserves the right to suspend or terminate a Bushcare volunteers' involvement, effective immediately. During a Bushcare program activity, Bushcare Supervisor may suspend a Bushcare volunteer's involvement, pending a report to the Bushland Management Coordinator.

The Bushcare Supervisor has the discretion to exclude volunteers from participation in volunteer projects on behavioural or health and safety grounds.

A Bushcare volunteer must immediately cease all activities relating to the Bushcare program should their registration be suspended or terminated.

Actions that may result in the suspension or termination of a Bushcare volunteer's registration includes but are not limited to, the volunteer's behaviour, actions or non-actions where they are.

- i. Counter-productive to the success of the Bushcare Program
- ii. Deemed to be unsafe for the volunteer or any other person
- iii. Significantly inconsistent with North Sydney Council policies; or
- iv. In contravention of a direction from the Bushcare Supervisor

The following activities are prohibited and require special approval.

- a. Felling or poisoning trees, use of power tools, such as chainsaws or spraying herbicides
- b. Planting of plants on Council land that have not been provided by North Sydney Council Bushland Team
- c. Picking flowers, foliage and/or seed from vegetation on public land

### **Aboriginal Heritage Sites**

Aboriginal heritage sites are common in North Sydney, particularly in bushland and include middens, burial sites, shelters and engravings, all of which are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife (1974) and other relevant legislation.

Always take a precautionary approach and be mindful of possible Aboriginal sites. Report any potential artefact or Aboriginal site location to your supervisor.

It is strongly recommended that all volunteers working in bushland undertake some Aboriginal Sites Awareness Training to familiarise themselves with the appearance of these sites, contact the Aboriginal Heritage Office for further information at [www.aboriginalheritage.org](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org) or phone 9976 1682.

### **Tree Vandalism and Dumping in Public Reserves**

Removal of plants, destroying regeneration, poisoning of large trees and dumping of weeds into bushland are unfortunately all common environmental and social problems in our community. If you see any suspicious activity or come across any suspected tree vandalism, please report it to Council as soon as possible and provide any evidence you may have, such as photos or video of illegal activity.

#### **Step 1: Record Information**

- Location
- Address
- Take a photo of the person &/or vehicle details

#### **Step 2: Report Information**

Fill out the Tree Vandalism online form at [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au) or email [council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au) with as much information as possible.

Phone: North Sydney Council on 9936 8100

Reporting of tree vandalism is treated confidentially, it will be acted on immediately as a breach of the Tree & Vegetation DCP. As stated in the Tree Vandalism Policy, an investigation will occur, and a \$10 000 reward will be offered for information leading to a successful prosecution. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979) can incur a penalty of \$1.1 Million.

### **Wildlife Care & Rescue**

Wildlife care and conservation is a shared responsibility. You can help native wildlife in distress by contacting a local wildlife rescue group or taking the animal to your nearest Vet. Only trained, licensed people can care for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife. All native animals are protected under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act.

You can help wildlife by training to become a rescuer or carer or by volunteering for a number of important tasks, such as staffing the rescue hotline, make cages or boxes or help build aviaries, raise food for animals in care, help fund raise, assist with technology and publicity resources, help in school education, help transport food and supplies.

For further information visit Sydney Wildlife at [www.sydneywildlife.org.au](http://www.sydneywildlife.org.au) or call 24Hr on 02 9413 4300 or Wires 02 8977 3333

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **How do I join Bushcare?**

People interested to volunteer with North Sydney Council are required to complete the online Volunteer Application Form.

Apply Here >> [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/volunteerapplication](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/volunteerapplication)

Approved applicants will be contacted by the Bushcare Officer and be directed to Bushcare groups requiring further assistance. Volunteers are encouraged to contact the Bushcare Group Convenor before attending scheduled meetings to confirm that the meeting is going ahead as planned and as a courtesy so that group knows to expect you.

See Bushcare meeting details here >> [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare)

#### **Can Children Attend Bushcare ?**

People younger than 16 years of age will be required to be accompanied by a parent or guardian at Bushcare. Any member of the public between to ages of 16 and 90 years of age (for insurance purposes) with the ability to perform Bushcare activities is eligible to become a Bushcare Volunteer.

#### **Can I bring my dog to Bushcare?**

Pets are not permitted at Bushcare as they may be a distraction from work activities, interfere with wildlife or cause harm to other volunteers or members of the public. The Bushcare site is considered a work environment, we request that you leave pets at home. All Council bushland and parkland policies apply to Bushcare sites and dogs must be kept on a short lead at all times.

**What happens if it rains?**

Bushcare meetings will be cancelled in the event of significant rainfall and/or if the ground is too sodden thereby creating unsafe work conditions and risk of compaction of soil, erosion and damage to regenerating plants. Bushcare meetings may also be cancelled due to other adverse environmental conditions including high winds, concentrated air pollutants and extreme heat.

The Bushcare supervisor will contact the Group Convenor at least an hour before the scheduled meeting time, to decide if the meeting will proceed. The Group Convenor will relay this information to the volunteers who have confirmed their attendance ahead of time or group members can call the Bushcare Convenor to find out if the meeting is cancelled or will go ahead as planned.

Bushcare meetings will not be rescheduled once they have been cancelled, and volunteers cannot work at Bushcare sites under these circumstances.

**What happens if Bushcare is on a long weekend?**

Some Bushcare group meetings will overlap with a public long weekend or other event/special day. The hard copy and online Bushcare calendar will mark these days for your information. This gives supervisors and volunteers a reminder to discuss the implicated date and if most of the group is away/busy and not attending the scheduled session, then the Bushcare meeting will be cancelled in advance. Discussions must take place at the scheduled meeting or with emails and phone calls/text, before the public long weekend/special event/day. Events such as the weekend tree planting in Boorowa, National Tree Day etc. where staff are required, may also necessitate cancellation of an overlap with any Bushcare group meetings.

## Workplace Safety

### Duty of Care

Workplace safety is the responsibility of every individual at Bushcare.

North Sydney Council is responsible for providing all workers (this includes employees and volunteers) and other persons a safe and healthy working environment, where practicable. This is achieved through management and employees/volunteers working together, following a program of health and safety training and procedures which are monitored, reviewed and audited to achieve best practice.

Volunteers will be expected to undertake work in a safe and responsible manner under the direction of their Bushcare Supervisor and abide by statutory obligations that include the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and to comply with Council's Policies and Procedures which include the *Volunteer Policy* and *Code of Conduct – Volunteers and Community Representatives*.

Workers/volunteers have a Duty of Care for;

- Taking reasonable care for his or her own health & and safety
- Taking reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons
- Complying with any reasonable and lawful WHS instruction
- Complying with any reasonable WHS policy and procedure as amended from time to time
- Reporting hazards and incidents to their supervisor immediately
- Duties of Other Persons at the Workplace

A person at the workplace has Duty of Care to;

- Take reasonable care of his or her own health and safety
- Take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons
- Comply with any reasonable and lawful instruction

### Child Safe Organisation

North Sydney Council adheres to the principles of a child safe organisation and is committed to the care and protection of all children and young people.

Volunteers will be expected to follow the Child Safe Code of Conduct which is located at the back of these guidelines.



### **Hazards at Bushcare**

Bushcare volunteers are encouraged to arrive 5 minutes before each Bushcare session to record their attendance for insurance purposes and to discuss on-site hazards and the work plan for the day. It is best practice to work in pairs and to stay within voice communication range of the Bushcare Supervisor.

The Bushcare supervisor will allocate tasks to each volunteer to suit their abilities and experience. New volunteers are encouraged to work alongside the supervisor and/or experienced volunteers for direction and support.

All Bushcare Volunteers are required to complete compulsory Bushcare Essentials Training within the first six months of volunteering to ensure safe and effective work practice. Training modules will be provided online, and additional in-person training will be offered biannually. This training covers site hazards, occupational health and safety, principles of bush regeneration, basic weed identification and removal techniques.

New volunteers will be oriented to the Bushcare site during their first visit to inform them about risks to their health and safety. The Supervisor will instruct the volunteer in all the common work practices, plant identification and weed removal techniques as listed on the Bushcare Work Method Statement that includes related hazards and control measures and will provide ongoing support and supervision.

Hazards are monitored continuously by the Bushland Management Team at Bushcare, when identified they are recorded on the daily Bushcare Report and during the biannual Risk Hazard Assessment, volunteers are encouraged to actively contribute to this process. Common hazards at Bushcare include jumping ants, sun exposure and trip hazards.

All volunteers will be issued Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where hazards cannot be eliminated, substituted, isolated or reduced through engineering controls at Bushcare, this includes the provision of latex dipped cotton gloves. On occasion, eye protection maybe required.

Bushcare volunteers are required to wear sturdy enclosed shoes with good grip, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sun protection, that is SPF 30+ Sunscreen or greater and a sun safe hat with a brim of at least 7.5 cm as recommended by the Cancer Council NSW. Regular volunteers will be issued a long-sleeved Bushcare shirt and broad brimmed hat on request, speak to your supervisor. Any uniform item issued to a volunteer must clearly identify the wearer as a Bushcare volunteer and may use the Bushcare logo and the word 'volunteer' on the back or front.

Bring at least 1.5 Litres of water to drink at regular intervals, particularly during warmer months of prevent dehydration and fatigue.

Alternate your position frequently in order to prevent physical injury or soreness while working on site, try not to do any single activity for an extended period of time, take breaks as required. Lift to within your own capacity and ask for help to carry heavy objects. When lifting, position yourself directly in

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front of the object, get a good grip, squat down and then extend from the knees while keeping a straight back.

Use only North Sydney Council issued tool kits and equipment maintained by the Bushland Team, please sheaf your knife when it is not in use. Please use the appropriate tool for the job, as instructed by the Bushcare Supervisor.

Report hazards to the Bushcare Supervisor when they are observed and inform co-workers and the general public if necessary.

Bushcare Volunteers are expected to consult their General Practitioner (GP)/health professional for a care/management plan where a personal health condition is likely to be seriously impacted by Bushcare activities. For example, people at risk of anaphylactic shock - a severe allergic reaction to allergens including stings and bites from insects maybe required to carry an antihistamine (EpiPen®), should their doctor approve/endorse their participation at Bushcare.

The Bushcare Supervisor is a qualified first aider, they will provide a first aid kit and mobile phone in case of emergencies and maintain a list of emergency contact details. For insurance purposes, all volunteers will be required to complete an incident report form within 48 Hrs of being injured at a Bushcare activity.

**What to wear at Bushcare – Full page diagram**

**Insurance**

Council's Public Liability/Professional Indemnity and Personal Accident insurance extends to volunteers undertaking tasks for Council. Volunteers are not entitled to workers compensation under the Workers Compensation Act 1987 and the Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998 but have limited benefits under Council's personal accident insurance. On request, Council will provide detailed information on insurance coverage for volunteers.

### **Code of Conduct**

Volunteers are asked to commit to Council's ethical standards and to perform their duties with integrity, honesty and fairness.

Volunteers are responsible for their own good conduct, this includes:

- To be courteous to the public, Councillors, Council Staff and other volunteers and community representatives.
- To obey all laws
- Uphold environmental responsibilities, such as disposing of litter or chemicals appropriately
- Help create a work environment that is free of harassment and discrimination  
Protect the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others in a workplace or public arena as outlined in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

The key responsibilities relating to volunteers, as outlined in Volunteer Code of Conduct, are in areas such as conflicts of interest, gifts and access to personal information.

#### **Conflicts of Interests**

A conflict of interest arises when our own interests, or those of people close to us, conflict with our obligations to Council, for example, when the personal interest of a volunteer influences the way a Council duty is carried out, this may include pecuniary interests – financial gains or losses.

If a conflict of interest arises in any area of voluntary work with Council, it should be disclosed to Council to allow others to understand their position and to prevent later criticism of Council activities or decisions. It does not mean that the volunteer would be suspended from participating in Bushcare.

Any questions regarding whether a conflict of interest exists can be discussed with Council's Director of Corporate Services (who is also Council's Public Officer).

#### **Gifts and Benefits**

No Volunteer or community representative should offer a Councillor or Council staff member a gift or benefit that:

- Is designed to gain advantage for themselves or a group they represent
- May be perceived by the public to give advantage to themselves or a group they represent.

Similarly, volunteers or community representatives should not accept gifts or benefits that could appear to give an advantage to the donor.

Token gifts may be given or accepted e.g., small items such as a bunch of flowers or box of chocolates. Cash incentives must not be offered to or accepted by, a Councillor, Council staff member, volunteer or community representative under any circumstances. Gifts not considered to be token should be reported to Council's Public Officer, openness about such matters prevents unfair criticism later.

### **Reimbursement of Expenses**

Volunteers will be paid for out of pocket expenses incurred during their role for Council, such as travel to meeting on behalf of Council or project materials that have been authorised in writing by the Bushland Management Coordinator or Bushcare Officer before they are incurred.

### **Council Resources**

Council resources should only be used for Council purposes unless approval has been given, for example the use of materials, equipment, vehicles, documents, records, data and information.

### **Media Protocols/Public Comment**

Volunteers are asked to refrain from making any public statement to the media or at a public event that would lead someone to believe that they are speaking on behalf of Council or expressing its views or policies, unless authorised and to defer such requests to the Manager of Communications or an appointed media liaison representative.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Volunteers and community representatives should not carry out their duties for Council while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs that could impair their ability or cause danger to the safety of themselves or others.

### **Reporting Corruption, Maladministration and Waste**

Volunteers and community representatives can help Council maintain our ethical standards by reporting any suspected incidences of corruption, maladministration or serious and substantial waste. These can be reported to the General Manager or the Public Officer. Alternatively, any suspected instances of corruption can be reported to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and any instances of maladministration to the Ombudsman.

A community representative may be a public official for the purposes of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act 1988 and subject to the ICAC's jurisdiction

### **Record keeping/Confidentiality**

The Bushcare Officer will maintain the Bushcare Volunteer database, a register of Bushcare program volunteer details. Volunteers must be registered to be covered by Council's insurers. This information will be kept confidential and not be shared with parties outside Council without the prior consent of volunteers. Bushcare Supervisors will secure and maintain volunteer details, including emergency contact details in the field.

Bushcare Volunteers and Bushcare Convenors must keep all privileged information in relation to Council Staff and customers confidential, they may not access, use or remove any personal information, unless they are authorised to do so.

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Privacy legislation governs the collection, holding, correction, disclosure and transfer of personal information. Any breach or misuse of Council's confidential or personal information should be reported to Council's Public Officer.

**Feedback and Recognition**

The performance of all volunteers will be regularly reviewed on an informal basis. Regular supervision will allow ongoing review of a volunteer's performance, role satisfaction and provide an opportunity for the volunteer to give feedback to the Supervisor.

**Unsatisfactory Performance**

If a volunteer's work is judged to be unsatisfactory or deviates from the standard principles and goals of service, if it contravenes the rights and responsibilities of other volunteers or places a member of the public / employee or any other person at risk, they may be asked to resign from their role with Council. The following procedure will be followed.

- a) The Bushcare Supervisor will discuss the issue with the volunteer and establish the appropriate standard of conduct/performance with the volunteer.
- b) A written record of the meeting is to be kept, documenting the issues discussed and the agreed strategies to support the volunteer to improve their performance. The volunteer will receive a copy.
- c) Deliberate or negligent acts that grossly endanger the safety of others, abuse of a member of the public, serious misconduct or making statements, which are likely to discredit Council, or other similar incidences may result in cessation of the volunteer agreement immediately.
- d) In the event that a volunteer believes that their placement has been terminated unfairly the volunteer can raise their grievance with the Manager of the business unit. This should be submitted in writing with the reasons why the action is considered unfair and the remedy sought.

**Cessation of Volunteer Agreement**

Either party can terminate a volunteer agreement, Council will attempt to provide one week's notice and request the same of the volunteer, any property, files (electronic or otherwise) etc. belonging to Council are required to be returned prior to leaving.

**Grievance Procedures/Dispute Resolution**

Volunteers have a right to raise a grievance without fear of retribution. All grievances shall be handled in a confidential and sensitive manner and where possible, responded to in a timely manner in accordance with Council's Grievance Procedures.

Volunteers are encouraged to first raise matters with their Bushcare Supervisor, if the issue is not settled to their satisfaction the volunteer may then raise the issue to their Manager/Supervisor, in this case the Bushcare Officer or Bushland Management Coordinator for further review if appropriate and if it still hasn't been resolved to their satisfaction, with the Manager of Environmental Services, Director of Open Space & Environmental Management and/or Public Officer for formal review.

## **Definitions**

**Biodiversity** – the diversity or range of various life forms that make up a natural ecosystem, the different plants, animals, microorganisms, fungi and all genetic material they contain.

**Bushcare Essentials Training** – is introductory training for Bushcare, it covers; site hazards, work, health and safety (WHS), principles of bush regeneration, basic weed identification and weed removal techniques. This is a compulsory training that must be undertaken by all volunteers within the first six months of joining the North Sydney Council Bushcare program.

**Bushcare Group** – a group of three or more volunteers undertaking approved bush regeneration and/or associated works on public land, owned or managed by Council, under supervision.

**Bushcare Officer** – a North Sydney Council employee, the designated administrator of the Bushcare program. Based in Council Chambers, this person is a central contact for all Bushcare Volunteer related program information, as well as annual promotion and evaluation.

**Bush Regeneration** – or more specifically ‘Assisted Natural Regeneration’ is the active intervention to help an ecosystem recover. This method uses, reinstates and reinforces the ecosystem’s natural regenerative processes (Ref: Restoring Natural Areas in Australia). In practice, it is the removal of weeds to encourage native plant seed to germinate rather than replanting.

**Bushcare Site** – a designated area of bushland that the Bushland Management Team and Bushcare volunteers are committed to regenerating over a number of years. The site is only as large as can be managed by the volunteer group. Once a Bushcare site reaches a stable point, where the natives are outcompeting the weeds, it’s area may be increased, or it may move to a new location.

**Bushcare Supervisor** – An appropriately qualified and experienced person who is employed by Council to direct and train Bushcare volunteers while they are working on a Bushcare site. Supervisors bring tools, equipment, plants, a First Aid Kit, rubbish bags etc. as required. On workdays, the Supervisor will set a work plan for the day, provide technical guidance on bush regeneration practices and provide morning/afternoon tea. Your supervisor can also liaise with the Bushcare Officer on a volunteer’s behalf about a bushland management issue.

The Bushcare supervisor directs the group in a professional and expert manner, following the Rehabilitation Plan for the site under the umbrella of relevant Council Plans of Management and state/national legislation.

**Bushcare Volunteer** – A person who freely contributes their time and energy without coercion or financial reward while registered within the North Sydney Bushcare program. Volunteers are trained in the basic principles of bush regeneration and WH&S to help Council restore degraded urban ecosystems. Volunteers follow the guidance of a Council Bushcare Supervisor and the Rehabilitation Plan for their Bushcare site under the umbrella of relevant Council Plans of management, state and national legislation.



Colonisers or Pioneers – are the first species to regenerate from a degraded site. Examples of colonisers are *Omalanthus populifolius* (Bleeding Heart), *Dodonea triquetra* (Native Hop Bush) and *Acacia* species. These are usually short-lived and give way later to longer lived species.

Endemic Plants – local native plants, indigenous to a specific area. Some Australia native plants may act as environmental weeds when introduced to a new area and can out compete local species e.g., *Nephrolepis cordifolia* (Fishbone Fern) is an invasive weed that is native to Queensland.

Fragmentation – The degree to which native vegetation is divided within the landscape determines its ability to retain plants and animals and allow for their movement. Small and isolated patches of native vegetation provide reduced habitat for wildlife and are limited by their capacity to carry out essential processes such nutrient and water cycling, they are more vulnerable to invasion by weeds, disease and feral pests.

Good Bush – an area of bushland that has good resilience, a high capacity to regenerate naturally. It is best practice to maintain areas of good bush before moving into more weed infested areas.

Group Convenor – this is a selected member of the Bushcare group, who helps coordinate attendance at Bushcare meetings and acts as the liaison between the volunteers and Bushcare Supervisors/Officer. The Convenor represents the views and wishes of the group at biannual Bushcare Convenor Meetings with the Bushland Team, this is a non-disciplinary role and much valued service to the community.

Group Meetings – scheduled meetings, dates and times when members of a Bushcare Group carry out work on their site. They are usually at the same time each month and are always under the guidance of a Bushcare Supervisor, throughout the Bushcare year from February through to November.

Leaf litter – is the natural mulch layer of leaves, sticks, seeds, fungi, micro-organisms, invertebrates and other matter that covers the soil in good bush. Leaf litter holds moisture in the soil and helps suppress weeds. Leaf litter disturbed during bush regeneration should be reinstated.

Local Provenance – Many native plants occur across a broad geographic range. However, within that range different populations of a particular species may change slightly to become specifically adapted to local conditions and individual habitats. Different populations containing local genetic variations are called provenances. It is important to preserve these different provenances, as each is unique.

Maintenance – Is follow-up weed control that aims to break the weed seed cycle and to exhaust the weed seed bank to reduce the incidence of weeds and their impact, thereby favouring native plant regeneration and cover. Maintenance is the majority of work required to regenerate any given site and should be prioritised over primary and secondary weeding.

Mulch – wood chip used to suppress weed growth and retain soil moisture. The use of mulch needs to be carefully considered as the wood chip will also suppress the growth of native species. Mulch sourced from weed trees such as, Camphor Laurel, Privet, Brushbox etc. can have a negative impact on your site.

No mow zone – an area excluded from mowing to allow for natural regeneration. Suitable areas may show signs of resilience, such as an intact soil profile, usually in areas with canopy trees covered by lawn. Carefully hand weeding may lead to the germination of the soil seed bank in these areas.

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Over clearing – opening up weed affected areas to a greater extent than can be maintained with follow-up weeding may encourage the further spread of weeds and negatively impact natural bushland regeneration. It is important to limit the application of primary and secondary weeding in line with available time and resources, so as not to destabilise your Bushcare site.

It is also important to account for the loss of habitat, to ensure wildlife is not displaced through the removal of their shelter and to prevent soil erosion by exposing cleared areas to the effects of rain.

Planting and Revegetation – involves adding in plants to an ecosystem by planting, direct seeding, leaf litter/soil translocation and or transplanting.

Planting should be carefully considered as natural regeneration may be outcompeted. Introducing plants could interfere with the genetic integrity of specific local plant communities. Allow the bush some time to regenerate naturally after opening up an area before considering replanting.

Planting of native plants, preferably from stock of local provenance, is best practiced in degraded bushland areas i.e., sites with low resilience. Plantings may not be as resistant to drought conditions and have the potential to introduce disease and weeds from the nursery to a site.

Primary weeding – the removal of weeds from an area that has not been worked previously, usually woody weeds - shrubs and trees. Primary weeding opens up the canopy to light and heat from the sun, thereby stimulating plant growth at ground level and triggers germination of the soil seed bank. The application of primary weeding should be conservative, measured and sympathetic to the rate of native plant regeneration.

Rehabilitation – aims to return a site to improved condition, it is a broad term that encompasses all the techniques used to repair degraded natural areas and may include, bush regeneration, revegetation and fabrication/reconstruction (the artificial construction of the original community or parts of it from scratch, usually in areas with little or no resilience).

Resilience – is the capacity of an ecosystem to recover after disturbance, sometimes referred to a ‘regenerative capacity’ (Ref: Restoring Natural Areas in Australia).

Resilience of floral communities is influenced by a number of factors, including.

- Integrity of the soil profile, the top layers of the soil that act as a reservoir for plant propagules i.e., seeds, rhizomes and roots of the native plants
- Presence of a canopy and other plants that drop seed to the soil
- Proximity to healthy bushland areas that allow for pollination and seed movement into degraded/disturbed areas. Seeds from native plants can be brought in by animals e.g., birds and bats
- Gravity - Resilience can best be improved from the top of a slope, as soil, seed and water move downhill under the influence of gravity
- Exposure to negative environmental factors such as urban run-off

Disturbance factors such as fire, weed removal and soil surface movement allow for additional light and heat from the sun to stimulate the germination of the soil seed bank and growth of other plant propagules, they are highly beneficial to demonstrate resilience of native plant communities.

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Secondary weeding - the important follow-up weeding after primary weeding. Secondary weeding is followed by maintenance weeding which is the more careful and longer-term removal of weeds on a site.

Seed bank – is a layer of soil on top of the soil profile that holds all the seeds that have dropped down over time. Acacia seeds for example, can remain viable in the soil for up to 100 years.

Weed – is a plant that is growing where it is not wanted, where it is having a negative impact ( Ref: Garden Escapes in Bushland Reserves, SWN Inc.) Bushland weeds are predominantly exotic or introduced plants to Australia that outcompete local native plants. Weeds can have different habits i.e., trees, shrubs, grasses, vines and ground covers, most have escaped from residential gardens.

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**Related Policies/Documents/Legislation**

North Sydney Council has the following statutory obligations with respect to Bushcare Volunteers;

- Work Health Safety Act 2011
- Equal Opportunity Legislation
- Pesticides Act, 1999
- Local Government Act 1993
- State Environmental Planning Policy No.19 Bushland in Urban Areas (SEPP No.19)
- Threatened species Conservation Act, 1995

The Bushcare Program Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents;

- Volunteer Policy
- ~~Equal Opportunity Policy and Bullying and Harassment Policy~~ EEO, Anti-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy
- Code of Conduct – Volunteers and Community Representatives
- Child Safe Policy - formerly called Child Protection Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct – once developed
- Alcohol and Drugs Policy
- Access to Council Information Policy
- Code of Conduct - Councillors and Staff
- Code of Meeting Principles and Practices
- Community Engagement Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Gifts and Benefits Policy
- Open Government Policy
- Privacy Management Plan
- ~~Grievance Procedures (need to find this ref)~~ We follow the award Grievance Clause

This document has been prepared with reference to, and is consistent with, the following relevant Council documents:

- Community Strategic Plan 2018-28, NSC
- Local Environmental Plan 2013, NSC
- Bushland Plan of Management 2021, NSC
- Natural Area Survey 2010, NSC
- Urban Forest Strategy 2019, NSC ???
- Bushland Rehabilitation Plans, 2019-29 NSC

All listed documents are available on Council's website: [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au)

Recommended Book List

Birds

Field Guide to the Birds of Australia (Simpson & Day)  
Field Guide to Australian Birds (Michael Morcombe)  
The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds (Peter, Pat and Raoul Slater)

Mammals

The Mammals of Australia (Ronald Strahan)  
Tracks, Scats and other Traces: A field guide to Australian Mammals (Barbara Triggs)

Reptiles and Amphibians

Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia (Harold G. Clogger)

Native Plants

Field Guide to Native Plants of Sydney (Les Robinson)  
Native Plants of the Sydney District: An identification Guide (Alan Fairly and Philip Moore)

Weeds

Weeds of the South East: An identification Guide for Australia (F.J.and R.G.Richardson & R.C.H Shepherd)

Environmental Weeds: A field guide for SE Australia (Kate Blood)

Bush Invaders of South-East Australia (Adam Muyt)

Bush Regeneration

Bush Regeneration: Recovering Australian Landscapes (Robin A. Buchanan)

Restoring Natural Areas in Australia (Robin A. Buchanan)

Other

Taken for Granted: The Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs (Doug Benson & Jocelyn Howell)

Reference Material

## References

North Sydney Council's Bushcare Program Guidelines (2010)

Mosman Parks & Bushland Association <https://mosmanparksandbushland.wordpress.com/>

The Australian Association of Bush Regenerators <https://www.aabr.org.au>

National Trust of Australia <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/services/bushland-management/history/>

\*The State of Bushcare and Landcare in Greater Sydney 2015/16

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landcare\\_in\\_Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landcare_in_Australia)

Mosman Parks and Bushland Association website

<https://www.mosmanparksandbushland.asn.au/history/>

Bush Regeneration (1971) by Joan Bradley published by The Mosman Parklands and Ashton Park Association

Bring Back the Bush – The Bradley Method of Bush Regeneration (1988) edited by Joan Larking, Audrey Lenning and Jean walker

Beecroft-Cheltenham History Group website [www.BCLG.org.au](http://www.BCLG.org.au)

AABR NEWS - Australian Association of Bush Regenerators No.132 April 2017 pages 4 -8

Restoring Natural Areas in Australia by Robin Buchanan Published 2009

The Natural Environment of Lane Cove 2nd edition by Lynne McLoughin page 7

The Regeneration of Wingham Brush, NSW [www.aabr.org.au](http://www.aabr.org.au)

ABC Radio National Earshot Program with David Rutledge 7th April 2015 – Part 1: The Other Green Army (excerpts from MPBA 50th Anniversary)

ABC Radio National Earshot Program with David Rutledge Producer Nick Franklin 7th April 2015 – Part 2: The Other Green Army (excerpts from MPBA 50th Anniversary)

Bushcare Program Guidelines 2020 – 6th Draft

[www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushland](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushland)

Bushcare on North Sydney Council's Website

North Sydney Council's website has a lot of information regarding the Bushcare program, bushland reserves and native plants and animals etc.

[www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/bushcare)

Information on trees in North Sydney, including reporting tree vandalism can be found at:

[www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/trees](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/trees)

Bushcare Program Guidelines 2020 – 6th Draft

Bushcare Volunteer Agreement

Thank you for your interest to become involved in North Sydney Council's Bushcare Program

Each Bushcare Volunteer needs to complete this form to acknowledge that you understand the role and responsibilities of being a Bushcare Volunteer, as defined in the Bushcare Program Guidelines 2021. An electronic copy of this form will be kept by Council in case future reference is required. If/when you are no longer able to be involved in the Bushcare Program, please inform the Bushcare Officer or contact Council at [council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au)

Please complete the following details

Name:

Postal Address:

Postcode:

Phone:

Mobile Phone:

Email:

Please send me a quarterly Bushcare Newsletter

by email

by post

I give permission for photographs of me to be included in various NSC publications

Yes

No

Medical Conditions/allergies relevant to volunteer Bushcare work (attach notes if necessary)

Emergency Contact Details:

Name:

Phone:

Mobile:

Relationship:

I have read and understood the information contained in the NSC Bushcare Program Guidelines and understand my legal obligations and conditions under which I volunteer.



Bushcare Program Guidelines 2020 – 6th Draft

I confirm I am physically fit to perform the stated role of a Bushcare Volunteer and agree to inform NSC if my health circumstances change.

I understand that insurance coverage is not available for those persons under 18 or over 90 years of age.

Signature of NSC Volunteer:

Date:

If you are under 18 years of age, name of parent or guardian:

PRIVACY STATEMENT

North Sydney Council is collecting your personal information for the purposes of processing an expression of interest in North Sydney Council's Bushcare Program.

The supply of information personal information is entirely voluntary. If you elect not to provide or do not wish to provide your personal information, Council may not be able to process your application.

North Sydney Council shall be regarded as the agency that holds your personal information and access to your personal information by interested parties, may be released in line with Council policies.

You have a right to access your personal information held by Council. You also have a right to have your personal information corrected or amended by Council.

Applications by members of the public to view Council's records which are not in the public arena are subject to the provisions of Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and North Sydney Council's Privacy Management Plan.

For more information, please read the information on our website:  
[www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Information\\_Pages/Privacy](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Information_Pages/Privacy)

Council Logo Bushcare Logo

NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL

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### **3.10. The Coal Loader Report**

**AUTHOR:** Rebecca Farrell, Events and Engagement Coordinator

**ENDORSED BY:** Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services

**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

**PURPOSE:**

To outline the achievements and highlights of The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability throughout 2021 and into the beginning of 2022.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Whilst the pandemic and La Niña events forced a major change to the way our usual programs were delivered in 2021/22, The Coal Loader continued to engage the public on a regular basis with a diverse offering of both in-person and online events.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**1. THAT** the report on activities at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability be noted.

## LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### 1. Our Living Environment

#### 1.1 Protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity

### 4. Our Social Vitality

#### 4.2 North Sydney is creative and home to popular events

## BACKGROUND

The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability offers a strong and diverse array of programs and events including a major events portfolio, free workshops and courses, public guided tour programs, a digital tour and augmented reality app, educational excursions and programs, and facilitated third-party event management. Its physical presence is also combined with and ever-growing digital presence through a comprehensive communications program.

As a premier lower shore venue, the centre and grounds also provide an excellent opportunity for self-timed community social activities and an avenue for the delivery of other key Council programs including the Streets Alive Community Garden program, the Bushcare Volunteer Nursery and the Green Events series. In addition, the site acts a venue for events put on by other sections of Council, including the Community Development, Arts and Culture team.

## CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

## SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The following table provides a summary of the key sustainability implications:

QBL Pillar	Implications
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increasing community awareness of sustainability</li><li>Best-practice delivery of environmentally sustainable events</li></ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increasing community connectedness to the Coal Loader and between local community members</li></ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coal Loader programs are delivered in accordance with the budget and help support local business wherever possible</li></ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coal Loader programs are implemented in accordance with the Delivery Plan</li></ul>

## DETAIL

Every year, The Coal Loader runs multiple programs to showcase and highlight the features of the site and promote every-day sustainability to the North Sydney community and wider public. The ever-increasing number of visitors also come to learn about the site's history and sustainability initiatives as well as to enjoy the beautiful views and parklands.

With the continued impact of the pandemic, The Coal Loader saw a modified program to enable the delivery of safe and effective engagements. Live community events took place when safe to do so (with robust Covid-safe measures in place) and activities in the digital space took over where appropriate.

2021 saw programs briefly return between lockdowns to larger audience levels with community groups restarting their tours, some large-scale physical events returning, third party venue hire increasing, and some school programs restarting. However, shut-downs, global logistics issues and general uncertainty in the events market made it essential that all physical engagements were adaptable. It is hoped that 2022 sees a renewed appetite for in-person public events while also maintaining interest in the strong digital projects the site offers such as Australia's largest augmented reality app.

Below is a snapshot each program and what we have achieved over the last 18 months.

### Coal Loader Events Program

The Coal Loader Events Program is designed to provide a mix of large-scale community focused events, smaller activations, ongoing engagement series, and sustainability-focused workshops. The aims are; to increase quality visitation to the site, continue to define a sense of place with community-building activities, providing educational opportunities to the residents of North Sydney, whilst always demonstrating best-practice sustainability in events. Scheduled in-person events through much of 2021 had to be postponed and activations were diverted to either our digital platforms or delivered, where possible, as small outdoor gatherings with restricted numbers.

Online events during periods of lockdowns and restrictions included; two virtual Artisans Markets held via the North Sydney Council website in 2021, which enabled us to provide an avenue for our stallholders to continue selling their wares to the public. The ongoing promotion of The Coal Loader Kids Trail and the launch in February 2021 of the much-anticipated The Coal Loader App, Australia's largest augmented reality app. The app takes visitors around the site with a choice of 3 trails History, Sustainability and Native Animals. Each trail has 12 stops and a mix of historical re-enactments, native animals and sustainability concepts are all brought to life with the help of augmented reality. To date there has been just under 10,000 uses of the various trails on The Coal Loader app and over 7,000 uses of the digital kids trail. In 2021 there were also two kids sustainable crafting classes, two seasonal cooking classes, digital Plastic Free July and sustainable Christmas campaigns and the inaugural Coal Loader Photography Competition, a chance for the local community to share the images taken during what was generally a time for self-times activity on site and showcasing the space in a different light.

2021 also saw a return to large scale physical events that commenced with the Summer Artisans Market, a COVID safe event with 50 stalls and approximately 2000 people in attendance throughout the day.

Salon de Refuse, a people-powered art re-homing exhibition and activation, took place over three weeks in the workshop. An estimated 500+ works were re-housed during this period, saving them from landfill and the event was well attended and widely shared on social media. Loader Lights, a multi-sensory, carbon-neutral lighting show was held for the second time in Tunnel One across 9 days over 3 weeks in December 2021 with approximately 5,000 visitors plus the addition of a pop-up bar and live music on the lower lawn. This unique event attracted national news coverage.

The Coal Loader Christmas Artisans Market was held in December 2021 with 100 stalls, live music, and approximately 5,000 visitors in a covid-safe outdoor setting.

Many small-scale outdoor, Covid-safe events were also able to continue in 2021 including the popular group exercise series, Wednesday Wellness which continues twice a week into May 2022, the 'This Thursday Theme' workshop series, and a variety of talks on history and sustainability themes. In addition, in 2021 The Coal Loader Sketchbook challenge began, including on-site classes, organized meet-ups, and associated online creative group run in collaboration with local artist Josephine Josephsen and Coal Loader artist in residence, Philipa Hagon. This challenge will culminate in a public exhibition of these community works later in the year.

The Sunset Sessions platform pop-up bar ran three times in early 2021 before being halted by the NSW lockdowns and later temporarily replaced with the Loader Lights pop-up bar in late 2021.

Lost Bird Found, a mental health initiative across North Sydney Council, saw over 100 rock birds being created and hidden for the community to find around the site and posted on social media. QR codes on the backs of the birds directed people to online mental health resources. The remainder of the 2022 Coal Loader events schedule is looking bright as we hopefully move into a time with more relaxed conditions and hopefully more favourable weather conditions.

Coal Loader Education Program

The Coal Loader education program focusses on delivering site specific sustainability content to schools, universities/TAFEs, and other professional bodies. Educational institutions are also encouraged to use the 'living lab' we have created at the Coal Loader for their own learning purposes. The education program was largely postponed in 2020/21 but 2022 has seen a rapid restart of educational institutions visiting or making future bookings. Historically student groups from environmental science and management, sustainability and the built environment, and architecture courses, and various primary and secondary school years have utilised the site. Tertiary institutions who visited included UTS, UNSW, Macquarie University, and various Northern Sydney TAFES. The significance of the site and the way it connects both Indigenous and industrial history and concepts of sustainability and adaptive reuse remain major draw-cards for the space.

In addition, bookings of tours professional bodies and other government departments have also re-started. Interest primarily focuses on the adaptive reuse of an ex industrial facility and the incorporation of sustainable design and technology into a heritage site.

2022 has also seen the Mess Hall used for *First Nation Women nurturing First Nation Women* regular meet ups, hosted by Aboriginal elder, Auntie Jeanie. Waverton Hub also continue their weekly arts education program in the same space. Both are supported by Council.

#### Coal Loader Guided Tour Program

The Coal Loader guided tour program, operating since 2011 has seen an increase in demand due to the growing awareness and popularity of the site. This enabled the creation of The Coal Loader volunteer guide program, where our local guides take tours of the site for the public. Like most volunteer programs, the guided tours were put on hold for most of 2020/21, with just 6 tours taking place over 2021. However, February 2022 saw the re-start of the program with 2 public general tours per month (on the first and third Saturdays) and the re-starting of the privately booked tours from social groups during the week.

Aboriginal cultural tours, held three times in 2011, were put on hold during the heights of the pandemic, are also set to return in 2022, with the seasonal program plus special tour + workshop events for NAIDOC week.

Free public tours were also conducted for Australian Heritage Festival, NSW Seniors Festival, and the Sydney Edible Garden Trail.

#### Coal Loader Venue Hire Program

The Coal Loader has multiple hireable spaces including The Platform, Tunnel One, The Genia McCaffery Centre for Sustainability, Mess Hall, and various transitional spaces, offering a unique environment that appeals to a diverse range of users. Venue hire opportunities include public exhibitions, sporting events, conferences, musical performances, awards nights, presentations, filming, product launches, fashion events, community classes and training.

Liaising closely with a broad spectrum of event organisers provides an exciting opportunity to promote a broader understanding of best practice in events sustainability. Events approved on site must adhere to the environmental and cultural ethos of the site, pledging to be single-use plastics free and utilize the solar power on site and exclude the use of fossil fuel generators.

Where possible, events are accepted on the following criteria:

<b>Essential</b> All criteria in this column should be implemented	<b>Desirable</b> Inclusion of these elements will be treated favourably	<b>Welcome</b> Inclusion of these elements will be treated favourably
<b>In-Line with our Aims:</b> The event will be in keeping with our aim to establish the Coal Loader Platform as a premier venue for events	<b>Sustainable Education:</b> An element of public sustainable education is highly desirable as part of the event	<b>Diversity Groups:</b> Events aimed at connecting and supporting diversity groups are encouraged on this accessible and all-ages friendly site
<b>Sustainable Event Practices:</b> Accepted response to the sustainable practices events questionnaire is mandatory	<b>Free event to the public:</b> (safety closures for bump-in/bump-out, private launch ceremonies, Tunnel One, & VIP seating/areas excepted)	<b>Not for Profit:</b> Special considerations apply for NFP and community groups, especially those focussed on sustainability
<b>Accessible:</b> All events on the site must ensure that they are fully accessible to all abilities	<b>Unique, Unusual, First of its Kind:</b> As a unique location, we encourage unusual and ground-breaking events.	<b>Educational:</b> As a historic and learning site we encourage a range of educational events and can assist with tour bookings

Due to the events management duties being based on site, The Coal Loader venue hire program was one of the first to be able to re-open across council, adhering to stringent Covid-safe conditions. A series of 360 photos of the site enabled virtual site-tours to continue despite lockdown conditions, enabling future event planning to continue safely.

Private hire opportunities to deliver public events is encouraged on site and in the past 18 months Council was able to collaborate with third parties to host events such as The Sydney Claymakers Exhibition (over 3 days and 3,500+ visitors), The Australian Finska Championships (500 visitors), Music in the Sky (over 4 nights and 500 performance-goers), Designers on Show (over 2 days each with approx.1,500 visitors).

### Coal Loader Communications Program

The Coal Loader social media channels remain a key avenue for connection to our audience and promotion of our events. Allowing Council to deliver relevant, timely and interesting information to our followers, our social channels help in the delivery of our programs and promotion of the site and practical advice on sustainability. The Coal Loader has continued to grow its digital presence and has 7,400 followers on Facebook, over 2,700 on Instagram, and 2,500 subscribers to the Coal Loaders quarterly e-newsletter. The combined Coal Loader digital audience has now grown to be the second largest across Council.

### Other projects

The period 2021/22 also enabled us to deliver several projects on the site in collaboration with, and in support of other teams within Council such as the *Project 2060: Homeward Bound* exhibition, delivered by the Arts and Culture Team, featuring 46 artists and six art groups. This exhibition will share varied stories of artists' remarkable resilience as cultural gatekeepers during a year of incredible change.

In collaboration with Councils Sustainability team and a group of dedicated volunteers, part of the workshop was brought to life as the Sydney Library of Things, with objects including

tools, gardening equipment, children’s arty gear, toys and games, art and craft supplies and recreational equipment among other things.

The volunteer run, not for profit library opened briefly in May 2021 before being affected by the NSW shutdown, and then re-launching in time for The Coal Loader Christmas Artisans Market 2021.



The Coal Loader Artisans Market, December 2021



Loader Lights, December 2021





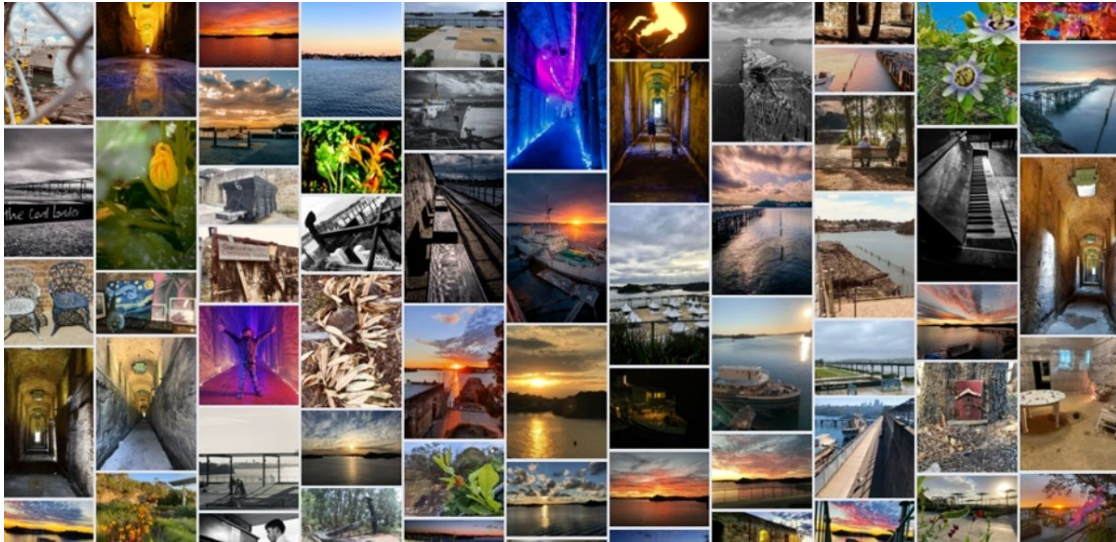
This Thursday's Theme sustainable crafting classes, various 2021



The Coal Loader Augmented Reality App



Working with 3<sup>rd</sup> party events to deliver single-use-plastic free events



The Coal Loader Photography Competition 2021. Various community artists



Wednesday Wellness weekly classes, 2021 and 2022



Guided tours, pictured: Dr Ian Hoskins during the Australian Heritage Festival 2021



Pop-up bar with live music on the Lower Lawn, December 2021



Salon de Refuse, 2021



Lost Bird Found Mental Health Project, 2021. Rock drops shown from various artists.



Sydney Claymakers Expo 2021



Music in the Sky concert series in Tunnel One, February and March 2022



Aboriginal heritage guided tours, pictured: Karen Smith from the AHO in 2021



Popular self-timed activities during Covid: painting, the pop-up piano, the new outdoor office

## General Business

### James Bushell would like to speak on the following:

'Domestic waste (red bin) charges and incentivisation for waste reduction'.

### Bruce Handmer would like to speak on the following:

- 1) Preservation of the natural environment and 'open space' (even on the water. A discussion on the future of Berry's Bay. It's a very important issue of the environment in North Sydney of course, with likely competing proposals for it's 'development' after the tunnel work is complete. I feel that the ERG and NSC must take a strong stand on what will gain Council's support. My understanding is the tunnel contractors are preparing a plan to develop café's, event spaces and such (a mini Darling Harbour perhaps), and the Sydney Heritage Fleet's proposal is for a museum, heritage fleet and some limited facilities. I note that they intend to maintain their heavy restoration work at Rozelle Bay.
  - a. From the point of view of the environment, this bay and surrounding spaces has been spared the development of huge marinas and the like due to Council and resident's strong and farsighted stand on such matters. We now have a bay which is almost unique in it's surrounding parks and bushland and heritage value, particularly adjacent to the old Woodley's site. But the fact that it is unique and undeveloped is, as has been shown in the past, a huge magnet for those who wish to 'develop'.
  - b. For these reason's I propose that the ERG recommend to Council that Council actively support the Heritage Fleet's proposal, as one that will help continue the excellent conservation of this bay and provide a unique and beautiful destination for locals and tourists alike.
- 2) Environmental pollution. The second is the mess and disruption caused by fishing. This has been raised before in the ERG and some useful signage was posted in areas where a lot of fishing takes place. Sadly however, there is still always discarded fishing line, hooks, bait and bait bags, and other equipment left behind (Blues Point water's edge path is a particular location} and the McMahons Point Wharf. I have not been on McMahons Point wharf in years without being able to pick up one or more hooks, lengths of fishing line and the like. Last night, half a dozen fishermen crowded the walkway from the covered waiting area to the pontoon, with their equipment, bait, buckets, rods and the like. The walkway was covered in fresh blood. Ferry passengers had to pick their way between all this and step in the mess. There was no attempt by those fishing to limit their mess or their obstruction of the public.
  - a. That the ERG ask NSC to schedule more cleaning in these places, and / or visits by Rangers to encourage appropriate behaviour. (it may be that other agencies are the responsible body of course but if so, that the NSC seek their active help on this matter)
  - b. That NSC write to Maritime (or RMS) requesting that either
    - i. There are limits set as to where the fishing can take place, ie not on the connecting walkway), or
    - ii. They arrange for very regular inspectors to visit to control this.

- 3) Noise pollution. Vehicle noise caused by hotted up cars, motorcycles and the like including 'burnouts'.
- a. The bottom of Blues Point Road (and heading up it between the buildings became a regular site for drivers to congregate and gun the motors for the noise or carry out burn outs and the like. I am acknowledge that Council is aware of this issue. This usually happens between about 10pm and 3am. Mostly on Friday and Saturday nights but a few weeks back, it was almost every night. It seems that there is no penalty for this type of pollution which seriously affects resident's lives.
    - i. In addition to planned traffic calming devices, I would like the ERG to request that Council place 'Noise Cameras' on this stretch of road and in concert with NSW Police / EPA identify the culprits and warn / fine as appropriate. Noise camera's are already used in Sydney.