

3.9. Revision of Bushcare Program Guidelines

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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 adaptation 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.

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

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 task 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 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 or email 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 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

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

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.

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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 maybe 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.

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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

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

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

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

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)

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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

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

www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/trees

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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

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.

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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

Council Logo Bushcare Logo

NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL

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