



AGENDA

Council Chambers
22 April 2021

I wish to inform you that a Meeting of the **Environment Reference Group** will be held in the Ros Crichton Pavilion, 200 Miller Street North Sydney at 7:15PM on 3 May 2021.

Your attention is directed to the accompanying statement of the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting.

KEN GOULDTHORP
GENERAL MANAGER



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1. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 November 2019 copies of which had been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.



MINUTES: ENVIRONMENT REFERENCE GROUP MEETING HELD IN THE ROS CRICHTON PAVILION ON MONDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 7.15PM

PRESENT

Councillor Gibson in the Chair, Councillor Brodie and Councillor Drummond

Staff: Rob Emerson, Director Open Space and Environmental Services
Peter Massey, Manager Environmental Services
Niki Carey, Senior Sustainability Programs Co-ordinator
Melissa McManus, Landscape Technical Officer
Peita Rose, Governance Officer (Minutes)

Citizen Members: Bruce Handmer
John Berry
Louise Byrne
Philip Worrall

Visitors: Nil

Apologies were received from Councillors Baker, Beregi, Keen and Mutton and Anne Edwards.

8. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 May 2019, copies of which had been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

Moved by Mr Handmer and seconded by Councillor Gibson

Voting was unanimous.

9. Presentation – Urban Forest in North Sydney Local Government Area

Council's Landscape Technical Officer presented an overview of the Urban Forest in the North Sydney LGA.

10. E01: North Sydney Council Climate Emergency

Report of Niki Carey, Senior Sustainability Programs Coordinator

This report is for information only as it was already considered by Council on 28 October 2019. It responds to the resolution of Council on 22 July 2019 with respect to Notice of Motion No. 7/19 by Cr Baker regarding the Climate Emergency. It provides

This is Page No 8 of the Minutes of the Environment Reference Group Meeting held on Monday, 11 November 2019.

an overview of existing and planned initiatives that are being implemented across the organisation, guided by Council's Greenhouse Action and Water Management Plan 2015-2020. These initiatives include solar projects, equipment upgrades, renewable energy electricity supply, streetlighting upgrades, community and business engagement programs and electric vehicle charging stations.

In combination, programs are set to see Council achieve its operational and community greenhouse gas reduction targets on track by 2020. Work is currently underway to develop new targets for 2030 accompanied by a new action plan to help guide Council's response to the climate emergency. This work will be the subject of a further report.

This report identifies a broad range of initiatives across the organisation, the funding for which is allocated in the 2019/20 budget.

Recommending:

1. **THAT** the North Sydney Council Climate Emergency report be received.

A Motion was moved by Mr Handmer and seconded by Mr Worrall,

1. **THAT** the North Sydney Council Climate Emergency report be received.
2. **THAT** Council looks for all opportunities to engage with organisations to enable Council to help drive a lower embodied carbon footprint during the design and construction phase of both commercial and residential building.
3. **THAT** staff liaise with companies specialising in carbon footprint to obtain more information on this matter.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the North Sydney Council Climate Emergency report be received.
2. **THAT** Council looks for all opportunities to engage with organisations to enable Council to help drive a lower embodied carbon footprint during the design and construction phase of both commercial and residential building works.
3. **THAT** staff liaise with companies specialising in carbon footprint to obtain more information on this matter.

11. E02: Single Use Plastics Policy

Report of Niki Carey, Senior Sustainability Program Coordinator

This report is to update the Reference Group on early progress in implementing Council's Single Use Plastics Policy. Since adopting the policy in September 2019, a number of activities have already been carried out. These include hosting a number of plastic-free community events, engaging staff to review purchasing choices to ensure compliance with the policy and the development of a guide to assist Council staff, businesses and the community to reduce their use of single use plastics.

There is likely to be some financial impact to effectively implement this policy, including capital costs to purchase possible additional crockery, dishwashers, and portable water stations, as well as potential increased operational costs to hire reusable materials and purchase compostable and recyclable alternatives to single use plastics.

There will also be an element of cost saving where policy-prompted procurement reviews may determine that certain single use items are no longer required and do not need to be replaced.

The implications of this strategy will impact all divisions of Council. The strategy will be funded from additional revenue or expenditure savings to be identified in future quarterly budget reviews.

Recommending:

1. **THAT** the Single Use Plastics Policy report be received.

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The Motion was moved by Ms Byrne and seconded by Mr Worrall.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. THAT the Single Use Plastics Policy report be received.

12. E03: Draft Bushland Rehabilitation Plans 2019 – Public Exhibition Summary

Report of Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Coordinator

The draft Bushland Rehabilitation Plans were recently placed on public exhibition for a period of 45 days. Leading up to the exhibition, the North Sydney community were informed of the draft Plans and invited to make a submission via a variety of print and digital media avenues. Furthermore, three community meetings / Q & A sessions were offered.

A total of nine submissions/comments were received from individual residents, stakeholder groups and Precinct Committees during the exhibition period. These submissions will be reviewed and where relevant, amendments made to the draft plans prior to their adoption by Council.

Actions arising out of the Bushland Rehabilitation Plans will be funded through existing allocations under the recurrent budget and the Environment Levy.

Recommending:

1. THAT the Draft Bushland Rehabilitation Plans 2019 - Public Exhibition Summary report be received.

The Motion was moved by Ms Byrne and seconded by Mr Handmer.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. THAT the Draft Bushland Rehabilitation Plans 2019 – Public Exhibition Summary report be received.

13. E04: Native Havens Program

Report of Ramin Khosravi, Bushland Projects Officer

North Sydney Council's Native Havens Program has supported the establishment of over 540 native and mixed native gardens across the local government area since 2003. Native Havens has been recognised for its ongoing environmental stewardship, as well as the role this program plays in enhancing wildlife corridors that link our bushland remnants.

Council's Bushcare Nursery produces approximately 10-12,000 local native plants per annum. Of these, approximately 3,499 native plants have been distributed over the past 12 months to local participants in the Native Havens program. Importantly, around 20% of these plantings are locally endemic tree species. These long-lived trees will contribute to canopy connectivity and improve North Sydney's urban forest.

Nil.

Recommending:

1. THAT the Native Havens Program report be received.

The Motion was moved by Ms Byrne and seconded by Mr Handmer.

Voting was unanimous.

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Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the Native Havens Program report be received.

14. **E05: Water and Energy Management Programs Update**

Report of Ian Garradd, Sustainability Project Officer

This report provides a six-monthly update on the implementation of Council's Greenhouse Action and Water Management Plan 2015-2020. The current focus is towards improving the energy and water efficiency of Council assets, while in the community sector, assisting North Sydney's large strata community with cost saving and renewable energy opportunities.

The water and energy programs discussed in this report are funded through a combination of Council's Environment Levy and Property Maintenance capital and recurrent budget.

Recommending:

1. **THAT** the Water and Energy Management Programs Update report be received.

The Motion was moved by Mr Handmer and seconded by Councillor Brodie.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the Water and Energy Management Programs Update report be received.

15. **E06: Streets Alive and Community Gardens Update**

Report of Hugh Goodman, Streets Alive Project Officer

This report is to update the Reference Group on the various projects Council has been undertaking within both the Streets Alive and the Community Garden programs. As of October 2019, Streets Alive has 362 registered volunteers covering approximately 150 sites within the Local Government Area (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 six official Community Gardens across the LGA which are managed 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.

Nil.

Recommending:

1. **THAT** the Streets Alive and Community Gardens Update report be received.

The Motion was moved by Councillor Brodie and seconded by Mr Berry.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the Streets Alive and Community Gardens Update report be received.

16. **E07: Green Events Program Update**

Report of Jordan Moy, Sustainability Education Officer

The Green Events program comprises a suite of sustainability related workshops and events offered to the North Sydney community free of charge. The program focuses on

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current themes and issues in sustainability and 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 purpose of this report is to provide an overview and evaluation of the Green Events program from July 2018 to June 2019.

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

Recommending:

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

The Motion was moved by Mr Handmer and seconded by Councillor Drummond.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

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

17. E08: Mixed Solid Waste Processing Update

Report of Bo Karaula Waste Management Coordinator

This report provides an update on the NSW Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) intent to discontinue Mixed Waste Organic Outputs (MWOO) as a soil amendment. Last week, the EPA announced a permanent ban on the use of MWOO to be applied on agricultural, mining rehabilitation or forestry land due to human health and ecological risks associated with chemical and physical contaminants found in the product. This follows the sudden decision by the EPA in October 2018 to revoke the general and specific Resource Recovery Orders and Resource Recovery Exemptions for the application of MWOO to land pending results of further research.

This means the materials collected from the red lid bin will be disposed to landfill as the processing of the materials is no longer an option under the Council's current Waste Disposal and Processing Contract.

Nil.

Recommending:

1. **THAT** the Mixed Solid Waste Processing Update report be received.

The Motion was moved by Mr Worrall and seconded by Councillor Brodie.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the Mixed Solid Waste Processing Update report be received.

18. E09: Spring Sounds @ The Coal Loader

Report of Rebecca Farrell, Acting Coal Loader Coordinator

This report will give an overview on the Spring Sounds Event held at the Coal Loader on 12 October 2019 and provides information on the sustainability practices that were introduced.

Spring Sounds on the Platform was the Coal Loader's first major no-single-use plastic event. The free, family-friendly event included 3 music stages, a pop-up bar with locally brewed beer, several stallholders producing sustainable goods as well as a range of activities to keep the children entertained all afternoon. With the aim to ensure our events are as eco-friendly as possible, Council introduced several sustainability initiatives for this event to ensure Council delivered the event consistent with this ethos. Council utilised Ruzi, a business who provides reusable plates, cutlery and cups which eliminated the need for single-use food and bar service items. Council installed

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temporary bubblers from Sydney Water which meant there was no single use plastic bottle sales, with visitors to the site able to refill their bottles, use bubblers or the Ruzi cups that were on hand. All stallholders were plastic-free and only retailed sustainable wares. Council also utilised the Coal Loader Café mug library, for customers who forgot their own keep-cup.

The event was powered using the solar PV cells on site, and Council was diligent in recruiting sustainability-focused food vendors, with Ruzi also removing food waste to compost to help reduce greenhouse gas production.

Funding for this project was included in the adopted 2019/20 budget. Expenditure for the event totalled \$23,000.

Recommending:

1. **THAT** the Spring Sounds @ The Coal Loader report be received.

The Motion was moved by Ms Byrne and seconded by Councillor Brodie.

Voting was unanimous.

Resolved to recommend:

1. **THAT** the Spring Sounds @ The Coal Loader report be received.

19.

General Business

19.1 Noise Pollution from ‘Party Boats’ in Berrys Bay (Bruce Handmer)

Mr Handmer would like to discuss the following:

What can North Sydney Council do to reduce the noise coming from more and more chartered party boats which are increasingly stopping in Berrys Bay (and possibly other bays) for hours at a time?

Council’s Manager Environmental Services stated he would forward the information he has received from the Compliance team on this matter to Mr Handmer.

Councillor Gibson requested an update council report on how the smoking ban in the LGA is going.

19.2 Update on Outcomes from LGNSW Conference (Philip Worrall)

Mr Worrall would like to discuss the following:

Update on the outcomes of the following motions submitted by Willoughby Bay Precinct Committee to the LGNSW Conference held on 14-16 October 2019:

1. That LGNSW press State and Federal Governments to work urgently together and with local government to address the current crisis in sustainable disposal of household recyclables brought about by the recent and continuing steady decline in overseas markets for recyclable product.
2. That LGNSW press the State Government to resolve the current impasse in processing and use of “Mixed Waste Organics”, towards restoration of a sustainable system for use of this product.

Any other matters discussed at the Conference relevant to this Reference Group.

Mr Worrall stated that media items indicated these matters may include motions with respect to the issues of “Zombie DAs” and “Council powers to control Demolition by Neglect”.

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Councillor Gibson stated that she had information from the LGNSW she would forward onto Mr Worrall.

19.3 Policy for NSW Councils' Use of Glyphosate (Philip Worrall)

Mr Worrall would like to discuss the following:

Is there a policy for NSW Councils' Use of Glyphosate?

The Director Open Space and Environmental Services stated that Council does not have a policy on the use of Glyphosate in the LGA and therefore Council does use it. In saying that Council does have a list of guidelines and wherever possible Council minimises the use of all hazardous chemicals. Council continues to try new products when they become available and that organic alternatives are used in children's playgrounds and near waterways. Council only uses glyphosate to the requirements on the label and have strong control on the use of it.

Councillor Gibson requested that future Environment Reference Group meetings be scheduled to start at 6pm.

The Meeting concluded at 8.50pm.

CHAIRPERSON

GENERAL MANAGER

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2. Disclosures of Interest

3. Committee Reports

3.1. Food Scraps Trial in MUDs

AUTHOR: Bo Karaula, Waste Management Co-ordinator

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an overview of the upcoming food scraps collection and processing trial. The purpose of the trial is to test the demand and gather data (cost and operational) of implementing a food scraps recycling collection service for residents in Multi Unit Dwellings (MUDs). The results of the trial will inform long-term strategic decisions on resource recovery options.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This project will be funded from the Domestic Waste Management Budget and the NSW EPA Grant.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the Residential Food Scraps Collection and Processing Trial report 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

Food waste collected with household waste makes up to 35% of the red lid rubbish bin content in the North Sydney local government area.

In order to capture this material and divert it from landfill, Council entered into a contract in 2006 to have all waste processed at SUEZ's resource recovery facility at Eastern Creek. From there, food waste was separated to produce compost for mine remediation and a variety of other applications. This facility was designed to maximize the recovery of resources and divert waste from landfill. Council, under contract with SUEZ, utilized this technology from 2006 to 2018, achieving a 60% recovery rate from the contents of the red bin with food waste and recyclables (plastics, paper and glass) being recovered. This process coupled with the kerbside collection of recyclables from the yellow lid bin contributed to a total waste diversion from landfill rate of 69%, surpassing the targets set by the NSW EPA at that time.

In 2018, the NSW EPA banned the application of mixed waste organics outputs to land due to risks associated with chemical and physical contaminants. This occurred when Council was seeking tenders for alternative waste processing and disposal services including the recovery of resources in the general waste stream.

As a result, Council entered into a contract with SUEZ on 1 July 2019 to dispose of Council's general waste to landfill with no opportunity to extract the organic fraction, which in landfill breaks down and creates methane, a greenhouse gas. This situation is under review however it appears unlikely the EPA will reverse or modify their previous decision.

The reduced diversion of food waste from landfill triggered a mayoral minute at the Council meeting on 24 February 2020 calling on Council staff to prepare a report on a food scraps trial.

A report was submitted to the 30 November 2020 Council meeting detailing the methodology and an estimation of the costs in running a separate collection and recycling of food scraps in MUDs in the local government area of North Sydney.

The Council resolved as follows:

- 1. THAT** the Residential Food Scraps Collection and Processing Trial report be received.
- 2. THAT** the Food Waste Collection Trial is progressed in accordance with the budget and methodologies and timeframes proposed in the details outlined in this report.
- 3. THAT** Council seeks three quotations from waste consultancies listed in the Local Government Approved Panel to assist Council in the planning, management and implementation of the trial.
- 4 THAT** a final report is provided to Council on the results of the Food Waste Collection Trial.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

Given that small, medium and high-density apartments represent almost 90% of the housing stock in the local government area, the multi-unit dwelling (MUD) community will be targeted in the trial. Single detached dwellings which represent 7 % of the housing stock, will be excluded from the trial because the results from food waste trials at other councils indicates this group consistently performs significantly better than MUDs in their participation and contamination rates. Individual waste disposal facilities are a contributing factor why houses outperform MUDs in food waste trials.

The objective is to generate a diverse sample of MUDs large enough to generate robust data that is a good representation of the local government area. The target of 400 individual unit dwellings has been set. It should be noted that MUDs are inherently more difficult to manage due their high transient population. The 2016 ABS census data revealed that of the entire housing stock in the North Sydney local government area, 46% are owner occupiers and 51% are tenanted. Other variables that will be considered include building age, size (number of units), presence/absence of a building manager/caretaker and site conditions i.e. location of garbage bin room, presence/absence of waste chutes, internal/external access and bin bay capacity for additional food scrap wheelie bins.

Consideration will be given to potential bias in the data and results obtained from the trial, if the resident sample are only those that are motivated by behavioural change and are willing participants as this sample group is unlikely to reflect a longer term commitment from the wider local government area if the service was to become permanent. To reduce the risk of the results being biased or distorted a direct random sampling method of recruitment will be used.

To gauge the community's interest in the participation of the trial, a number of community engagement methods will be deployed prior to using the direct random sampling method.

Key learning from other Councils having conducted similar trials include consideration of how it is to be determined if residents are participating fully or poorly, as efforts can sometimes only be measured in aggregate for an entire building (given the shared bin and services model that exists in MUDs). In this instance, learnings have shown that it is imperative for the Owners Corporation or Strata Managers to support such an initiative and to ensure data collection is accurate, a commitment from the building to actively take part is required. Other Councils have attempted with varying degrees of success to appoint Point of Contacts (PoC) that include building managers, cleaners and nominated building champions.

APrince consulting will assist Council with the planning, design, recruitment of participants, audits, data collection, surveys and reporting functions.

Overview of Methodology

Residents will be asked to separate their food waste via kitchen caddies in each individual dwelling and place this food waste in a separate food-only Mobile Garbage Bin (MGB) on a shared basis in an allocated waste disposal area on site for collection. This method is consistent with standard practice adopted at other councils that have undertaken similar food waste trials. The trial will be supported by an education campaign. It is proposed that our current waste collection contractor, URM, would undertake the MGB collection service with all collected food waste delivered to an anaerobic digestion processing facility at Camelia (EarthPower Technologies) for conversion to compost / fertiliser with the added benefit of green electricity being generated. This facility is currently closed for refurbishment and is expected to reopen July 2021.

To make separating food scraps for processing simple, registered participating households will be provided with:

- a small seven (7) litre kitchen caddy;
- one off supply of compostable caddy liner bags;
- food scraps recycling wheelie bins, 120 L size with a burgundy lid as per industry standards;
- wall poster for lobby noticeboard, fridge sticker, bin sticker, bin bay signage, FAQs information booklets; and
- ongoing support from Council in managing the likely contamination of the food scrap bins.

URM will carry out delivery of kitchen caddies as well as the delivery, repair and replacement of the food scraps wheelie bins. This will be arranged per building. Collection services will be undertaken by URM on a once per week basis on Wednesdays in a separate truck. The existing waste services will continue to be provided as per normal.

To gain a realistic understanding of how the residents and the wider community will respond to such an initiative, the trial will run for a period of six (6) months.

The trial will be funded from the Domestic Waste Management Budget and the recently acquired grant from the NSW EPA. Funding of \$180,000 has been secured under the Local Council Transition Fund program administered by the NSW EPA. The funding program allowed eligible councils to apply for a grant of up to \$180,000 to undertake projects that will increase the recovery of organics in the red-lid garbage bin.

The results of this trial could possibly shape whether future food scraps recycling services would be viable across the North Sydney local government area.

3.2. Bushcare Community Programs update 2020

AUTHOR: Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Co-ordinator

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

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.

These programs focus on volunteer participation (i.e. Bushcare; Adopt-a-Plot; Wildlife Watch) and resident engagement (i.e. Native Havens; Bushcare Workshops, Activities and Events).

From March 2020 onward, the Coronavirus pandemic affected the way in which these programs were delivered to the community. Unlike a number of other metropolitan Councils, North Sydney suspended volunteer involvement in Bushcare programs only during the "lockdown" period from the around the 27th of March until the 15th of May 2020. As soon as NSW Government restrictions allowed, the Bushland Team sought to utilise every available resource and apply innovative practical operational procedures to enable all possible volunteering and community engagement activities to recommence safely.

The following report details the activities and achievements within each of these programs during 2020, as well as a snapshot of current or planned initiatives for the 2021 calendar year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the Bushcare community programs update 2020 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

4. Our Social Vitality

4.3 North Sydney supports lifelong learning

BACKGROUND

In the context of North Sydney Council, “Bushcare” can be considered a catch-all term that encapsulates many of our community education and engagement activities that focus on biodiversity conservation. Bushcare incorporates 12x active Bushcare groups working across 16x bushland sites; the Bushcare Community Nursery and 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

Bushcare Volunteer Program in Review

The Bushcare volunteer program was suspended during “COVID lock-down”, from mid-March through to mid-May 2020 in order to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers. As a result of this decision, the Bushland Operations Team and Adopt-a-Plot Supervisor added maintenance of the Bushcare sites to their already busy workloads.

The Bushland Team employed innovative, online avenues for keeping in contact with our Bushcare volunteers during lockdown. This included circulating short video blogs made by individual Bushcare Supervisors while they worked on their respective Bushcare sites, keeping a presence on our social media platforms and preparing/sharing a weekly “Bushcare Learning” (or training blog) with our volunteers. The blog profiled different technical skills used in the field of bush regeneration, as well as introducing and explaining the science behind bushland rehabilitation concepts and strategies. These training initiatives received consistent positive feedback from volunteers and generated good discussion among others.

Several volunteers suggested these learnings could be utilised as a basis for creating training videos, a need previously identified as it is a challenge for new volunteers to complete their compulsory face-to-face Bushcare Essentials training within the first six months of joining the program. Two training video modules are now complete, covering Work Health Safety and weed control techniques. Weed identification and some theory modules will be developed

during the next financial year. The training videos are currently being integrated with Council's E-learning platform, "Litmus", as the software will enable the Bushland Team to verify volunteers have completed introductory Bushcare training and understood the content. Existing volunteers will also be asked complete the training as a refresher.

The second major project commenced during 2020 was the revision of Council's Bushcare Volunteer Program Guidelines. It has been over a decade since the Bushcare Guidelines were last reviewed, hence the need for an update that reflects changes in legislation, as well as currently adopted policies and procedures that have been amended over time. A supplementary booklet outlining weed control technique and plant identification will be developed to accompany the Guidelines, providing a valuable resource for new and existing volunteers alike.

Volunteer participation in the Bushcare program was reinstated in mid-May with the adoption of mandatory social distancing and hygiene measures. Volunteers were reminded by email and in person, to refrain from attending if they felt unwell and/or suffered symptoms consistent with Covid-19. At Bushcare, volunteers and staff were asked to social distance, that is; maintain a distance of 1.5m with persons outside of their home. Morning tea, an important social aspect of Bushcare that involves the sharing of food/tea/coffee, was suspended until further notice. Furthermore, hygiene practices such as washing hands and using the supplied hand sanitiser are encouraged. All tools and shared equipment were required to be sterilised using a 70% Methylated Spirits solution at the end of each meeting. To date, there have been no cases of Covid-19 at Bushcare.

Regrettably, the all-of-Bushcare Volunteer Christmas party was cancelled in 2020 and replaced with individual Bushcare group parties, which were celebrated at local cafes/venues where social distancing and safe food service could be assured. Whilst most volunteers lamented the cancelled all-in Christmas party, the reasons were well understood, and the alternative individual group parties were greatly appreciated.

Changes to Bushcare Groups

The Bushland Team instigated changes at several Bushcare sites to enhance reserve-level bushland rehabilitation outcomes, as well as accommodate feedback from volunteers seeking a greater variety of work, such as secondary removal of wood weeds (i.e. plants other than herbs and grasses) found mostly in adjoining sites now dominated by regenerating native plants and where volunteer participation has been increasing.

Smoothey Park Bushcare Group was reduced to one meeting per month due to a decline in volunteers and reduced weed presence (due to successful site management over the past 25+ years). This decision enabled a second Bushcare site to be created in Badangi Reserve, at Bridge End, along the residential property boundary. The second, mid-week Bushcare Group that work in Primrose Park also benefited from a change in site boundaries, with a new area designated near the walking track entrance adjoining #5 Folly Point. This is a resilient site with healthy canopy cover, diverse understory and unstable (i.e. weedy) edges adjoining the private property interface. Another mid-week Bushcare site was established at Walumetta Reserve in Waverton, to accommodate strong interest from new volunteers wishing to join the already well-attended Balls Head group in Waverton.

There has been a proportionally large increase in the number of volunteer applications for Bushcare since the pandemic began, presumably due to more residents working from home or electing to take early retirement. Bushcare Officers from other Greater Sydney Local Government Areas reported similar observations at a recent Volunteer Convenor Network (VCN) meeting.

Bushcare Volunteer Contributions

There was a ~15% decrease in volunteer hours during 2020, when compared to 2019, however this was to be expected with the 8-week participation hiatus due to COVID lockdown. Volunteer participation in the Bushcare program has continued trending upward by ~9% from 2018 to 2020. The 2021 figures only represent February and March, and due to wet weather are not yet a true reflection of volunteer participation. There are currently 130 active Bushcare volunteers working with Council, 25% of whom have been participating for up to two years and a further 25% for twenty years (or greater). Overall, the length of service and depth of volunteer experience is evenly distributed. Below is the annual breakdown of hours and volunteer numbers:

2018 Total Voluntary Contribution: 1739 hr 10 min
Total Number of Volunteers: 105 Volunteers

2019 Total Voluntary Contribution: 2045 hr 20 min
Total Number of Volunteers: 115 Volunteers

2020 Total Voluntary Contribution: 1760 hr 15 min
Total Number of Volunteers: 126 Volunteers

2021 Total Voluntary Contribution: 422 hr 50 min
Total Number of Volunteers: 83 Volunteers (*note this figure only represents volunteers that have attended a work session up to the end of March 2021 and does not account for several rain-cancelled work sessions*)

Voluntary Service by percentile

0 to 1 years = 9 or 7%
0 to 2 years = 31 or 24 %
0 to 4 years = 44 or 34%
5 to 9 years = 25 or 19%
10 to 19 years = 30 or 23%
20 to 28 years = 31 or 24%

Total number of active Bushcare volunteers, as at April 2020 = 130

Bushcare Events Calendar

Each year, the Bushland Team provides a range of environmental education activities and events on behalf of Council, to engage our community and encourage their interest in conserving our bushland environs. Examples include guided bush walks, community nursery tours, Bushcare volunteer exchanges and community planting events.

These Bushcare activities have progressively increased over the past decade, unintentionally placing a strain on the Bushland Team's time and resources. Therefore, a reduction in the overall number of activities offered was necessary to allow for a more balanced and sustainable approach to delivering the Bushcare workshops and events program. This also enabled the Bushland Team to refocus our attention on improving the provision of Bushcare volunteer training and support.

In 2019, the Bushland Team planned 69 activities, this decreased to 43 in 2020, however just 12 of these were actually delivered due to the disruption caused by Covid-19. Initially, lockdown restrictions precluded activities from going ahead, followed by the subsequent social distancing measures which resulted in some events being non-viable. This year, we plan to provide 31 activities adhering to COVID-safe practices, with consideration for social distancing restrictions of the relevant venues and transport requirements. To-date, seven of these activities have been delivered to the North Sydney community.

In 2020, Bushcare activities were delivered as planned, up to mid-March, before being suspended through to August with the exception of a Family Bush Walk during the June/July school holidays. The Bushland Team mostly provided bush walks in local reserves, a popular activity during this time. School holiday activities were cancelled for a variety of reasons, the Mini Beast Muster required shared equipment and we couldn't ensure social distancing for the Spotlight Walk in the evening. Bushcare kayaking was cancelled as it was too labour intensive for voluntary provider Jeff Cottrell to sterilise equipment after use. However, the children's kayak activities provided by local business SydneybyKayak were able to go ahead.

National Tree Day, our largest annual community engagement event went ahead, as planned on 2 August at the Coal Loader Parklands. Unlike previous tree day events, time slots were mandated and volunteers were social distanced at the planting site. Unfortunately, Planet Ark made the decision to cancel National Tree Day as a risk mitigation strategy. This resulted in all our registrations being lost and participants being told by Planet Ark that the event was not going ahead. However, with preparations well under way and a COVID-safe approach in-place, the Bushland Team pushed ahead with the activity. Despite this being our smallest ever Tree Day, we managed to get 101 native plants in the ground with the aid of five enthusiastic participants and two Bushland staff.

A most interesting public engagement trend emerged during the Pandemic through the development and delivery of online educational content. The Bushland Team provided our first webinar to the community, a Bandicoot Talk on 13 August 2020. The webinar was very successful, with 91 people in "virtual" attendance. The presentation by Prof. Peter Banks and Associate Prof. Catherine Price of Sydney University, as well as volunteers from Sydney Wildlife, was recorded and can now be used as a "living" educational resource. Owing to the success of this activity and the unpredictability of the pandemic, a further three webinars have been planned for 2021. The first was a Rakali (native Water Rat) talk provided on 18 March with 50 people in attendance. The second will be a Native Bee Talk with Apiarist Gavin Smith that is planned for 20 April and the third is a Dark Skies for Wildlife Conservation talk to be provided by the Dark Skies Alliance on 12 August.

Landcare Collaborations

On Thursday 31 October 2020, the Bushland Team provided our first Landcare Australia Corporate Environmental Volunteer (CEV) day at Balls Head Reserve for Amgen Australia.

The Bushland Team entered a host agreement for the CEV program to provide an avenue for corporate sponsorship to Landcare Australia, with the added benefit of being able to pass on the activity fee (paid by the corporate group) to our longstanding Landcare partners Boorowa Community Landcare Group.

Understandably, our annual trip tree planting weekend to Boorowa, NSW was cancelled for the first time in twenty years due to the pandemic, as was Harbour2Hunter, a *Building Bridges to Boorowa-type* activity with a new Landcare group at [Luskintyre](#) in the Hunter Valley. This initiative was in response to a request for help by Hunter Regional Landcare Network as a means to kick-start their environmental restoration project and demonstrate to other potential partners the value of urban/rural volunteer programs.

Bushfire Recovery

Following the devastating 2019/20 bushfires, which affected much of NSW (outside of Sydney), attention turned to what we could do, both as individuals and as North Sydney Bushcare, to assist affected communities. As a first step, the Bushland Team promoted bushfire recovery volunteer opportunities and services in the Bushcare Newsletter, including The Centre for Volunteering website and the National Bushfire Recovery Agency.

The Bushland Team also registered an offer of assistance with the NSW Office of Local Government to provide a *Building Bridges to Boorowa - style* volunteer activity in which Council would transport, supervise and support up to 40 North Sydney volunteers to assist with appropriate recovery activities, such as replanting bushland buffer edges, target weed control, fencing and erosion control, habitat augmentation and other bush regeneration actions. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented many of these activities from actually taking place.

Eventually, the Bushland Team were able to undertake a Bushfire Recovery Project in partnership with the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The project involved helping to control a 1,000 ha infestation of Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius subsp. scoparius*), 95% of which was impacted by fire in the World Heritage-listed Barrington Tops National Park. Joined by members of the NSC Tree Management Team, the work required chainsaw accredited workers that could safely use these power tools within a remote-access environment. In part, the Bushland Team selected this project with the intention of scoping its suitability for our Bushcare volunteers and because it has a further 4-years of funding that allows follow-up weed control to occur.

On Wednesday 5 February, the Bushland Team along with representatives from Willoughby, Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils attended the Northern District Branch of Sydney Wildlife Rescue's monthly meeting. The Councils were invited by the Chair, Bev Young, so they could learn about opportunities to assist wildlife recovery projects in the post-bushfire phase. During the meeting, discussion turned to how Council could help in emergencies by potentially providing suitable venues as evacuation points to house animals in the event of a natural disaster. Other ideas included providing foliage for possums and other wildlife and helping to build habitat nest boxes, something the Bushland Team has previously carried out in partnership with Willoughby Council.

Another activity suggested during this meeting was assistance for wildlife carers in fire affected areas. Andrew Scott – NSC Bushcare Officer volunteered to help with a wombat compound rebuild on Anne William’s Native Animal Rescue Group (NARG) property in Sassafras NSW, 50km south west of Nowra. This activity was facilitated by Sydney Wildlife Rescue volunteer Sonja Elwood, taking place on the weekend of 25 & 26 July 2020. North Sydney Council supported this activity by providing Andrew with the use of a pool vehicle.

Volunteer Workforce Planning

At the recent biannual Bushcare Convenor meeting, the need for proactive recruitment was questioned by some attendees as a response to the significant increase in new volunteer applications received during 2020/21.

Over the past year, online volunteer applications increased to 53 – nearly double the number for 2019 (28). This trend of increased community interest in volunteering appears to be continuing, with 20 applications received to-date in 2021. The reason for this increase is thought to be reflective of more people working from home, travelling less and or taking early retirement.

Variation in group sizes – both between the different Bushcare Groups and within each group from meeting-to-meeting – was identified as a significant issue affecting the management of Bushcare sites and the facilitation of Bushcare meetings. It was suggested that core group sizes of 6-8 would be optimal and that this could potentially be achieved through group dynamic training that targets volunteer retention. Scoping new work sites to accommodate further volunteer interest was also discussed by the Bushland Team.

Bushcare Nursery

2020 could be considered an unusual year, one of disruption and adjustment. Although plant propagation and general nursery business continued apace, the COVID-19 pandemic affected much of community life. 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 only 124 plants in 2020. The Bushcare Community Nursery volunteer group was also put on hold from late March until mid-May.

The Native Havens program used fewer plants during 2020, reflecting the need for social distancing between participants and staff. Internal bushland and parks teams were mostly unaffected by COVID-19 protocols and their plant usage increased, largely due to favourable rainfall throughout the year (compared to 2019).

The total number of plants used in 2020 (8,603) is notably less than 2019 (11,209). 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 2013-20

Year	Plants supplied by Bushcare Nursery
2013	9,513
2014	11,107
2015	9,170
2016	11,767
2017	12,382
2018	11,382
2019	11,209
2020	8,603
AVERAGE	10,642

Figure 2. Plant supply by Program, 2020

Council Program	Quantity
Native Havens	2,975
Bushland Rehabilitation	2,661
Other (i.e. Community Events)	969
Streets Alive/Parks & Gardens	955
Adopt-a-Plot	681
National Tree Day	124
NSC Tree Planting Team	17
Dead stock	167
Unaccounted stock (i.e. theft)	54
TOTAL:	8,603

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. 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 2. Percentage of plants grown at the Bushcare Community Nursery (NSC) or delivered from external nurseries (D) across all programs.

Origin	Quantity	Percentage
NSC Bushcare Nursery	7,028	82%
External Nurseries (D)	1,575	18%

Figure 3. 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	1,720	58%
	External Nursery (D)	1,255	42%

Across both delivered and home-grown stock, 160 different native plant species were supplied by the nursery in 2020, which is comparable to previous years.

Excluding (D) delivered plants, the estimated value of outgoing NSC stock grown by volunteers and staff was over \$24,000. Most plants comprised tubestock (6,318 @ \$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 4. Estimated value of plants grown in the Bushcare Community Nursery.

Size	Quantity	\$ Each	\$ Total
Forestry Tube	6,318	\$3-	\$18,954-
Mega Tube	42	\$8-	\$336-
Round Tube	474	\$6-	\$2,844-
4" Square Pot	103	\$6-	\$618-
6-8" Pot	68	\$15-	\$1,020-
Rocket Pot	12	\$25-	\$300-
Tray/Flat	11		
			\$24,072

Figure 5. Stock usage per month and yearly total

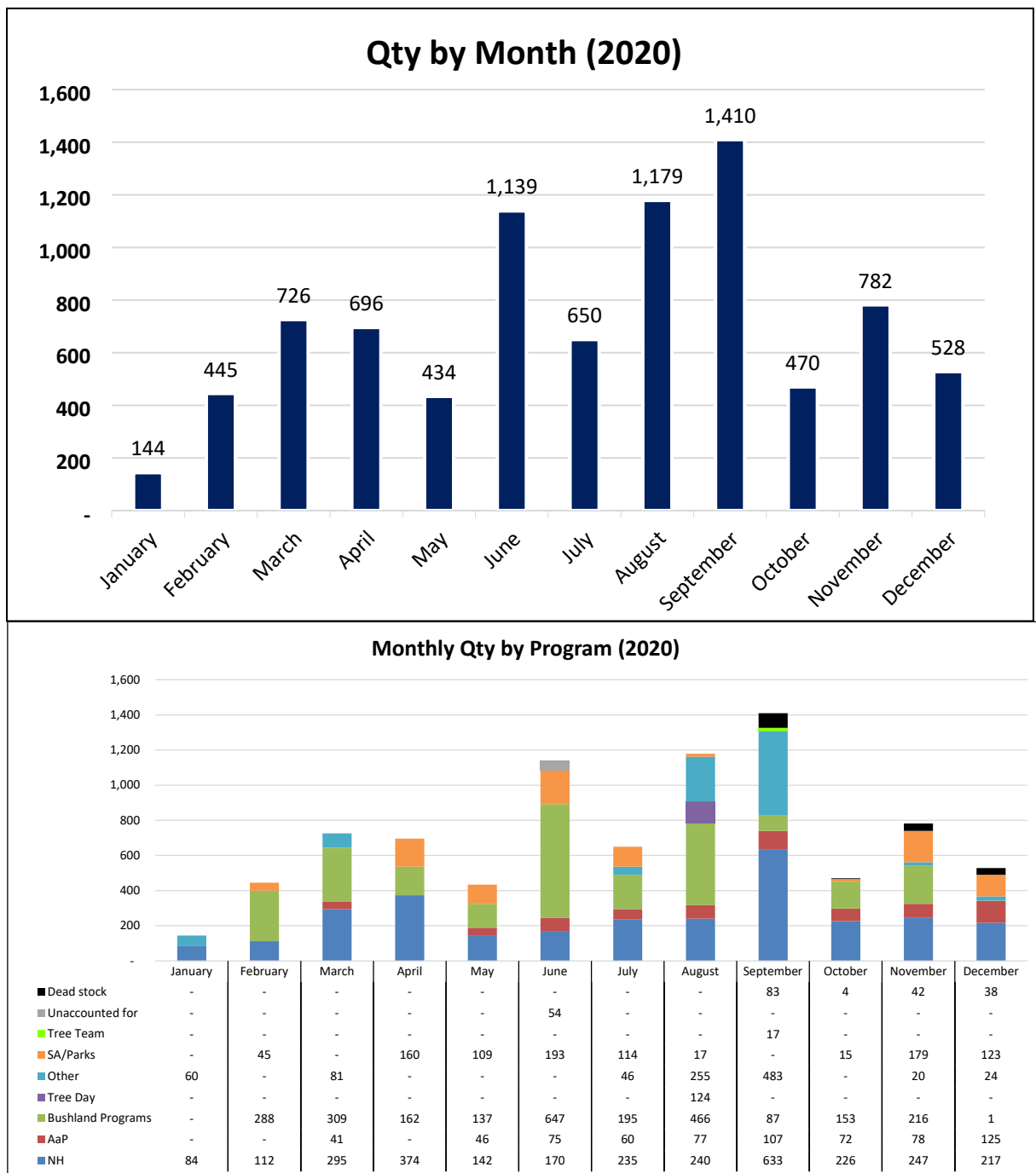
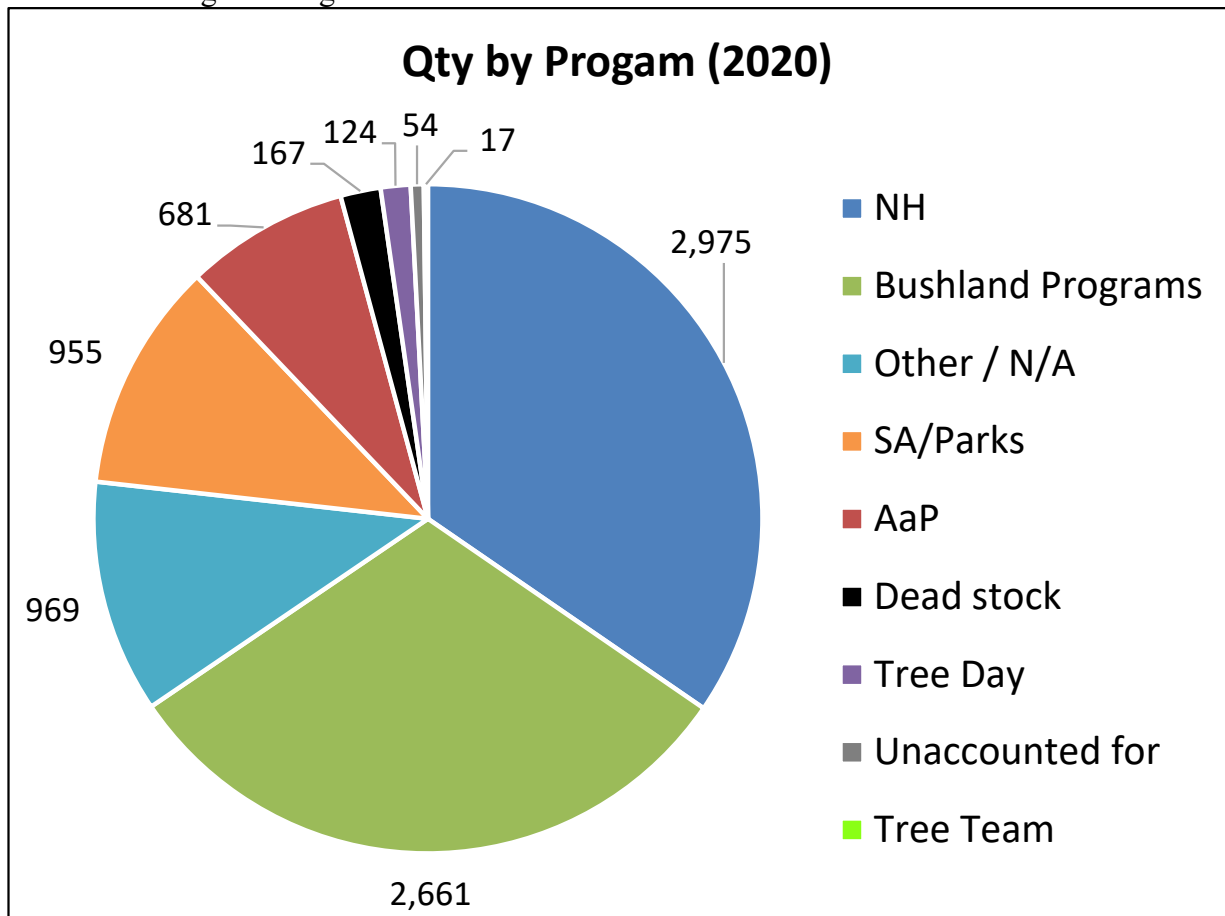


Figure 6. (above) Monthly stock usage, by program.

Figure 7. (below) Annual Stock usage by program, showing Bushland Programs and Native Havens with highest usage.



“Other/NA” = e.g. community events, markets & giveaways

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 in April and May 2020. Meetings resumed in June with COVID-safe protocols in place, including no shared morning tea, strict sanitising procedures and a rostering system whereby volunteers attended on alternate fortnights to keep numbers within manageable limits for physical distancing. Group numbers remained steady with around 8-9 regulars.

During the lockdown period, a short video was filmed by the Nursery Supervisor (a virtual nursery tour and update) and this was distributed to the volunteers as a way of keeping in touch until in-person meetings could resume.

To uphold COVID-safe protocols, the nursery volunteer Christmas party was held at the Coal Loader Café instead of the usual self-catered affair.

Bushcare Nursery Events and Achievements 2020

The seed propagation workshop in March was fully booked with eight participants. However, on the day, only one participant showed up. This was likely due to heavy rain and the beginning of government discussions about a Covid-19 lockdown.

Nursery Open Day was held in September and was a great success despite COVID-safe protocols that restricted attendees to 20 at a time in booked time slots. Between them, the 75 attendees took away 321 plants comprising 12 specially selected native species.

In October, we ran the popular seed propagation workshop where participants learn techniques for propagating native plants from seed. The workshop was fully booked with 8x attendees participating.

The nursery continued to propagate and supply plants for all programs and events, but the unpredictable nature of 2020 meant that a lot of stock was produced and remained unused, to be held over into 2021.

A stock-take system was trialed in June 2020. When information from the Stock Out procurement sheets is entered into the database, it is automatically deducted from a master list, giving an accurate figure for the number, pot size and species of plants available in the nursery at any one time.

Plant thefts and security

During the height of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Coal Loader and Balls Head became a focus for North Sydney residents seeking outdoor recreation and diversion. It was during this time that a noticeable number of plants, sometimes entire crates of tubestock, began disappearing from the nursery.

Some of these disappearances could be traced to specific residents pursuing unauthorised “lockdown” projects (planting out road verges, public parks and the like) but many of the thefts remain a mystery. Some of the unexplained losses have been recorded in the stock records as “unaccounted for” (see figures 2, 8 and 9). Others have been registered under the program they were traced to, whether they were approved or not (e.g. Streets Alive). Many have not been recorded as they were taken before the new stock take system was implemented. Estimated losses would be around 200+plants, mostly tubestock but also larger pots.

To prevent the nursery becoming a public thoroughfare during the Covid-19 lockdown, and to discourage plant thefts, signage and yellow plastic chain barriers were placed across the nursery access points. These were removed in 2021 as Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed.

The nursery continues to collaborate with internal teams such as Parks and Gardens and Tree Management, fulfilling requests for native plants for specific projects (e.g. Green St, St Leonards Park, the bushfood garden at Civic Park etc). Advanced, local provenance trees were also supplied for use by the tree planting team and we continue to grow these for future streetscape and parkland planting projects.

Bushcare Nursery Events 2021

It appears that 2021 will be a more “normal” year with greater community participation and events being offered. After record rainfall in summer and autumn, many plants will be leaving the nursery for use in bushland programs (Bushcare, contractors, corporate volunteers and by bushland staff). Planting events, such as Trees for Mum, National Tree Day, citizenship ceremonies and the nursery open day are all likely to proceed.

An irrigation upgrade is planned for the shade house, where there has been repeated leaks and failures with overhead sprinklers. Ideally, the hose will be replaced with rigid poly pipe, pending feasibility.

A volunteer excursion to Sutherland Shire community nursery is planned for May 2021, as well as two nursery workshops for 2021. A cuttings propagation workshop in March (cancelled due to extreme weather and torrential rain) and a seed propagation workshop in October.

Nursery volunteer numbers are stable and the group is at capacity with 9 regular participants. A new volunteer joined the group at the start of 2021.

Adopt-a-Plot

Council’s Adopt-a-Plot Program grew out of an Environmental Trust grant project commencing in 2005. This unique approach to bushland rehabilitation and community involvement provides local residents with an option to either work one-on-one with a professional Council Bush Regenerator, typically in a “plot” of bushland near their home or, where time and family commitments prevent this option, co-funding the cost of Council’s Bush Regenerator working for 4 hours per month in “their plot”.

During 2020, the Adopt-a-Plot program continued to be delivered without interruption, albeit with a COVID-required hiatus of volunteer involvement from late March to late May. During this period, the Adopt-a-Plot Supervisor worked on all “plots” regardless of whether they were registered as participant (i.e. volunteer) plots or donation (i.e. co-funded) plots. Understandably, there was an overall reduction in volunteer hours during 2020, with only 420 hours contributed to bushland rehabilitation, as well as fewer plants (approx. 895) installed.

Over 2020, the Adopt-a-Plot program supported 26x participants working in 6x North Sydney Bushland Reserves. In 2021, an additional bushland reserve was included in the program, through the creation of a new plot in Waverton Park, at the bottom of John St. This degraded bushland edge will be transitioned over time from a mostly weed dominated foreshore slope to a structurally complex and species diverse bushland buffer, providing habitat for locally rare small bush birds including the Superb Fairy-wren and White-browed Scrubwren.

During 2020, changes to the Adopt a Plot donor fee structure were introduced, with the elimination of a sliding scale system that reduced fees over a successive 4 years period. This approach was originally initiated to encourage ongoing, as opposed to short-term, donor support.

The change introduced a simplified 2-tier fee structure that was more closely linked to the individual plot’s rehabilitation needs rather than a more arbitrary temporal factor. The new system comprises:

- Standard fee (equivalent to 50% of the cost to employ a Council Bush Regenerator to work for 4x hours per month on a plot)
- Maintenance fee (equivalent to 50% of the cost to employ a Council Bush Regenerator to work for 2x hours per month on a plot)

The introduction of a Maintenance fee provides recognition of where an AaP Donor site has been under continuous rehabilitation for several years, and the phase of ecological recovery has reached a low maintenance stage. The Maintenance Fee was made available to long-term donor plots that have substantially achieved the rehabilitation objectives stated in their contracts, including the establishment of dense, species diverse native vegetation cover with only sporadic weed incursions and subsequently, low maintenance requirements.

Donors were also given the option to continue contributing the full Standard fee, in which case the additional hours not required on their Plot would be utilised in neighbouring bushland areas where the work will benefit the donor plot and/or help to improve bushland condition at the wider reserve level.

All existing donors transferred to the new maintenance fee, with the exception of the new donor at Waverton Park. This change is a reflection of the progress of the program meeting its long-term objectives and the application of continuous improvement principals.

Following feedback from participants in the Adopt-a-Plot Program, the Bushland Team organised an online talk on communal and solitary native bees to be delivered by expert apiarist Gavin Smith in April 2021.

Native Havens

North Sydney Council's Native Havens Program has supported the establishment of over 613 native and mixed native gardens across the local government area since 2003. Native Havens has been recognised for its ongoing environmental stewardship, as well as the role this program plays in enhancing wildlife corridors that link our bushland remnants.

Council's Bushcare Nursery produces a average of 10,000+ local native plants per annum. Of these, approximately 2,975 native plants have been distributed over the past 12 months to local participants in the Native Havens program. Importantly, around 20% of these plantings are locally endemic tree species. These long-lived trees will contribute to canopy connectivity and help to replenish North Sydney's urban forest. During 2020, there were 63 new participants who joined the program and a further 93 existing participants who were provided with ongoing support.

Wildlife Watch

During 2020, the Wildlife Watch Program evolved from employing a paper-based wildlife monitoring and reporting format to utilising a web and smart-device interface. This long-planned initiative was made possible by the Atlas of Living Australia's "Biocollect" smartphone app. being customised to record the same data as Council's paper-based monitoring forms, which are themselves based on database requirements of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment's BioNet wildlife atlas.

The move to digital reporting has been embraced by all participants in the Wildlife Watch Program and has resulted in an increase in recorded observations. Two training workshops are planned for 2021 and will be delivered for new and existing participants in the Wildlife Watch Program.

During 2020, 713 wildlife observations were added to Council’s Wildlife Watch database as well as the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) and BioNet. A further 2,546 wildlife observations were entered directly in to the ALA and subsequently, the NSW BioNet, using North Sydney’s BioCollect smartphone app. There are currently 22 volunteer contributors in the Wildlife Watch Program.

For the fifth year running, North Sydney residents actively participated in Birdlife Australia’s “Aussie Backyard Bird Count” as part of National Bird Week. The event was promoted by Council’s Bushland Management Team as an extension of the Wildlife Watch program.

2020 saw a 30% increase in local participation, largely due to Council’s promotion of the event, which included the NSC website, Facebook page, Bushcare newsletter, Posters (erected at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability) and direct contact with our existing Bushcare and Wildlife Watch volunteers (via email). Local Schools were also contacted to raise their awareness and encourage participation.

Result:

The following statistics relate specifically bird sightings made in the North Sydney LGA during the “Aussie Backyard Bird Count”, which ran from the 19th to 25th October 2020:

182 observers took part in the surveys (over 24 percent increase over 2019 participation levels)

A total of **6,542** birds were observed and recorded during the week (see Table 1), this represents a ~ 22% increase over 2019 results. **60** individual bird species were recorded during the 2020 survey - (Table 1)

The most commonly observed species included Rainbow Lorikeets; Noisy Miners; Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Silver Gull and Australian Magpie. Locally significant species recorded included a Grey Goshawk, Pacific Baza, Red-browed Finch, Silvereve and Sacred Kingfisher.

Table 1: Total count of all 60 bird species observed within the North Sydney Councilboundaries during the 2020 Aussie Backyard Bird Count.

* Introduced species; RA = Rare; NT = Near Threatened; VU = Vulnerable; En = Endangered, CE = Critically Endangered (based on IUCN listings; BirdLife Australia, 2019).

Bird Species	Count	Bird Species	Count
Rainbow Lorikeet	2307	Common Starling *	11
Noisy Miner	874	Little Black Cormorant	11
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	566	Pacific Black Duck	10
Silver Gull	321	Brown Gerygone	8
Australian Magpie	311	Tawny Frogmouth	8
Pied Currawong	279	Australian Pelican	6
Welcome Swallow	272	Pied Cormorant	6
Rock Dove *	181	Chestnut Teal	3

Little Corella	162	Golden Whistler	3
Australian White Ibis	147	Great Cormorant	3
Grey Butcherbird	147	Red-whiskered Bulbul *	3
Australian Brush-turkey	100	Spotted Dove *	3
Laughing Kookaburra	98	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	2
Common Myna *	93	Eastern Yellow Robin	2
Australian Raven	89	Little Pied Cormorant	2
Australian King-Parrot	69	Long-billed Corella	2
Australian Wood Duck	56	Powerful Owl (VU)	2
Channel-billed Cuckoo	47	Spotted Pardalote	2
Crested Pigeon	40	Variegated Fairy-wren	2
Galah	40	Australasian Darter	1
Eastern Koel	33	Australasian Grebe	1
Superb Fairy-wren	32	Brown Goshawk	1
Magpie-lark	29	Grey Goshawk	1
Musk Lorikeet	27	Northern Mallard *	1
Australasian Figbird	25	Pacific Baza	1
Eastern Whipbird	25	Red-browed Finch	1
Fairy Martin	23	Red Wattlebird	1
White-browed Scrubwren	20	Sacred Kingfisher	1
Masked Lapwing	16	Silveryeye	1
White-faced Heron	13	Topknot Pigeon	1

3.3. Balls Head Reserve Vehicle Access Management

AUTHOR: Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Co-ordinator

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Balls Head Reserve is a popular, iconic bushland reserve on the foreshore of Sydney Harbour. Currently, the reserve is open to public access 24 hours a day, however vehicles are not permitted to park in the reserve between 10pm and 6am. Unfortunately, the reserve is affected by regular instances of vandalism and antisocial behaviours that result in financial cost to Council and lasting damage to the natural values of the reserve. Over the past 12 months alone, the reserve has suffered more than 18 documented instances of vandalism and antisocial behaviour ranging from dumping of rubbish and green-waste, graffiti, and facility damage, to the lighting of numerous fires. As many of these activities occur overnight, after Ranger patrols cease, it is proposed to install boom gates on the entrance/exit to Balls Head Reserve and manage their opening/closure in accordance with the signposted parking restrictions.

These actions are supported by a previous resolution of Council and adopted management plans for the reserve. Funding for the project, estimated at between \$26,000 to \$32,000 is available within the existing Bushland Management recurrent budget allocation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The associated costs will be covered by the 2021/22 Bushland Management recurrent budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council proceed with the installation of boom gates in Balls Head Reserve and the adoption of managed vehicle access in the reserve between 10pm and 6am.

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

4.3 North Sydney supports lifelong learning

BACKGROUND

Balls Head Reserve is a highly valued community asset that is being negatively impacted by ongoing, regular bouts of vandalism and antisocial behaviour, particularly during night-time hours. The proposal to install boom-gates on the entry and exit lanes of the Balls Head loop road would provide additional options to Council for managing after-hours vehicle access to the reserve, helping to limit the damaging activities that presently occur during this time.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Balls Head Reserve, which occupies the southernmost portion of the Waverton peninsula, is North Sydney Council's single largest bushland reserve. The 12.5Ha remnant is a popular destination for locals and visitors alike, offering unrivalled views of Sydney Harbour and the City skyline within a natural bushland setting.

Over the past 3 years, Council has made a significant investment in capital improvements to the reserve, including the completion of:

- Several new walking track/lookout handrails that improve visitor safety and protect sensitive foreshore vegetation, as well as sites of Aboriginal cultural significance.
- Walking track upgrades including new steps, track edging and a raised viewing platform.
- Picnic area upgrades including new table settings, sandstone paving and BBQ facilities
- Carpark line marking and signage improvements including new reserve entry signs; wayfinding; interpretive and carparking regulatory signage.
- Upgraded wastewater system, which will provide a substantial improvement to the treatment and disposal of wastewater from the Balls Head amenities block.

Unfortunately, the Reserve continues to be affected by regular bouts of vandalism, fires, and antisocial behaviours – particularly during non-daylight hours. To help counter this issue, the Bushland Management Team has worked closely with Council Rangers to institute evening patrols (where possible), as well as introduce parking regulations that restrict vehicles parking in the reserve between 10pm and 6am. Despite these initiatives, vandalism continues to occur with regularity, causing damage to property, loss of bushland vegetation and interference with ecosystem values/wildlife habitats (e.g. removal of logs and fallen timber for making fires).

The following table summarises these incidents over the past twelve-month period only:

Date	Incident detail	Indicative cost
08/04/21	Rubbish left, 60+ glass bottles broken, and fire lit in picnic area	\$390-*
22/02/21	Rubbish dumped in picnic area; broken glass; food waste; melted plastic on BBQs	\$540-
09/02/21	Establishing native plants pulled out/snapped off; rare Sphagnum moss beds that only grow on sandstone shelves destroyed	Est. ecological recovery 5+ yrs
06/12/20	Repair damage to new picnic area furniture, seat hardware snapped off and thrown down foreshore slope	\$1,100-
07/10/20	Dumped garden waste x3 truckloads to remove ^{1. Photo reference}	\$1,220-
07/09/20	Graffiti attack on all sides of the amenities block	\$1,500-
07/08/20	Hypodermic needles on road edge	\$150-*
07/08/20	Fire in picnic area, timber picnic setting seat smashed and burnt ^{2. Photo reference}	\$530-
27/07/20	Fire in picnic area, bushland vegetation damage	\$300-*
07/07/20	Hypodermic needles in picnic area	\$150-*
07/07/20	Fire in picnic area, bushland vegetation damage, burning logs rolled down bush slope (fortunately did not start a bushfire)	\$300-*
22/06/20	Picnic area fencing damaged and fence posts stolen	\$535-
22/06/20	Dumped household waste in picnic area	\$340-
14/06/20	Three separate fires lit in different locations in the reserve. NSW Fire and Rescue and Police attended ^{3. Photo reference}	\$450-*
09/06/20	Fire lit near harbour lookout. Rocks removed from bushland to create fire pit and deadwood gathered from adjacent bushland	\$225-
09/06/20	Broken crockery and glass dumped in picnic area	\$395-
20/04/20	Dumped soil and turf grass in bushland adjoining upper carpark	\$680-
12/02/20	Dumped mattress and household goods in upper carpark	\$320-
		\$9,125

**Cost estimate based on staff labour and material disposal costs only – damage to remnant bushland vegetation and the loss of habitat not quantified in monetary terms*



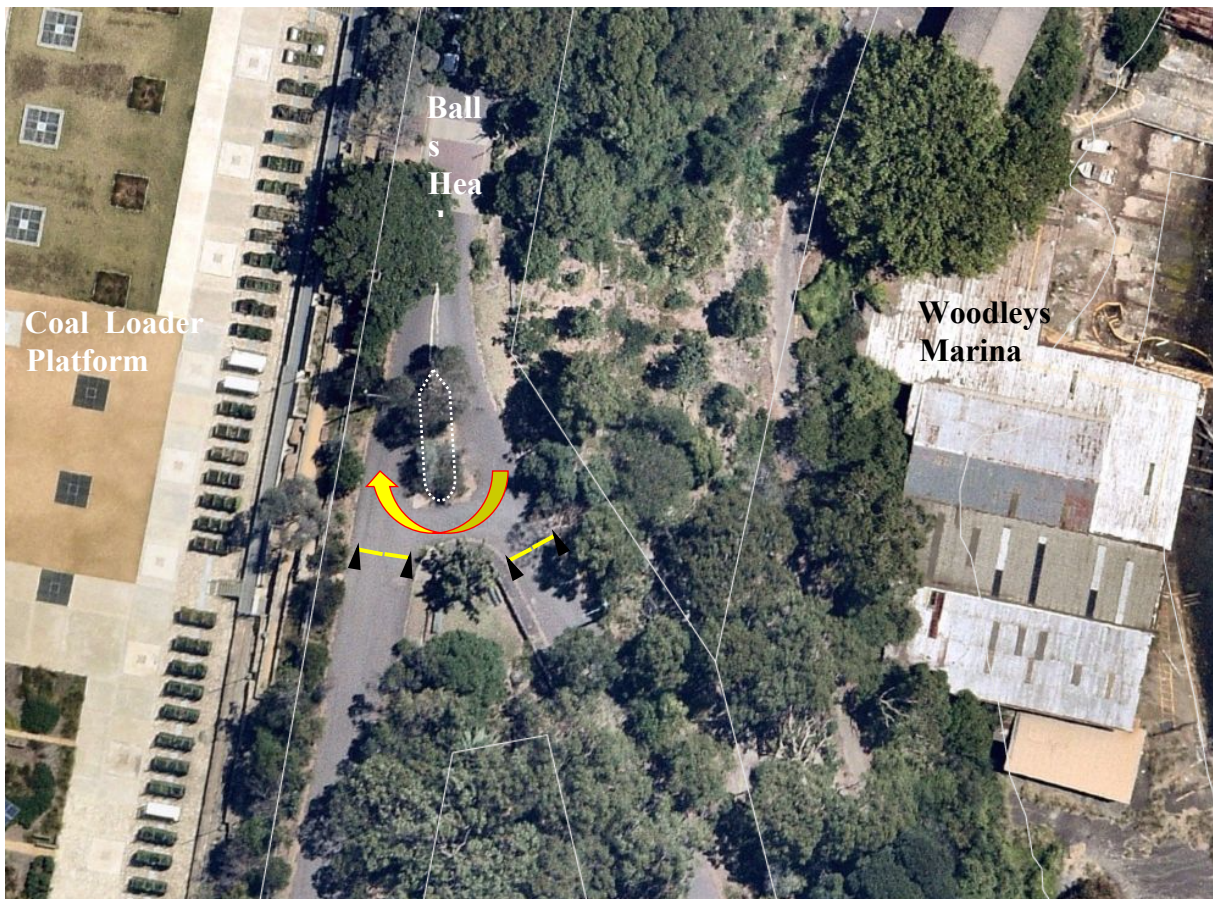
As outlined above, the estimated direct costs of these incidents, incorporating staff labour, waste disposal fees; graffiti removal contractor and facility repairs/replacements exceed \$9,125 for the past twelve-month period alone. Indirect costs, such as loss of staff time to other duties; damage to sensitive bushland vegetation and loss of habitat values are more difficult to quantify in monetary terms.

In addition to the above costs, there is also an increased risk of injury or harm that Bushland (and other Council) staff have to deal with when cleaning up dumped waste materials, including hypodermic needles, broken glass and fire ash etc. These work health and safety issues present a constant risk to staff as well as other users of the reserve.

To assist with managing these ongoing impacts on the reserve, it is proposed to install boom-gates on the entry and exit sides of the Balls Head loop road, incorporating minor modification of the road island to facilitate light vehicle U-turns when the gates are closed. These gates would subsequently be used to manage night-time vehicle access to the reserve in line with the existing parking restrictions (i.e. closed at 10pm and opened at 6am).

The installation of boom gates in Balls Head was previously approved and adopted by Council as part of the Bushfire Danger Period Public Access Management Plan resolution (15/12/2014). Under this approval, the boom gates would be closed under extreme and severe bushfire danger conditions, as declared by the NSW Rural Fire Service. Due to funding constraints and competing priorities, installation of the approved boom gates has been delayed to-date.

The need for greater security and improved access management for Balls Head Reserve have been identified as priority actions under the Council-adopted Bushland Plan of Management 2015 and Bushland Rehabilitation Plans 2019-2029. Both these strategic management documents recommend the installation of boom gates at the entrance of Balls Head and the implementation of night-time managed access to address the issues summarised above.



Above: draft schematic of proposed boom gate location and re-shaped road-island Council’s Ranger Services have been consulted regarding the proposed installation of boom gates in Balls Head Reserve and are supportive of the initiative. Duty Rangers could perform the opening and closing of the boom gates, as the times correspond with shift rotation and existing duties such as opening/closing public amenities in the Coal Loader Parklands. In the event that vehicles are locked inside Balls Head Reserve, Council’s security services provider could potentially provide out-of-hours boom gate opening on a user-pays basis, similar to the model used in other Local Council-operated bushland reserves such as Manly-Warringah War Memorial Park (Manly Dam Reserve).

Funding for the proposed boom gate installation and minor road augmentation works is available under the existing 2021/22 Bushland Management budget allocation. Installation of the boom gates has been costed at between \$12,000-16,000 whilst modification to the existing road island near the entrance to Balls Head Reserve, where the roadway divides and becomes a one-way loop through the reserve, would require approximately \$14,000-18,000 including new signage and replacement plantings.

It is recommended that the Environmental Services Reference Group endorse the recommendations of this report and that Council adopt the following resolutions:

That Council proceed with the installation of boom gates in Balls Head Reserve and the adoption of managed vehicle access in the reserve between 10pm and 6am.

3.4. Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability Update

AUTHOR: Daniel Birkbeck, Co-ordinator Centre for Sustainability

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability projects and events over the last 18 months. Whilst the COVID 19 pandemic forced a major change to the way our usual programs were delivered in 2020, Coal Loader activities and events are now beginning to return to normal.

This report outlines the achievements and highlights of the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability throughout 2020/21, including the development and delivery of the Coal Loader App and virtual kids trail, COVID safe markets, art exhibitions and wellness sessions, and cross team projects including a native bushfoods garden and venue provision for the Sydney Library of Things.

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

4.3 North Sydney supports lifelong learning

BACKGROUND

The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability (The Coal Loader) offers a diverse array of programs and events and provides 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.

Coal Loader specific programs include the free public guided tour program; excursions and educational outreach programs for schools, universities and TAFE's; an exciting events program; venue hire and third-party event management; and an ever growing social media presence through a comprehensive communications program.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Every year, The Coal Loader runs multiple programs to showcase and highlight the features of the site to the North Sydney public, and the ever increasing number of visitors that come to learn about the sites history and sustainability initiatives, as well as to enjoy the beautiful views and parklands.

In 2020, the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on Coal Loader programs was significant, with nearly all in person activities and events being put on hold. We did, however, manage to pivot many of our community events and activities to digital and maintain the running of some programs with restricted numbers. This forced change to many of our usual activities meant we were able to focus on large projects that have been in a longer term planning stage such as the Coal Loader Augmented Reality App, a digital kids trail and the redesign of the Coal Loader native bushfoods garden.

In 2021, programs are slowly returning to pre COVID levels with community groups restarting their tours, third party venue hire increasing, large scale physical events returning and school/university education and outreach programs restarting. Below is a snapshot each program and what we have achieved over the last 18 months.

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 but we managed to host several universities and TAFE classes who conducted their own learning across the site. Students from environmental science and management, sustainability and the built environment, and architecture courses utilised the site for their own studies. Tertiary institutions who visited included UTS, UNSW, Macquarie University, and various Northern Sydney TAFES.

Secondary school excursions restarted in late 2020 and we were visited by 3 schools including Barker College, Shore School and Loretto Kirribilli. Over 500 students managed to visit the site in 2020 and we have already had over 350 students undertake facilitated excursions from 4 local primary schools in 2021. Demand remains high for Coal Loader excursions as schools now fully realise the significance of the site and the way it connects both Indigenous and industrial history and concepts of sustainability and adaptive reuse.

In addition, tours are provided to professional bodies and other government departments and there has been 4 undertaken over the last 18 months. Interest primarily focuses on the adaptive reuse of an ex industrial facility and the incorporation of sustainable design and technology into a heritage site. Groups in attendance have included the Young Planners Institute, National Heritage Trust, Randwick City Council and Kuringai Council.

Coal Loader Guided Tour Program

The Coal Loader guided tour program has been operating since 2011 when the site was established. In recent years demand for the program has increased due in part to the opening of the Coal Loader Platform and the extensive promotion of the site that ensued. 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, however began again with a monthly Saturday tour (albeit with restricted numbers) in September. In 2021 we have increased to twice monthly weekend tours and have conducted 12 mid-week guided tours for community groups to date. Group numbers are restricted to maximum 25.

Coal Loader Events Program

The Coal Loader Events Program is designed to provide a mix of larger scale community focused events and smaller activations, aimed at increasing visitation to the site and providing free community events to the residents of North Sydney.

After a strong start in February 2020 with the Summer Artisans market, that included over 90 stalls and 4000 visitors, the events program was quickly put on hold mid-March due to COVID 19. Scheduled in-person events had to be cancelled and activations pivoted to both digital events and small outdoor gatherings with restricted numbers. Two virtual Artisans Market's were able to be held via the North Sydney Council website, which enabled us to provide an avenue for our stallholders to continue selling their wares to the public.

Other digital activations included the Coal Loader Kids Trail and the much-anticipated Coal Loader App. Following a year in production, The Coal Loader App was launched in February 2021, and 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 over 1000 downloads of the Coal Loader app and over 5000 downloads of the digital kids trail.

A number of small-scale outdoor events were able to continue in 2020 including the popular group exercise series, Wednesday Wellness. In addition, we were able to put on a COVID safe movie night, 2 Shakespeare performances of ‘As You Like It’ by the group Bar’d Work, and a 6 session en plein air painting class run by local artist Josephine Josephsen. The Sunset Sessions platform pop-up bar ran only once in March 2020 before being cancelled for a year and restarting in February 2021.

2021 has seen a return to large scale physical events and we started off with the Summer Artisans Market, a COVID safe event with 50 stalls and approximately 2000 people in attendance throughout the day. The Coal Loader Platform also hosted the 2020 FINNSKA championships with over 400 people attending throughout the day.

In March 2021, Councils Arts and Culture team successfully delivered the art exhibition ‘Project 2060’ in Tunnel One, bringing over 1500 visitors to the site. In addition, we are currently hosting workshops and tours as part of Council’s Seniors Festival and Heritage Week Festival.

The remainder of the 2021 Coal Loader events schedule is looking bright as we continue with the seasonal Artisans Market, Sunset Sessions pop up bar, Wednesday Wellness Series, the new ‘This Thursday Theme’ workshop series, and a planned concert series in Tunnel One. One upcoming ‘This Thursdays Theme’ includes an in-conversation event with Bill Ryan, a former coal loading worker who has some fascinating stories and unique insights into the late industrial history of the site.

Coal Loader Venue Hire Program

The Coal Loader has multiple hireable spaces including the Genia McCaffery Centre for Sustainability, Mess Hall, Tunnel One and The Platform, offering a unique environment that appeals to a diverse range of users.

Venue hire was put on hold in March 2020 and we began taking bookings again in September. Reasons for venue hire include meetings, awards nights, presentations, product launches, community classes and training. Upcoming 2021 bookings include award ceremonies, meetings and workshops, and filming for commercials and TV series.

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 us 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. In total, the Coal Loader has 5660 followers on Facebook and over 2000 on Instagram, and 1500 subscribers to the Coal Loaders quarterly e-newsletter.

Other projects

The period 2020/21 also enabled us to deliver several projects on the site in collaboration with other teams within Council. One such project was the rejuvenation of the native bushfoods garden at the northern entrance of the Coal Loader. Streets Alive staff and volunteers worked with Parks and Gardens staff to design and plant the area out with culinary popular edible natives. This area is now a key feature of our Indigenous tours and enables hands on learning of bushfoods by visitors to the site.

In addition, in collaboration with Councils Sustainability team, we have turned one of the unused workshops into the Sydney Library of Things, like a library but with things instead of books! The volunteer run, not for profit library is set to open in May 2021 with objects including tools, gardening equipment, children's arty gear, toys and games, art and craft supplies and recreational equipment among other things.



2020 En plein air painting classes



Stall at February 2021 Artisans Market



Artisans Market on the Platform February 2021



Wednesday Wellness class, 2020



Shakespeare on the Platform, February 2020



Project 2060 art exhibition, March 2021



Cottage community gardeners with produce, February 2020



Marketing for virtual Artisans Market, September 2021



Outdoor movie night, March 2020



Coal Loader volunteer tour guides, December 2020



Guided tour, 2020



Revamped Coal Loader Bush Foods Garden, August 2020

the Coal Loader

CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

WELCOME TO THE COAL LOADER APP

Learn about native animals, history, and environmental sustainability as you journey around the site.

Pick a trail and use the map to find the hidden markers. Then use your phone to scan the targets and watch them come to life.

Sign on to the free Coal Loader public Wi-Fi and scan the QR codes below to begin.



NATIVE ANIMALS

Explore the site to find the hidden animals. Discover why biodiversity is so important and how we can all help protect our native animals.



HISTORY

Step back in time to explore the Coal Loader's rich history as a place of culture, industry and learning.



SUSTAINABILITY

Explore themes of environmental sustainability and learn how you can lighten your impact.

Stay safe: Watch out for your surroundings and others.

www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/CoalLoader



Site signage for the Coal Loader App, February 2020

3.5. Worn Up North Sydney

AUTHOR: Jordan Moy, Sustainability Education Officer

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2021, North Sydney Council started a pilot program with a new fabric recycling provider, Worn Up, with the aim of reducing waste by collecting unwearable second-hand school uniforms and processing them into new and usable everyday items.

Three North Sydney schools are currently part of the pilot program: Cammeray Public, North Sydney Demonstration School and North Sydney Girls High. Currently all three schools have successfully collected and delivered unwearable school uniforms to Worn Up at the end of Term 1, 2021.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the pilot Worn Up program in 2021.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This project is funded through Council's Waste Levy. The project budget was \$2,500 with most of the funding been spent on clothing collection and end of line processing.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the report about the Worn Up North Sydney Program 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

4. Our Social Vitality

4.3 North Sydney supports lifelong learning

BACKGROUND

Since 2015, schools had been contacting the Sustainability Team with questions related to how best to manage the waste produced on-site at their schools. This includes food waste, paper waste and also second hand uniforms. Most schools estimated that they had previously been sending over 400 kg of unwearable second hand school uniforms to landfill each year.

Teachers from Cammeray Public and North Sydney Demonstration School had initial discussions about the Worn Up program and contacted Council to discuss whether we may be able to assist with this partnership.

After extensive research and investigation, Worn Up were chosen in 2021 to assist in collecting and processing common waste items that are currently not able to be recycled in regular commercial and residential waste streams.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

Why tackle textile waste?

95% of all textile waste in landfill is recyclable and 10% of all global CO² production comes from textile production. By recycling non-wearable uniform waste North Sydney schools can reduce landfill, save water and can help make new Australian-made products.

Worn Up's partnership with North Sydney Schools

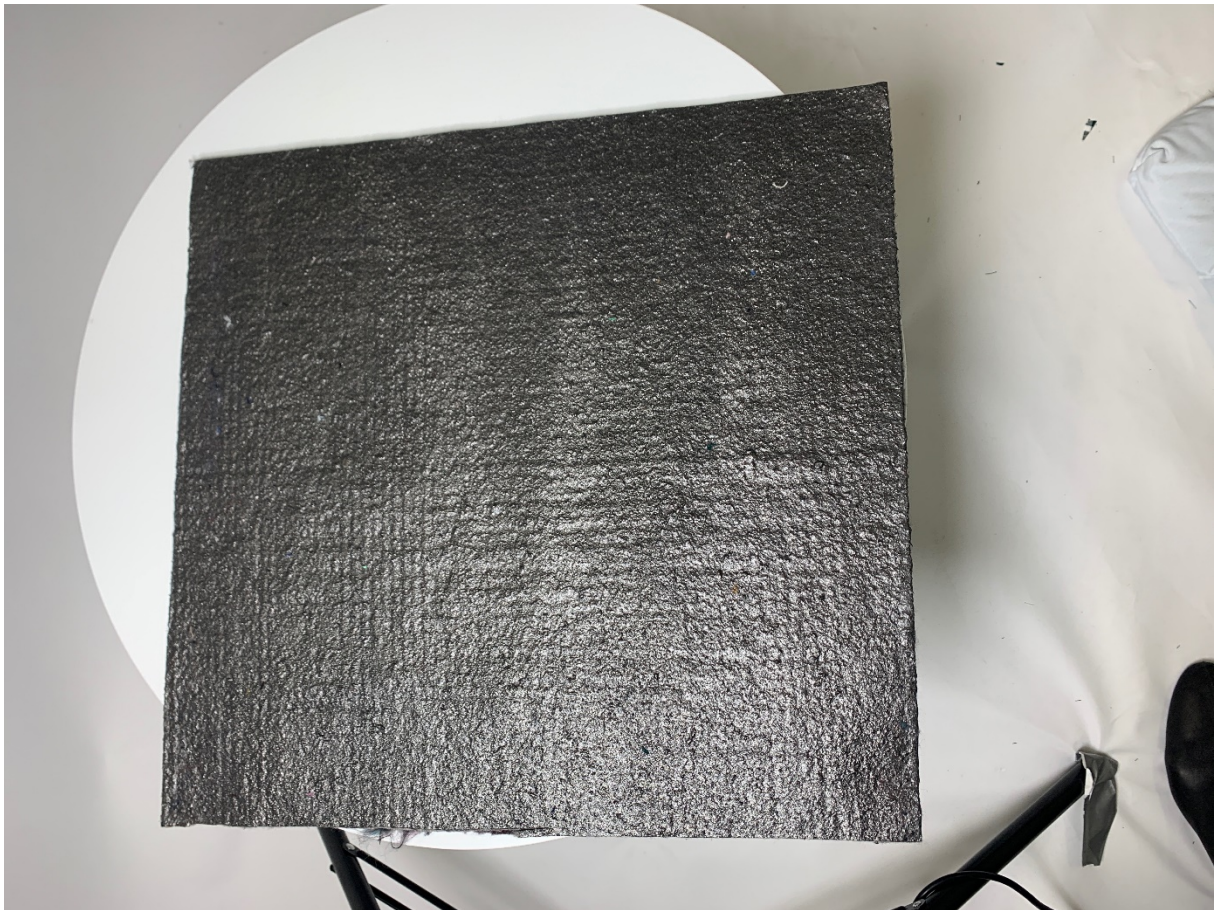
Cammeray Public, North Sydney Demonstration School and North Sydney Girls High were included in the pilot program as they had been collecting unwearable school uniforms and were actively looking at opportunities to recycle these. All three schools will continue to collect all non-wearable school uniforms and arrange a quarterly pick up with Worn Up. It is estimated that each school will collect between 100kg-400kg of textiles per year. Worn Up will then make new things from old and help close the loop when it comes to waste.

What kind of new things will Worn Up make?

Non-wearable uniforms are now a great resource to make new things and Worn Up will work with partners such as UNSW Smart Centre and others to make 'stuff from your fluff'. Items such as school desks from school dresses, acoustic tiles from scraps, dog beds and floor tiles are some examples of products that are currently being made. Other products are still in development but Worn Up are continually looking at opportunities to recycle school uniforms to best utilise this valuable commodity.

What happens next?

As this is a pilot program, Council will review the results at the end of the year. After a full post program review which will include discussions with each school, Council's future involvement in the program will be considered with the potential to expand and include more local North Sydney schools as there is considerable interest in this space.



Acoustic tile prototype which will go into commercial production later in 2021. Made from 100% unwearable school uniforms.



Floor tiles that are currently in commercial production. Made from 100% unwearable school uniforms.



Dog enjoying his new 100% recycled school uniform doggy swag.



Zoe Harpham and Nicole Newton from Cammeray Public with their first unwearable school uniform collection in Term 1.

3.6. Water and Energy Management Programs Update

AUTHOR: Ian Garradd, Sustainability Project Officer

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an update from the last 18 months on the implementation of Council's Greenhouse Action and Water Management Plan 2015-2020 and more recent water and energy audit reports.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

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

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

1.1 Protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity

4. Our Social Vitality

4.3 North Sydney supports lifelong learning

BACKGROUND

The Environment Reference Group last received a report on 11 November 2019 providing an update on the implementation of Council's Greenhouse Action and Water Management Plan 2015-2020 and water and energy audit report that were carried out in 2019 and 2020. The implementation of the plan and reports is funded largely through Council's Environment Levy.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

In pursuit of Council's aims to address its Greenhouse Action and Water Management Plans, a range of initiatives have been introduced or implemented in the past 18 months as summarized below:

Recently implemented projects:

- **New solar power installations** at the following Council locations:
 - Coal Loader – a further 25kW
 - Holtermann St Carpark – 94kW solar carpark roof
 - Forsyth Park Community Centre - 20kW system
 - McMahons Point Community Centre - 22kW
 - 15kW is directed to the North Spoon Café in a 'solar for rentals' arrangement. This is the second such installation, where Council has installed a photovoltaic (PV) system on its property, to allow commercial tenants to save money on billing, while simultaneously re-imbursing the Council investment to install the systems. It's a financial win-win for the business and Council while also mitigating substantial green house gases (GHG).

These installations have increased Council's solar power capacity to 435kW. The electricity generated could power an electric vehicle (EV) for 3.7 million kms annually.

- **Replacement of gas hot water with solar** powered electricity at the Coal Loader. This has achieved cost savings and GHG mitigation and is part of a program to disconnect the site from fossil fuel gas to renewable heat and electric power.

- **Specification of heat pump instead of gas for hot water heating at Council Chambers end or trip facilities.** For the new bathroom facility, cost and emissions mitigation will result from these sustainability specifications in new works.
- **Water audit for Parks and Gardens**
This audit indicated that the overall volume of water use per unit of area in parks was consistent with best practice. (Variations around optimum were identified for individual parks.)
- **Energy and Water Audits for Council Property Assets**
These were conducted during 2019-20 and will help guide and prioritise Council's energy and water management decisions for the coming 4-5 years. The audits identified a range of upgrade opportunities, some of which have already commenced implementation.

Futureproofing Apartments Program

- 120 residential strata buildings assessed. With many of those buildings currently undergoing upgrades including:
 - Lighting upgrades to LED with smart controls
 - Transitioning from gas to heat pumps for hot water
 - Solar PV installations
 - Car park fan efficiency
- Results as at July 2020:
 - The early outcomes were: 220 tons GHG mitigation from \$99000 of investments by the apartment owners
 - Current projects at that time: a further 195 tons GHG mitigation
 - Further identified potential: 5100 tons GHG mitigation, with a potential investment value of all identified opportunities to July 2020 of \$4.5 million.

3.7. Sydney Library of Things Tool Library

AUTHOR: Niki Carey, Senior Sustainability Programs Co-ordinator

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an update on the “Sydney Library of Things”, or “SLoT”, a new community run tool library which will be trialed for 12 months at the Coal Loader in part of the workshop space next to the Artist Studio. Council endorsed the trial on 22 February 2021 and is expected to launch on 12 June 2022. As well as reducing local resource use, and supporting the share economy, the tool library will create a new sustainability focused community hub which may lead to an ongoing “Environmental community group in residence” program at the Coal Loader.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Minor carpentry and electrical works totalling less than \$5000 have been allocated from the Environment Levy to provide a secure storage space for a tool library, and other potential future environmental groups, in the workshop area at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability. The space has been offered free of charge to the SLoT for the trial period. This is consistent with the not for profit nature of the community group, the significant local environmental and community benefits of the proposal, as well as the value it will add in contributing to the vision and objectives of Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the report providing an update on the Sydney Library of Things is 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

Tool Libraries have started popping up around greater Sydney over the last few years, including the Inner West (<http://innerwesttoolibrary.com.au/>), Wollongong (<https://www.make-do.com.au/>) and the Blue Mountains (<https://toolo.com.au/>). Members borrow items like power drills, sewing machines, electric whipper snippers, party catering kits, inflatable jumping castles, board games etc. The libraries therefore reduce the purchase of multiple new but rarely used items throughout the local community, reducing resource use and eventual waste to landfill.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

Council supported a proposal received from a recently formed local not for profit community group, the "Sydney Library of Things" or "SLoT", seeking to establish a community run "tool library" at the Coal Loader in part of the workshop space next to the Artist Studio. The group is made up of committee members from the lower north shore, and is led by Bridget Kennedy, the current artist in residence in Ridge St and coordinator of the Sydney Edible Garden Trail. The SLoT is modeled on the operations of other Sydney tool libraries and is informed by surveys of potential local volunteers and members. More than 40 volunteers have already committed to help run the library. A tool library in North Sydney, where most residents live in apartments and where storage space is limited, is likely to be well patronised, especially in a location like the Coal Loader which enjoys strong foot traffic from sustainability minded visitors.

The tool library will be open for four hours on a Saturday initially with the option to expand opening hours to Thursday afternoons depending on demand. To borrow items from the library community members will need to take out membership. Membership fees are expected to range from \$21.25 for quarterly concession membership to \$110 for a full annual subscription. This will fund a community librarian, development of a website, Internet hosting and service provision, business registration, tool repairs, purchase of battery tools, graphic design costs, advertising and software costs.

Items for loan are currently being sourced from the community by donation. The items will be owned by the SLoT, who will be responsible for their regular maintenance to ensure they are in good and safe working order. Similarly, the SLoT will be responsible for providing guidance

to borrowers to ensure they know how to use borrowed items and are aware of, and can mitigate against, any associated risks.

If the initial 12-month trial is a success, Council will consider establishing an ongoing “Environmental community group in residence” program, using an expression of interest process similar to the Artist in residence program. This could extend the tenure of the SLoT beyond 12 months and would continue use of part of the workshop space as a community run environmental sustainability facility into the medium and longer term.

5. General Business

Phil Worrall would like to discuss the following:

North Sydney Council Climate Emergency-Report E01-11 November 2019
Council summary update on outcomes of Report initiatives, particularly target achievement levels.

5. Closure