

3.4. Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability Update

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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