

3.2. Bushcare Calendar of Events and Activities

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ENDORSED BY: Peter Massey, Acting Director Open Space and Environmental Services

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Bushcare Calendar of Events and Activities [3.2.1 - 3 pages]

PURPOSE:

To inform Councillors and the community about the purpose and benefits of North Sydney Council's Bushcare Calendar of Events and Activities Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2023, the Bushland Team will provide over 45x biodiversity education and engagement activities to the North Sydney community. The Calendar Program is in addition to ad hoc corporate volunteer and school Bushcare activities that occur on a request-basis. Bushcare events are held both in and out of area; they include Introduction to Bushcare Training; guided interpretive bushwalks, school holiday activities, an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness activity, community tree planting events, wildlife workshops, inter-Council Bushcare activities and the Bushcare Volunteer Christmas Party.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for the Bushcare Calendar Program is included in the adopted 2022/23 budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the Bushcare Calendar of Events and Activities Report be noted.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.1 Protected, enhanced and biodiverse natural environment

5. Our Civic Leadership

5.3 Community is engaged in what Council does

BACKGROUND

Each year, since the Bushcare program was introduced in 1993, Council's Bushland Team have provided a calendar of events and activities to engage North Sydney Council's Bushcare volunteers and community members with bushland management and related environmental awareness and education activities.

North Sydney Council's Bushland Team works in conjunction with our partner Councils Lane Cove, Willoughby, Mosman and Hunters Hill to share Bushcare events and activities within our communities, as well as combining resources to provide a broader range of opportunities that engage locals with our biodiversity conservation objectives.

North Sydney's Bushcare Volunteer Register (database) shows that since 2007 (when records began) 340 volunteers have contributed 25,475 hours of voluntary work to maintain Council's bushland reserves. The Bushcare calendar of events provides volunteers with the skills and knowledge to carry out this work safely and effectively. It also helps to connect the wider community with their local environment, affording associated benefits to mental health and wellbeing.*

**Not including the Adopt-a-Plot Program hours and other community planting days e.g., National Tree Day and Boorowa Tree Planting Trip*

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

Each year, the Bushland Team provides a calendar of events to engage North Sydney Council's Bushcare volunteers and community members with bushland management and related environmental awareness and education activities.

In 2023, the Bushland Team will provide 45 activities, not including ad hoc corporate volunteer and school Bushcare activities. Of these activities, four Introductory to Bushcare workshops are planned to ensure safe and efficient volunteer work practice.

The Bushland Team holds a Bushcare Stall at the Produce Markets twice a year to promote the Bushcare program and the Native Havens (wildlife habitat garden) program with plant giveaways. Bushcare Stalls are provided in support of other Council activities such as the recent Seniors Festival on 1 February.

Events are promoted via Councils' website, on the home page events listing and Bushcare events page. They are also advertised via the quarterly electronic and hardcopy Bushcare newsletter that has been in circulation since 1993.

North Sydney Council's Bushland Team works in conjunction with our partner Councils Lane Cove, Willoughby, Mosman and Hunters Hill to share Bushcare events and activities, to pool resources that provide our communities with regular opportunities to engage with all bushland matters.

Bushcare activities are held both in and out of area, providing a broader range of educational opportunities than would be possible within the LGA alone.

Bushcare Essentials

All Bushcare volunteers are required to complete introductory Bushcare training within the first six months of joining Council's Bushcare program. These training sessions ensure that volunteers are aware of their obligations to work safely; their Duty of Care, and to teach weed identification and weed control techniques.

Bush Walks

Local activities included several guided bush walks through Council's bushland reserves e.g., Gore Cove to Berry Island and Balls Head Reserve, both of which are located near train stations, which is in part for the benefit of participants without private transport.

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Education

The Bushland Team has a long-standing commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Awareness. Each year, a field trip is coordinated with the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO), promoted in the Gai-mariagal Festival Calendar and held during or close to NAIDOC week. Karen Smith – AHO Education Officer guides the tour, encouraging participants to 'Connect to Country', appreciating our natural areas and learning about Aboriginal history and culture. The Bushland Team coordinates bookings and provides transport and plant identification.

[Gai-mariagal Festival \(gai-mariagal-festival.com.au\)](http://gai-mariagal-festival.com.au)

School Holiday activities

The Bushland Team provides several school holiday activities aimed at engaging families with environmental education. Most years, the Team provide a bush walk around the Gadyan Track at Berry Island, or spotlight walks that are preceded by a wildlife awareness show. Family kayak activities are always well attended and encourage the community to engage with North Sydney Council's foreshore environments. School holidays activities are extremely popular.

Wildlife Activities

The Bushland Team provided several wildlife education activities each year in support of the Council's long running Wildlife Watch Program. At the Introduction to Wildlife Watch Workshop, participants are shown how to log wildlife observations and to source wildlife identification resources. Dr Holly Parsons of Birdlife Australia is a regular guest speaker at this event, where she promotes habitat gardens for wildlife conservation.

This workshop is closely followed by a field trip with a bird enthusiast to assist Wildlife Watch participants to accurately identify birds and other wildlife by their habits and behaviors in the field. Wildlife observations are used to inform Council's Bushland Plans of Management.

Nest box building workshops are held most years to help residents provide habitat for birds and possums. Sydney Wildlife, a non-for-profit volunteer-run organisation are invited to provide advice about wildlife rescue and care at this event. Wildlife habitat is becoming increasingly important in the North Sydney area as canopy loss occurs.

Bushcare Nursery Activities

The Bushcare Community Nursery provides several plant propagations workshops each year. There is often a long waitlist for these events, no doubt a reflection of the community's interest. Participants learn how to grow native plants from seed and cuttings. The Bushland Team provides a Community Nursery Open Day each year. Residents can seek advice and receive free local native plants to encourage wildlife habitat gardening on private land, which helps build green connections that aid wildlife movement between Council's isolated bushland reserves.

National Tree Day

Planet Ark's National Tree Day (NTD) is the largest volunteer tree planting event in Australia. For over twenty years, the Bushland Team has hosted a National Tree Day planting site annually. Planting sites are prepared and maintained by the Bushland Team, they are often designed to buffer our remnant bushland areas from negative environmental pressures and to create corridors to aid the movement wildlife across the landscape. On average, around 90-130 local residents and community members participate in our NTD event, planting approximately 1,500 trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers within a few hours. NTD is a family friendly activity, it is sometimes a child's very first planting experience. The Bushland Team provides all tools, equipment and planting instruction.

Bushcare Volunteer Christmas Party

The Bushcare Volunteer Christmas Party is the biggest event of the year, held to thank our volunteers for their annual voluntary contribution to North Sydney's bushland rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation. The Mayor and Councilors are invited to the celebration, sharing in the positive achievements of the past year. Recognition of Service is a mainstay of the event. This year, 5 volunteers will have completed 30 years of service and a further 29 volunteers will have reached the 20-plus year milestone.

Out of area activities

Out of area activities are made possible through the use Council's three community busses and the Bushland Team having a qualified driver on-staff. Bus transport aids accessibility, enabling community members without private transport to participate in communal activities where public transport is unavailable.

In recent years, out of area activities have been geared toward contributing to Bushcare. The Bushland Team runs two or more Bushcare visits per year where we join other Greater Sydney Local Government Bushcare Programs to undertake bush regeneration, mostly at the hosts regular Bushcare meetings. These activities grant the volunteers the opportunity to work in different environments, broadening their knowledge and understanding of the bush and to assist networking with other volunteer groups. Many people are pleased to learn that they are not alone in their efforts to rehabilitate urban bushland. Bushcare visits are organised at biannual Volunteer Coordinator Network (VCN) meetings, attended mostly by Local Government Bushcare Officers in Greater Sydney. VCN meetings are chaired by Greater Sydney Local Land Services.

The most recent Bushcare Visit was to Taren Point, a refuge for migratory shorebirds hosted by Sutherland Shire Council's Bushland Team. We enjoyed a talk with ornithologist Ricki Coughlan at an observation point at Woolooware Shared Pathway, followed by morning tea and weeding in an endangered salt marsh vegetation community. On our return journey, we visited Sir Joseph Banks Park to view the work of Bayside Council Bushcare Volunteers. Participants are surveyed post activity to assess where improvements can be made.

Sample feedback:

The Taren Point Bushcare trip last Tuesday 13/2/2023 was outstanding. I am so grateful to have been invited to attend. I was blown away by Andrew Scott's depth and breadth of wisdom, understanding and organisation skills, which contributed so much to the enjoyment of the day. I would very much like to be involved in future activities if that is possible. It was such a lovely group and we met remarkable people who broadened our understanding of the wider world with so many delightful 'takeaway' mind pictures and maps.

Judith Fairly-Cunningham

Boorowa Tree Planting Trip

The highlight of North Sydney's Bushcare events calendar is our annual trip to Boorowa in south-west NSW. This urban-rural partnership project provides an eager and hardy volunteer labour force of 30-40 Bushcarers to help plant trees, shrubs and groundcovers on rural properties in the Boorowa district. Joining our partners in the Boorowa Community Landcare Group, the program aims to combat land degradation, salinity and canopy-loss, whilst promoting wildlife habitat expansion – particularly for the endangered Superb Parrot.

This partnership began in 2000 and is now in its 24th year. Tens of thousands of plants have been planted during this time and many city-country friendships have formed.

Bushcare Events – Environmental Services Report

Each year, the Bushland Team provide a calendar of events to engage North Sydney Council's Bushcare volunteers and community members with bushland management and related environmental awareness and education activities.

In 2023, the Bushland Team will provide 45 activities, not including ad hoc corporate volunteer and school Bushcare activities. Of these activities, there are four Introductory to Bushcare workshops are provided to ensure safe and efficient volunteer work practice. The Bushland Team hold a Bushcare Stall at the Produce Markets twice a year to promote the Bushcare program and the Native Havens (wildlife habitat garden) program with plant give aways. And, on occasion Bushcare Stalls are provided in support of other Council activities such as the recent Senior Festival on 1 February.

Events are promoted via Councils' website, on the home page events listing and Bushcare events page. They are also advertised via the quarterly electronic and hard copy Bushcare newsletter that has been in circulation since 1993.

North Sydney Council's Bushland Team works in conjunction with our partner Councils Lane Cove, Willoughby Lane Cove, Hunters Hill to share Bushcare events and activities, to pool resources to provide our communities with regular opportunities to engage with bushland matters.

Bushcare events are held both in and out of area.

Bushcare Essentials

All Bushcare volunteers are required to complete introductory Bushcare training within the first six months of joining Council's Bushcare program. These training sessions ensure that volunteers are aware of their obligations to safe work practices - Duty of Care, to teach weed identification and weed control techniques.

Bush Walks

Local activities included several guided bush walks through Council's bushland reserves e.g., Gore Cove to Berry Is. and Balls Head Reserve both of which are located near train stations in part for the benefit of participants without private transport.

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Education

The Bushland Team has a long-standing commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Awareness. Each year, a field trip is coordinated with Aboriginal Heritage Office, promoted in the Gai-mariagal Festival Calendar, it is held around Sorry Day / NAIDOC week. Karen Smith – AHO Education Officer guides the tour, encouraging participants to 'Connect to Country', to learn and appreciate our natural area and learn about Aboriginal history and culture. The Bushland Team coordinate bookings and provide transport and plant identification.

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School Holiday activities

The Bushland Team provide several school holiday activities aimed engaging families with environmental education. Most years, the Team provide a bush walk around the Gadyan Track at Berry Is., spotlight walks proceeded by a wildlife awareness show and a subsidised family kayak activity to encourage the community to engage with North Sydney Council's foreshore environments. School holidays activities are very popular.

Wildlife Activities

The Bushland Team provided several wildlife education activities each year in support of Council's long running Wildlife Watch Program. At the Introduction to Wildlife Watch Workshop, participants are shown how to log wildlife observations and to source wildlife identification resources. Dr Holly Parson – Birdlife Australia is a regular guest speaker at this event, where she promotes habitat gardens for wildlife conservation.

This workshop is closely followed by a field trip with a bird enthusiast to assist Wildlife Watch participants to identify birds by their habits and behaviours in the field. Wildlife observations are used to inform Council's Bushland Management Plans.

Nest box building workshops are help most years to help residents provide habitat for birds and possums. Sydney Wildlife, a non-for profit, totally volunteer run organisation are invited to provide advice about wildlife rescue and care at this event. Wildlife habitat is becoming increasingly important in the North Sydney area as trees are removed by land managers/owners.

Bushcare Nursery Activities

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National Tree Day

Planet Ark's National Tree Day (NTD) is the largest volunteer tree planting event in Australia. The Bushland Team host National Tree Day plantings most years. Planting sites are prepared and maintained by the Bushland Team, they are often designed to buffer our remnant bushland areas from negative environmental pressures and to create corridors to aid the movement wildlife across the landscape. Approximately 90 residents and community members participate in NTD in North Sydney planting several hundred trees, shrubs, grasses, and ground covers within a few hours. NTD is a family friendly activity, it is sometimes a children's very first planting experience. The Bushland Team provide all tools equipment and planting instruction.

Bushcare Volunteer Christmas Party

The Bushcare Volunteer Christmas Party is the biggest event of the year, held to thank our volunteers for their contribution over the previous the year. The Mayor and Councillors are invited to the celebration. Recognition of Service is a mainstay. This year, 5 volunteers will have committed 30 years of Service and 29 volunteers will have committed 20 years plus service.

Out of area Activities

Out of area activities are made possible through Council's three buses and the Bushland Team having a qualified driver within on staff. Bus transport aids accessibility, it enables community members without private transport to participate in communal activities where public transport is not available.

In recent years, out of area activities have been geared toward contributing to Bushcare. The Bushland Team runs two or more Bushcare visits per year where we join other Greater Sydney Local Government Bushcare Programs to undertake bush regeneration, mostly during the hosts regular Bushcare meetings. These activities grant the volunteers the opportunity to work in different environment to broaden their knowledge of the bush and to assist with networking volunteer groups, many people are pleased to learn that they are not alone in their efforts to rehabilitate urban bushland. Bushcare visits are organised at biannual Volunteer Coordinator Network Meetings attended mostly by Local Government Bushcare Officers in Greater Sydney. VCN meetings are chaired by Greater Sydney Local Land Services.

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For example:

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Judith Fairly-Cunningham

Boorowa Tree Planting Trip

The highlight of the events calendar is the annual trip to Boorowa to plant trees alongside our partners Boorowa Community Landcare Group to combat land degradation and provide wildlife habitat. This partnership has begun in 2000 and is now in its 23 years. Ten of thousands of plants have been planted during this time and many city-country friendships formed.