



AGENDA

A meeting of the **Environment Reference Group** will be held on Cammeraygal Land at the Ros Crichton Pavilion Council Chambers, 200 Miller Street, North Sydney at 7:00 PM on Tuesday 7 March 2023.
The agenda is as follows.

Therese Manns
GENERAL MANAGER



North Sydney Council is an Open Government Council. The records of Council are available for public viewing in accordance with this policy, with the only exception being made for certain confidential documents such as legal advice, matters required by legislation not to be divulged, and staff matters.

Table of Contents

1. Confirmation of Minutes	3
2. Disclosures of Interest	3
3. Committee Reports	4
3.1. <i>Imperfect Low Waste Living Program</i>	<i>4</i>
3.2. <i>Bushcare Calendar of Events and Activities</i>	<i>11</i>
3.3. <i>Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability Update</i>	<i>20</i>
3.4. <i>Gore Cove Reserve Walking Track Upgrade</i>	<i>26</i>
3.5. <i>Food Waste Trial</i>	<i>35</i>
5. Closure	44

1. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 November 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

2. Disclosures of Interest

3. Committee Reports

3.1. Imperfect Low Waste Living Program

AUTHOR: Jordan Moy, Sustainability Education Officer

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report provides a program review of the Imperfect Low Waste Living Program that was delivered in 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Imperfect Low Waste Living (ILWL) Program assists residents to significantly reduce their household waste by providing a range of affordable, low-tox and zero or low waste alternatives for common household waste items. It is a wholistic program that focuses on one key area of the house per week, and is designed to fit residents means, ability, energy, access, and time. The intensive four-week program has been running since 2021 and 60 participants have achieved an average of 45% reduction in their household waste.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and evaluation of the most recent 2022 Imperfect Low Waste Living Program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This project is funded through Council's Environment Levy. The project budget was \$10,000 with the majority of this going towards facilitator costs, staff time and materials for the program participants.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. THAT** the report regarding the Imperfect Low Waste Living Program be received.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment
- 1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

BACKGROUND

Imperfect Low Waste Living Program was developed from community feedback to provide a more comprehensive Council program to assist residents to reduce their household waste. In response to the community need, a four-week household waste program was developed. The program aims to assist residents to eliminate or significantly reduce their household waste through a combination of online coursework, live online sessions and face-to-face sessions. The (ILWL) program has three core focus areas which are to:

- reducing packaging waste through smarter shopping
- reducing food waste by being kitchen-clever
- reduce toxic load in the home when cleaning by making better choices

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

In 2022, thirty North Sydney residents were selected to be part of the ILWL program. The participants were chosen from a selective application process which required each participant to respond to key program criteria that included the need and ability to reduce waste at home, key motivations to reduce their household waste and the capability to complete the coursework and attend all the online and face-to-face sessions.

The project was delivered through a combination of lecture style and hands on workshops, online learning and social media. A Google Group was established and used for group communication, whilst also enabling participants to upload photos and discuss the weekly topics in-between workshops.

Each participant had the opportunity to be involved in hands-on making and creating workshops such as beeswax wraps and soap making, provided a comprehensive learning guide for each module, and over fifty DIY recipes from home cleaning to creating healthy skin-food products and received guided facilitation and group discussion each week. At the end of the program participants will be invited to join the ILWL alumni with exclusive access to future workshops/webinars and events on low waste living.

The program and all the sessions were facilitated by Sarah Tait from Wanderlightly. Sarah is a low waste expert and has spent the last six years working with local Sydney Councils to deliver waste education workshops and programs. Sarah has been involved in the program from conception and assisted in the program design, online course program and mapping out the delivery timeline.

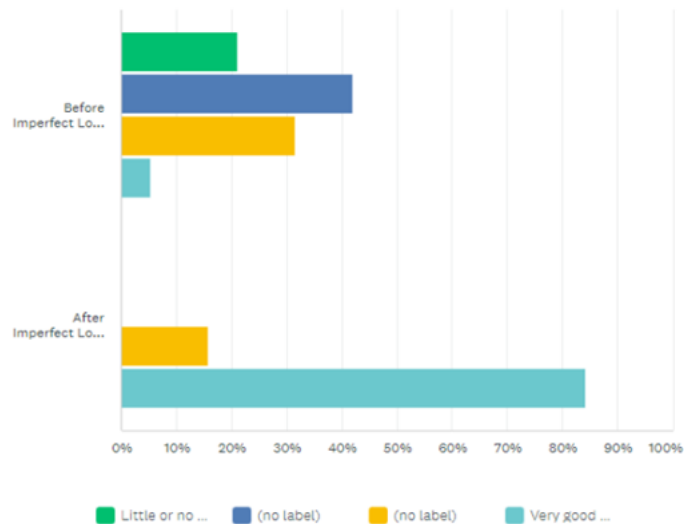
Evaluation

The evaluation results of the program were required to be submitted by each participant after they had completed a pre and post litter audit and submitted all the required coursework and assessments.

The following results were taken directly from the participant evaluation:

On the scale below, please tick the box that corresponds to your level of understanding of low waste living before and after the program.

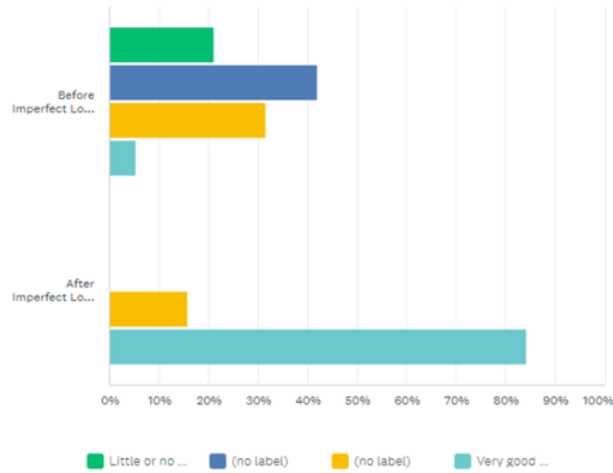
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



84% of participants indicated that they had a very good understanding of low waste living after the program.

On the scale below, please tick the box that corresponds to your level of understanding of low waste living before and after the program.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



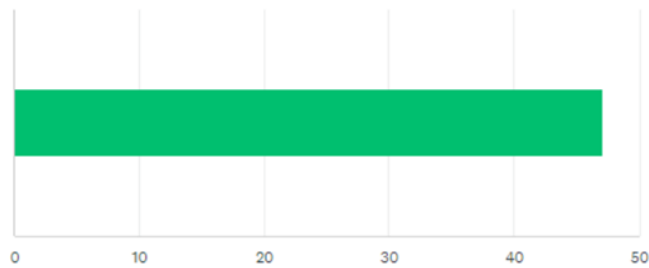
94% of participants indicated that they a very motivated to take their learnings from the program and put them into action

Q4

Customize Save as

Based on your bin audit or visual bin check, how much waste have you been able to reduce during the four week program per week?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	47	895	19
Total Respondents: 19			

Program participants have averaged a 47% reduction in their household waste after the program

Participant Feedback

- *I have learnt so much from this course. So much to take away and the endless possibilities to make our planet a far better place for us all to savour. Your resources are just so limitless and to know that we are still able to access them even after the course is absolutely welcoming. So much thought must have gone into planning and executing this remarkable course. – Patricia*
- *Thank you again for sharing all of your amazing knowledge with us Sarah and for facilitating such a fantastic course Jordan. I have learnt so much and it was really wonderful to connect with such like-minded souls. – Ella*
- *Thank you for organising such an enjoyable and knowledgeable workshop with Sarah, which has been really beneficial for all of us as responsible citizens. We were so inspired by how much we can do to reduce wastes and with the aid of DIY helps to save our environment. Our home general waste bin has been cut down by half! – Julie*
- *Thank you again for the fabulous program, I have learned so much and changed so many of my behaviours. I'm now making butter and bread (with buttermilk from making the butter) for our family to cut down on plastic and waste. I have a scraps container in my freezer to make stock and am now using tooth paste tablets to cut out plastic there. So many changes! - Kate*



2022 Imperfect Low Waste Living Program participants



Beeswax wraps making



DIY soap making and dishwashing tablets



'Special Thing' household item swap



Lots of opportunities for participant sharing



Participant sharing her favourite food waste recipe with delicious samples to try

3.2. Bushcare Calendar of Events and Activities

AUTHOR: Andrew Scott, Bushcare Officer

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.

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

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

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 for it. Participants learn how to grow native plants from seed and cuttings. The Bushland Team provide a Community Nursery Open Day each year, residents are eligible to receive free local native plants to encourage wildlife habitat gardening on private land that aids 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. 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:

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 'take away' mind pictures and maps.

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.

3.3. Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability Update

AUTHOR: Leonie Netting, Coordinator Coal Loader Sustainability Centre

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

Nil

PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability activities over the last six months, as well as a projection of activities for the next six months.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report includes a brief synopsis of Coal Loader activity including education, events, tours, site activities and other activations, as well as a projection of planned activities over the period.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability 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
- 1.2 Environmentally sustainable community
- 1.3 Clean and green places
- 1.4 Well utilised open space and recreational facilities

2. Our Built Infrastructure

- 2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet diverse community needs
- 2.2 Vibrant public domains and villages

4. Our Social Vitality

- 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe
- 4.2 A centre for creativity and learning
- 4.3 North Sydney's history is preserved and recognised

5. Our Civic Leadership

- 5.3 Community is engaged in what Council does

BACKGROUND

The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability is the 'sustainability hub' of North Sydney, offering a diverse array of programs and events including a major events portfolio, school and tertiary engagement, a heritage tour program, facilitated third-party event management, a number of volunteer programs, indigenous engagement and a number of other activations throughout the year. The Coal Loader is also home to two community gardens (including aquaponics and chickens), the native bushcare nursery and well-maintained bush and parkland.

A busy public open space, the Coal Loader attracts constant visitation from all over Sydney and beyond and is well set up for self-guided tours through the augmented reality app as well as the digital kids' trail.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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

DETAIL

A snapshot of Coal Loader activities over the last six months:

Coal Loader Education Program

The Coal Loader plays host to regular school and tertiary education activities through:

- Self guided excursions utilizing the Coal Loader Sustainability Learning Guide;
- Facilitated school excursions for both North Sydney and non-North Sydney schools from stage 2 and up (both Primary and Secondary);
- Customised tertiary learning experiences (through partner Universities and NSW Tafe).

Over the last six months, there have been:

- 5 facilitated primary school excursions;
- 8 facilitated secondary school excursions;
- 4 facilitated tertiary engagements.

The Coal Loader also hosted the Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre's Primary School Sustainability Expo, with around 150 students from eight different schools participating in a full day of sustainability activities led by high school students.

Coal Loader Events Program

The Coal Loader Events Program is designed to provide a mix of large-scale community focused events, smaller activations, ongoing engagement series, and sustainability-focused workshops. Over the last six months The Coal Loader has hosted around 80 events including 65 free-ticketed and 15 non-ticketed activations. Activities included two Artisans Markets (held quarterly for an audience of up to 10,000), a three-week long Salon de Refuse art saving and re-homing activation, weekly Wednesday Wellness sessions (held from September to April annually), four Indigenous talks and workshops, three seasonal cooking classes, monthly Sunset Session pop-up bars (December to March), a week-long exhibition of amateur artwork inspired by The Coal Loader and the Plastic Free July tea and talk.

Coal Loader Guided Tours

A tour guide program operates throughout the year incorporating both bi-monthly Saturday tours and private tours for group bookings of ten or more. This is a completely volunteer led program co-ordinated by Coal Loader staff with an average of 1-2 private tours per month taking place.

The Coal Loader also puts on free quarterly aboriginal cultural tours, alternating leads between the Aboriginal Heritage Office and Koori Kinnections. These tours are family friendly and almost always book out, giving the opportunity to around 100 people a year to learn about the indigenous cultural value of the site.

The Coal Loader hosts regular corporate bookings throughout the year and most of these – along with other corporate groups coming to the Coal Loader for training/staff development etc – request a site tour focusing on history, adaptive re-use and sustainability.

Coal Loader Venue Hire

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

Venue hire opportunities include public exhibitions, conferences, musical performances, awards nights, presentations, filming, product launches, fashion events, community classes, social groups, sporting events, professional training and more. The last period saw Tunnel 1 activated with the Sydney Claymakers Exhibition (over 5,000 visitors in three days) and live Shakespeare performances, while the Genia McCaffery Sustainability Centre and the Mess Hall hosted a multitude of bookings including a weekly seniors art class, several corporate events and team building activations.

Other projects

The Coal Loader partnered with the Sea Heritage Foundation Board, TAFE NSW and the Prince’s Trust Australia to roll out the first Indigenous Maritime Operations certificate 1 General Purpose Hand course for indigenous students. The six students completed the theoretical component of their course at the Coal Loader and the practical component on the Cape Don. All six students completed the course and have gone on to find employment.



The Coal Loader Christmas Artisan Market



Sunset Sessions



The Sketchbook Challenge



Indigenous Tours



Third party events

The next six months for the Coal Loader:

Display room upgrade

The Coal Loader is home to a display room in the Genia McCaffery Centre for Sustainability which is open to the public six days a week. A concept for the re-fresh of this display room is currently being developed and will include homage to both indigenous and industrial heritage, sustainability education and interactive displays.

The first 'addition' to the display room will be the acquisition of a large, to-scale model of the ship loader that operated at the Coal Loader, built and donated by the original design engineer. The 'unveiling' of the model will take place during April in celebration of Heritage Month.

Community engagement/business planning

A business plan needs to be developed for the Coal Loader to provide strategic direction for the site for the next five years. Stage one of this business plan development is to undertake a community engagement exercise seeking stakeholder views. A community engagement plan is currently being developed.

Infrastructure upgrades/facilities management

Two IT projects are currently underway, being an upgrade to the WIFI system at the Coal Loader (to include WIFI access in Tunnel 1 for the first time) and an upgrade to the people counting system. Proposals for both systems are currently being assessed by Coal Loader and IT staff.

A number of other facility upgrades have taken place over the last six months including upgraded commercial cooking equipment to the Mess Hall (induction cooking and a water efficient dishwasher), new signage for the Cottage community garden and chicken coop and new bench seats.

The Coal Loader Café

The previous tenants of the Coal Loader Café went into liquidation and unexpectedly did not return after Christmas. New tenants are currently being sought. During the closure the kitchen equipment will be electrified to remove the last remaining gas usage onsite.

Upcoming events

The next six months will be busy as always at the Coal Loader with the final Sunset Sessions (pop up bar), Wednesday Wellness (weekly wellness sessions), the Autumn and Winter Artisan Markets, Heritage Month and of course, the biggest event of the year: the Living Futures Festival:



Living Futures comprises of a week long talk series culminating in a full day festival activation at the Coal Loader on April 30.

3.4. Gore Cove Reserve Walking Track Upgrade

AUTHOR: Gareth Debney, Bushland Management Coordinator

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report informs Councillors and the community about the development and coordination of upgrades to the Gore Cove Reserve bushland walking track in Wollstonecraft.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Gore Cove Reserve bushland walking track in Wollstonecraft is being upgraded with funding from North Sydney Council (Capital Works) and a grant awarded by the NSW Department of Lands.

This combined funding will enable new track features to be constructed as well as replacement of aging track elements such as sleeper box steps; raised boardwalks; track edging; water-bars and handrails.

The last time a major upgrade was carried out on the Gore Cove track was in 2008. Due to significant access constraints that are a characteristic of this linear foreshore reserve, track elements were constructed from treated pine building materials which have a limited lifespan particularly in sheltered, moisture-affected areas like Gore Cove and the Berry Creek riparian corridor. Despite being only fifteen years old, many of these timber track elements were approaching their safe useful life expectancy and required replacement. The additional funding afforded by the grant has enabled replacement of these timber elements with large-dimension sandstone blocks. Whilst moderately more expensive upfront, sandstone building materials in bushland provide far greater longevity, improved resistance to moisture and an aesthetic appeal that is highly compatible to a bushland setting.

Under normal circumstance, the use of dimension sandstone would not be possible in a difficult-to-access reserve like Gore Cove, however the grant funding has enabled the use of aerial materials delivery via a specialised helicopter lifting service, more commonly seen in National Parks or larger Council bushland areas like Manly Dam on the Northern Beaches.

The Gore Cove track upgrade will deliver a safer, more enjoyable and environmentally stable track surface, including:

- 174x dimension sandstone block steps (replacing mostly treated pine sleeper box steps)
- 4x new/replacement raised boardwalks covering over 40 lineal meters

- New galvanised steel handrails
- Water-bars, track edging and removal of in-track trip hazards
- New interpretive signage

Implementation of the project has begun and is expected to be completed by the end of May 2023. Periodic track closures will be required for public safety and aerial delivery operations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for this project is included in the adopted 2022/23 budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Gore Cove Reserve walking track upgrade 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

BACKGROUND

Gore Cove Reserve in Wollstonecraft is one of North Sydney's most unique and ecologically diverse bushland remnants. The 4.3-hectare reserve, which incorporates Smoothery Park, conserves seven distinct vegetation communities – including two state-listed endangered ecological communities, as well as providing habitat for threatened species such as *Acacia terminalis* sub species *terminalis* and the Powerful Owl.

Berry Creek, which is the longest natural creekline in North Sydney, flows down the centre of Gore Cove Reserve, forming a boundary between North Sydney and Lane Cove Local Government Areas. On the Lane Cove side of the creek lies the bushland reserves of Holloway and Greendale Parks, further contributing to the overall size/ecological value of this urban bushland remnant and its importance as connecting habitat between the greater Waverton-to-Greenwich bushland corridor.

Skirting the foreshore of Gore Cove and the banks of Berry Creek is a ~1.2km walking track that connects Shirley Road (near Berry Island) with Smoothery Park (near Wollstonecraft Station). Around two-thirds of the track is in North Sydney LGA, whilst the remaining sections are across Berry Creek in the Lane Cove LGA.

Parts of the Gore Cove Reserve walking track have deteriorated over the past fifteen years due in-part to high usage levels, as well as weather and environmental conditions that expose large sections of the track to prolonged moisture, which in-turn accelerates timber decay. This project will improve the track surface and extend the lifespan of this popular bushland infrastructure.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Apart from two aging footbridges that were reconstructed in 2016, the last major investment in track upgrades in Gore Cove occurred in 2008 with funding provided by the NSW Department of Planning's Sharing Sydney Harbour Access Program. That upgrade delivered works to both the Lane Cove and North Sydney parts of the track and featured (in the NSC sections):

- 85x treated pine sleeper box steps
- 46x lineal metres of galvanised steel handrails
- 9x lineal metres of treated pine sleeper track edging
- 18x lineal metres of raised timber boardwalks
- Refurbished dimension sandstone steps at the track entrance on Shirley Rd

Over the past 15 years, much of the timber-based infrastructure outlined above has deteriorated due to high usage levels (which intensified during COVID lockdowns) and the predominantly moist environmental conditions that characterise much of this reserve.



Above left: Raised timber boardwalk with decayed decking timbers

Above right: Damaged timber sleeper steps



Above left: Treated pine log steps with exposed steel pickets

Above right: Treated pine box steps, eroding and exposing service conduit



Above left: Raised boardwalk with decayed decking timbers

Above right: Eroding track surface exposing trip hazards

In the 2021/22 fiscal year, Council allocated \$90,000 for walking track upgrades in Gore Cove Reserve. Consequently, the Bushland Management Team prepared a project plan and prioritised the most degraded sections of track for repair and/or replacement of failing infrastructure.

In September 2021, these upgrades works commenced with construction of an 11x lineal metre raised boardwalk that curved around a heavily eroding bend in the track (see below), where the exposed roots of numerous trees made negotiating the track difficult.



Above: track condition before upgrade



Above: 11m raised boardwalk

In early 2022, Council was invited by the NSW Department of Lands to apply for grant funding for Gore Cove Reserve as part of formalising land ownership/management for a crown land parcel that forms a large part of the reserve. Consequently, the existing upgrade project was paused pending the outcome of the grant application.

In mid-2022, Council was advised by the Dept. of Lands that our application for funding had been successful, and Council would receive just under \$160,000 (ex-GST) to carry out the proposed track upgrades.

Combined with the residual \$70,000 Capital Works funding, the scope of this project was able to be revised allowing for further upgrades to be delivered using superior materials.

Importantly, the additional grant funding has enabled many timber track elements first installed in 2008 to be replaced with large dimension sandstone block materials. There are numerous advantages to using sandstone as a track construction medium in bushland settings. Apart from the aesthetic values of a natural and locally-occurring material characteristic of North Sydney's bushland, the main advantage of dimension sandstone is its longevity in service. For example, many of the 15-year-old treated pine sleeper box steps on the Gore Cove Track were nearing the end of their safe useful life expectancy – particularly in those parts of the track constantly exposed to moisture. In contrast, sandstone block steps are far less vulnerable to wet conditions and can safely remain in-service for decades longer than timber – reducing the number of times a track will require upgrading over time; which in-turn reduces the environmental impact associated with construction and achieving an improved return on investment.

Apart from a marginally higher upfront cost, the main reason dimension sandstone blocks are not used more frequently in bushland track construction is due to the difficulty moving and handling each 200-250kg block. This is particularly applicable in bushland reserves like Gore Cove that have very few points of access and a narrow, steeply undulated and irregular track surface. To overcome this constraint, the Gore Cove track upgrade project will use a specialist helicopter lifting service to move around 48x 1-tonne bags of sandstone blocks to various points along the track where they must be used.

Although a relatively common practice in National Parks and some larger Council areas (such as Hornsby and the Northern Beaches); aerial delivery of track materials will be a first for North Sydney and has only been made possible by the additional funding provided by the NSW Department of Lands.

It is expected that the aerial operation will take 5-6 hours to complete. During this period, a 75m public exclusion zone is required to ensure public safety is maintained. Due to the linear nature of Gore Cove Reserve, a small number of properties will be impacted by the exclusion zone and the Bushland Management Team will endeavor to contact affected residents and discuss options around the drop-point exclusion zones.

The Gore Cove track project resumed in December 2022 with construction of track elements not reliant on aerial delivery of materials. Around 50x treated pine log and sleeper steps from the track entrance off Shirley Road to the first creek crossing were replaced with dimension sandstone steps and integrated water-bars. This work included upgrades to the foreshore link track that accesses a dinghy storage area on Gore Cove’s foreshore and replacement of a small footbridge (see images below).

Stage two of the project, which involves the aerial delivery of sandstone block materials, is planned for completion between March and May 2023. In accordance with the grant agreement, Council will also incorporate new educational signage along the track and undertake “activation” activities later this year including guided walks through the reserve.



Above left: link track to foreshore with integrated drainage swale in foreground

Above right: Upgraded raised boardwalk with FRM mesh deck and reinforced hand-rail



Above left & right: Hand-faced dimension sandstone steps replacing sleeper box steps



3.5. Food Waste Trial

AUTHOR: Bo Karaula, Waste Management Co-ordinator

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

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report provides an overview of the results of the six month Food Scraps Trial in Multi Unit Dwellings (MUDs).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

State Government legislative framework requires Councils to implement food and garden organics collections for all NSW households by 2030.

The previous Council resolved to undertake a six-month food waste collection trial to determine to what extent a separate Food Organics collection and processing service is feasible in (MUDs) which make up approximately 90% of the housing stock in the LGA.

The trial was implemented in May 2022 and ran for six months. It examined the participation and food scraps contamination rates whilst gathering cost and operational data. Such data is required in order for Council to make long-term strategic decisions on resource recovery options prior to the renewal of the waste collection and processing contracts in June 2029 (includes the extension options having been exercised for these contracts). Preparation of Tender documents for Food Organics Collections and Processing services would require at least a two-and-a-half-year lead time before Tenders are sought for such services. Additionally, the successful contractors would require at least 18 months lead time to mobilise the necessary plant and equipment to fulfill their obligations prior to the commencement of the new contract/s in June 2029. This assumes there will be a viable food processing facility available for Council to deliver the food organics for processing.

The main objective of the trial was to engage a diverse sample of MUDs large enough to generate data that is a good representation of the LGA. MUDs are inherently more difficult to manage due their high transient population. To reduce the risk of the results being biased or distorted a direct random sampling method of recruitment was used. A total of 413 individual unit dwellings were recruited across 10 MUD blocks in four suburbs. Participants were provided with the necessary infrastructure such as kitchen caddies and compostable caddy liner bags to ensure the Trial ran smoothly. Each building was provided with 120 L MGBs allocated on a shared basis. Participants were supported by educational resources including wall posters for lobby notice boards, bin and caddy stickers, bin bay signage, brochures etc.

The once weekly collection was undertaken by Councils contractor, URM. The material was delivered to Earthpower owned by Veolia in Camelia where it was bulked up and transported to Wormtech in Forbes for composting.

As the trial progressed, audit results showed a decline in the amount of food waste separated by the participants as well as an increase in the contamination levels. Detailed results of the Trial and suggested options for Council to consider moving forward will be presented by APrince Consulting at the Environment Reference Group meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Council was successful in securing a grant for \$ 180,000 from the State Government to assist with the delivery of the trial. 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 total cost of the project was \$215,000 which is less than the original project estimate of \$220,000. The Domestic Waste Management Budget funded \$40,000.

There are no financial implications for the purposes of this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Food Waste Trial 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

1.2 Environmentally sustainable community

BACKGROUND

According to the DPIE's NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, an average resource recovery target of 80% from all waste streams by 2030 has been established for the waste management industry. To achieve this target, councils are required to undertake waste management practices which minimise waste disposal at landfill and maximise resource recovery, including implementing a Food Organics or Food combined with Greenwaste collection service by 2030.

Council currently offers and undertakes the following resource recovery initiatives-

- All recyclables collected in the yellow lidded bin are transported to Visy at Smithfield for sorting and processing. Scrap metals (whitegoods) from bulk waste cleanup collections are taken to scrap metal merchants.
- All greenwaste collected at kerbside is transferred to an organics processing facility.
- To reduce food waste from being landfilled, Council provides subsidised compost bins and worm farms through the Compost Revolution program (the bins and worm farms are offered to residents at subsidised prices and residents are encouraged to participate in workshops to enhance their knowledge of composting and the need to reduce material going to landfill). 172 compost and worm farm bins were provided to residents in the last 12 months.
- Recyclesmart program for difficult to recycle items (books, toys, textiles)
- Promotion of the Bower Reuse and Repair Centre for household furniture, bikes, some electronic appliances, building materials, bric-a-brac, kitchenware, and books.
- Textile, ewaste, hazardous waste, batteries etc recycling at the CRC
- Resource recovery and waste avoidance messages and workshops

Prior to 2019, Council had contracted Suez to transfer the material collected in the red bins, to a processing facility at Eastern Creek. At this facility, the material was separated into various streams and valuable resources such as metals, plastics and organics were processed; this resulted in landfill diversion of approximately 65% of the contents of the red bin. The organics waste stream was ultimately converted into a compost like material used in mine rehabilitation and broad acre agriculture applications. However, the NSW EPA rescinded the waste exemption orders that allowed for such applications, resulting in the entire red bin being landfilled.

As a result of increased waste generation and landfilling, governments, both state and federal, have lobbied that the organics fraction of the red bin, approximately 40% of the bin's contents, should be source separated and processed at recognised Food Organics and Garden Organics facilities.

In 2021, Council resolved to undertake a six-month food waste collection trial to determine to what extent a separate Food Organics collection and processing program was feasible in MUDs which make up approximately 90% of the housing stock in the LGA. Under the trial, 413 multi-unit dwellings were to be given a separate food waste bin. The food waste thus collected was to be transferred to Veolia's Earthpower facility at Camellia where it was bulked up and transported to Wormtech in Forbes for composting. The aim of the trial was to determine whether the material collected was suitable for processing, the extent of contamination in the food waste collected and whether such a program could be rolled out throughout the LGA in the long term.

Unfortunately, the trial was delayed due to the COVID lockdowns and supply chain challenges including: -

- Limited capacity at Earthpower – Veolia advised that Earthpower has no capacity to accept additional material from any sources. Additionally, the facility runs strict contamination thresholds meaning organic waste which contains materials such as plastic bags are rejected and landfilled. Earthpower has been closed for waste processing.
- Earthpower were in negotiations with alternative processing facilities outside of the Sydney Metropolitan Area, including a site near Forbes and Wormtech at Yenda, NSW. Essentially, Veolia's Camellia facility was used as a transfer station for collected food waste before being transferred to a rural location. Again, contamination management being the major concern.

To achieve the mandated 80% resource recovery target, it is imperative that there are financially viable processing options within the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Councils are required to provide their residents waste management processes which meet community expectations and provide value for money. Currently there are limited food waste processing options available to Sydney councils – Veolia's Earthpower and Suez's Kemp Creek facility (both of which have no excess capacity). Barriers to entry for new participants is high: -

- It requires sizeable capital investment to acquire/build/operate an appropriate site.
- Government regulations surrounding noise and odour management and the use of end-products can be arduous to overcome.
- Councils are generally bound to long term contracts which inhibit competition for new players.
- There is a lack of end-market use for the resultant compost products.
- Contamination management is a major drawback for waste feed stock generators.

In August 2021 Council wrote to the NSW State Government to provide the waste management industry with more assistance, both regulatory and financial, to incentivise the development of new waste processing facilities with the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Councils and industry players require long term certainty over processing contracts (price and feed stock quality) and over the regulatory environment.

A one-stop policy, such as a separate food waste collection and processing option, does not suit all councils. North Sydney Council is unique with a high multi-unit, high-rise apartment demographic combined with a high transitory population and sites with limited bin storage capacity. These characteristics have proved that contamination management is an expensive and difficult problem, resulting in poor quality feed stock that is not suited for processing at facilities that currently operate under stringent contamination guidelines.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement has occurred in accordance with Council's *Community Engagement Protocol*.

DETAIL

The purpose of the trial was to test the demand and to gather cost and operational data of implementing a food scraps recycling collection service. Such data is required for Council to make long-term strategic decisions on resource recovery options noting the current legislative framework requiring Councils to implement food and garden organics collections for all NSW households by 2030. The current Waste Collection and Disposal Contracts expire 30 June 2029 (includes the extension options having been exercised for both contracts). Preparation of Tender documents for Food Organics Collections and Processing services would require at least a two and a half year lead time before Tenders are sought for such services. Additionally, the successful contractors would require at least 18 months lead time to mobilise the necessary plant and equipment to fulfill their obligations prior to the commencement of the new contract/s (June 2029). This assumes there will be a viable food processing facility available for Council to deliver the food organics for processing.

Selection of participants

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 were targeted in the trial. Single detached dwellings which represent 7 % of the housing stock, were 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 was to generate a diverse sample of MUDs large enough to generate robust data that is a good representation of the local government area. MUDs are inherently more difficult to manage due their high transient population. 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 were considered included building age, size (number of units), presence/absence of a building manage/caretaker and site conditions i.e., location of garbage bin rooms, presence/absence of internal waste chutes, internal/external access, and bin bay storage capacity for additional food scrap wheelie bins. These factors had an impact on the quality and quantity of the food waste that was separated.

To reduce the risk of the results being biased or distorted a direct random sampling method of recruitment was used. 413 individual unit dwellings were recruited across 10 MUD blocks in 4 suburbs, North Sydney, Cammeray, Kirribilli, and Neutral Bay.

Methodology

Waste consultant, APrince Consulting, supported and assisted the Council with the planning, design, recruitment of participants, audits, data collection, surveys, and reporting functions.

A baseline food scraps audit of the selected households was undertaken prior to the commencement of the Trial. The results revealed 35% of the contents of the red bins comprised of food scraps.

To make separating food scraps for processing simple, registered participants were provided with the appropriate infrastructure and educational resources and support including a kitchen caddy and liners and shared wheelie bins.

During the Trial an online platform (closed forum) was used to engage participants to engage with each other to find out more information, build a community of practice, discuss user experience and feedback/ideas for improvement etc. This approach facilitated participant self-service and enabled a central point of communication to and by Council.

The following engagement methods were used:

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
<i>Introduction letter and follow up letters</i>	<i>Strata and participating residents</i>	<i>Inform</i>	<i>Informed strata and participants of the trial, what is involved, what they are asked to do and how they can provide feedback and raised contamination issues during the trial</i>
<i>Council website (and Your Say North Sydney web page)</i>	<i>All</i>		<i>Informed the community and participants about the Trial. Include FAQs.</i>
<i>Postcards (advising of Trial prior to commencement and delivery of caddies and bin liners)</i>	<i>Participants</i>		<i>Informed the participants about the Trial and encourage involvement in it</i>

<i>Survey (hard copy and online)</i>	<i>Participating</i>	<i>Consult</i>	<i>Obtain feedback on the Trial as a potential solution to diverting waste from landfill and desired user experience, via a two-stage survey (onset and completion)</i>
<i>Online Forum</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Consult/Involve</i>	<i>Closed forum open only for registered Trial participants to find out more information, build a community of practice, discuss user experience and feedback/ideas for improvement etc.</i>

The food organics bins were collected by URM every Wednesday, being the same day as the red bin service for the participating households. The material was delivered to Earthpower in Camelia where it was bulked up and transported to Forbes at Wormtech- composting facility.

APrince Consulting (APC) completed the following tasks:

- A baseline waste audit and resident survey – completed in June 2021
- Weekly visual monitoring of bin presentation and contamination for 4 weeks after trial implementation
- Fortnightly monitoring of bin presentation and contamination for 5 months after trial implementation
- Mid-trial waste audit to assess progress – completed in August 2022
- Post (end)-trial waste audit and resident survey – completed in November 2022

Overview of the Results

The Food Organics (FO) trial ran for 6 months before the final audit was conducted to determine how the trial progressed from the last mid-trial audit. The introduction of the FO bins, although undertaken in a small sample size, demonstrated positive behaviour as it manifested in the reduction of general waste generation by 1.08 kg/unit/week. The reduction in food waste (loose and containerised food) of 0.8 kg/unit/week contributed largely to this general waste reduction.

While the 9% decrease in loose food (from 26% to 17%) over the 3-month initial period of the trial looked very promising, this was not sustained. In the post (end)-trial audit, a 6% reduction was observed. Compliance declined after 3 or 4 months of commencement of the trial. Similarly, the food recovered in compostable bags decreased by 8% from the mid-trial to the post-trial with an increase of loose food in the FO bins. This has management implications considering that contained food materials will minimise risks of odour and pests.

Contamination during the trial also deteriorated with an increase from 7% midway through the trial to 13% post-trial by weight. The amendment to the NSW EPA Guidelines on limiting the acceptable materials to food, compostable plastic kitchen caddy liners and fibre-based kitchen caddy liners (e.g., paper or newspaper) used to collect and transfer food waste to the FO bin may have affected the contamination rate. The change which took effect in July 2022 after the commencement of the programme did not provide Council enough time to raise awareness. If these changes have not been implemented yet, contamination rate would have increased to 10.5% by weight. Nevertheless, the increase in contamination rate from the mid-trial to the post-trial period indicates the need for sustained awareness.

It is also prudent to consider the materials which are highly contaminating the FO bins such as food in non-biobags, contaminated paper and textiles as these three materials comprise 86% of all contamination by weight. Soft plastics also occupy substantial volume of contamination. The elimination of these materials is critical to FO product quality especially when the food waste will be composted along with other organic materials.

The behaviour of residents in different block sizes as manifested in the audit results should be also considered when planning for an extended coverage of the food scrap collection programme. The trends over the entire trial period indicate higher waste reduction and more food waste recovery in small MUDs than large MUDs. Contamination of food waste bins is also lower in small MUDs than medium-sized units. This reflects the significance of MUD block size to the waste dynamics.

The final audit also allowed determination of current recovery rate of food organics which is 32%. There is still a potential to further increase recovery through proper messaging of the food scrap collection programme. The estimated current diversion rate from the landfill is at 9%. This can also be further improved through intensification of the programme. A potential diversion of 38% can be achieved if all loose food and containerised food are placed in the FO bins or if a more conservative 60% recovery of loose food is taken, a 31% diversion rate could be achieved.

Resident Feedback

10 % of the total participants responded to the final survey. The participants that provided feedback generally found the foods scraps trial to be a positive experience. Some found it helped them lead a more sustainable lifestyle and incentivised them to compost. Some residents noticed a decrease in the amount of general waste and were made aware of the amount of food scraps being disposed of and indicated they 'felt good to be helping the environment'.

The negative comments given were that the kitchen caddy liners decomposed after only 2-3 days and food scraps needed to be double bagged. General contamination in the burgundy lidded bin was noted by some residents. A few of the residents remarked that the kitchen caddy is an inconvenient size and shape for the kitchen benchtop. The burgundy bin was found to be dirty, and fly blown by some. The bin rooms needed more space for the food scraps bins.

Other comments were that further education is needed to reduce contamination in the food scraps bins, bins should be cleaned regularly after collection, stronger caddy liners required, caddy lids should be able to be secured and one comment was that the burgundy lidded bins should be more accessible and not in the garbage room. Overall, the main comment from the participants that provided the feedback was the disappointment that the trial came to an end as they wanted to continue separating food scraps.

4. General Business

Mr Bruce Handmer would like to speak on the following:-

I wish to raise formally the issue of noise pollution from party boats and request that the Council consider writing to the relevant department/people in the NSW Government about this issue if they are unable to take any sort of action themselves.

Background:

I am sure no one objects in principle to businesses running parties and cruises on the harbour. Unfortunately, some of these boats ignore their own Code of Conduct and ignore NSW noise regulations. Raising the issue through the EPA appears to make no difference.

It is worth considering that stadium concerts, for example, are limited. The Homebush stadiums are limited to a certain number of concerts, and within certain time limits, because the noise disturbs residents. For example, only 7 concerts per year are allowed in one of the large stadiums in Homebush. Other stadia have similar limitations. Likewise, venues like pubs and clubs must manage their noise to within regulations or risk being closed down. Car (drivers) may not make excessive noise or risk being fined. Commercial operators on the harbour appear to have no such limitations. Whilst most boats have their sound systems inside, which limits the noise, one boat, Glass Island has it's DJ and speakers on the open top deck. I have measured their sound levels at over 70db inside our apartment with the windows and doors closed. People who work on other party boats have commented to me that this example of amplified music is at a "crazy" level. Additionally, smaller catamaran party boats tend to pick up moorings in sheltered water such as Berry's Bay and will stay there for hours whilst around 30 passengers each, party.

Why is this such an issue? Noise pollution is insidious. It is well understood now that it causes significant health issues and harm. To humans and also other animals and wildlife. Much of this noise is unnecessary. Its loudness for loudness sake. And it is getting worse quickly.

Sound travels over water very easily. The party boat, Glass Island's noise levels are extreme from when it approaches McMahons Point from the east, until it rounds Balls Head to travel into the next western bay, one and one half kilometres away. These boats travel slowly, so for fifteen to twenty minutes, in each direction of travel, residents are subjected to noise as if they lived overlooking an open air rock concert / dance venue. This happens anytime between 5pm and 11pm any night, although most usually Friday through Sunday. Given that on a busy night there may be a dozen party boats cruising past, some nights the noise is almost constant.

The issue with boats picking up moorings in Berrys Bay (or any other bay) is that they sit there for two or more hours, sometimes with loud music and almost always with excited and sometimes drunk people yelling happily to each other. Again, the sound

travels easily to the shore and in some cases, apartment buildings are less than 100m away. So having a quiet afternoon or evening if you live anywhere near these bays is unlikely during the week and almost impossible on weekends. People who live near North Sydney Council's waterfront may as well have bought an apartment next door to an unrestricted music venue or under the flight path of Sydney Airport, given the constant noise.

Residents I have spoken too agree that this is an issue that is getting worse. Ten years ago, it was rare to be disturbed. Amplification was lower and there were significantly fewer party boats. Now there are many many more and some of them have sound systems that are extraordinarily loud. There needs to be consideration given for those who are subjected to unacceptably high levels of noise.

5. Closure