

President's Report August 2020

This has been my first year in this position and I would like to particularly thank the members of our committee for their hard work. The time put into our various programs by each committee member allows Friends to keep our message alive for the community, Council and State Government.

Our mission statement 'preserves the Bushland in the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment' is essential to provide a quality of life for everyone in our region.

I would like to thank all our members and supporters. You all give us encouragement to continue our endeavours for the preservation of this beautiful area.

This year our activities have included newsletters, bush walks by Conny Harris throughout the catchment, 3 Forums at the Coastal Environment Centre, (our fourth forum was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic), and many submissions to Council and the State Government.

Our programs included:

Forums

26 August 2019 Northern Beaches Council Planning Towards 2040

Presented by Andrew Piggot Manager Strategic Planning

25 November 2019 Environmental aspects of a) Roadworks on Mona Vale Road and b)

Northern beaches Hospital; presented by Senior Environmental staff from Roads and Maritime Services.

24 February 2020 Secrets of the Catchment seen in the 21st Century; presented by

Jayden Walsh. Jayden also led some night time walks in the catchment associated with this presentation. Jayden Walsh has been observing wildlife for some time in the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment. He had some fascinating photos and stories to tell about discoveries that have been made in the 21st Century.

Letters and submissions

State Government: Housing Strategy, Strategic Plan for Crown Land

Northern Beaches Council: local Strategic Planning Statement, Community Participation Plan, Bushland and Biodiversity Policy, Open Space Survey, deferred areas, Bike Plan, Open Space and Recreation Strategy. Other letters and submissions on inappropriate development applications.

Presentations at Hearings

Planning Panels and the Land and environment Court hearings associated with inappropriate development proposals.

This year the Council and the State Government have produced a number of draft documents inviting public submissions. Many of these documents when implemented will have an impact on our natural environment and quality of life.

It was essential that we made submissions on these proposals.

Planning Document

One of the most important draft documents was the Council's draft Local Strategic Planning Statement.

This document will be the basis and provide the priorities for the new Local Environment Plan for the whole Northern Beaches Council area. This LEP will provide the planning controls including planning zones for the Narrabeen Catchment.

Currently the planning controls for the Catchment are under LEP2000 as they were deferred from inclusion in LEP 2011 for the previous Warringah Council area.

The preparation of the new LEP is currently underway and will involve various studies which will be placed on exhibition during 2021 and then the production of a draft LEP which will be on exhibition in 2022.

We will be studying all these documents and making appropriate submissions. The Council expects that the LEP will be presented to the State Government for acceptance in 2023.

Shrinking urban bushland

Where new urban areas or planning proposals are developed, the end result is usually near-complete clearing. Urban bushland is replaced with smaller, fragmented, more sanitised, open and neat spaces.

These are designed for a narrower (but still important) set of usable attributes, like a bike path, lawns and a playground. But the original values of the bushland are lost. This pattern is repeated in the expanding suburbs.

If some urban bushland, wetlands or other landscape assets have been retained, the pressure on these from Development is relentless.

Further, during this year we have become aware of increasing inappropriate activities in the Catchment resulting in considerable Bushland destruction. We are currently in communication with the Council to determine better controls to protect the Bushland in this beautiful area of the Northern Beaches.

It is essential to protect, sustain and restore the health of critical natural habitats and ecosystems.

We must make long-term ecological sustainability an issue in all Local Government and State Government policies.

What do we mean by urban bushland?

Urban bushland ranges from a bushland of native trees, to wetlands – in fact any native vegetation characteristic of the local region.

With its undisturbed soils and associated wildlife, urban bushland is more diverse than other types of green spaces. So it adds significantly to neighbourhood biodiversity.

The more unfragmented the landscape, or unaltered the bushland, the more likely it will be to retain its biodiversity. Hills, swamp land, creeks, watercourses, Riparian zones and gullies, have greater biodiversity than a plantation of trees.

The health benefit of urban bushland partly comes from this biodiversity.

In a city like ours, health benefits work at two levels. Not only do local residents receive health benefits when they have urban bushland, the wider urban population also feels the health effects.

Why should we care about our Catchment?

For many the concept of biodiversity is a pretty abstract one. People can recognise that a rainforest or the Great Barrier Reef have amazing ecosystems, but how is biodiversity relevant to our urban area? Ecosystems benefit the urban environment as well as the natural environment.

Access to natural places is essential for human well-being. Contact with nature has been shown to promote faster recovery from surgery, better pain control, fulfilment of emotional needs, lower stress, positive moods, increased vitality, reduced depression, improved social behaviour and healthier family units. Psychological benefits are higher in areas with greater biodiversity.

We must provide a 'quality of life' by ensuring that our Natural ecosystems are sympathetically integrated into urban development, to benefit people, flora and fauna.

These and other health benefits are virtually never accounted for in local and state land development processes.

Urban planners need to consider these health benefits of the urban bushland when making decisions about the future of our Northern Beaches Area.

Thank you for your attendance and interest.

Ron Patton
President, Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment