

## **President's Report to the 2018 AGM of Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Inc**

Welcome to the fifth Annual General Meeting of Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Incorporated.

I'd like to acknowledge the Quandamooka people, the traditional custodians of this land, of elders past and present. A special welcome to Cr Lance Hewlett also to Jan MacIntyre from the Coochiemudlo Island Heritage Society who, after formalities, will discuss the application lodged last week for the entry of the Emerald Fringe as a place on the Queensland Heritage Register.

2018 is a milestone year on many fronts for Coastcare. As we celebrate the achievements and acknowledge the contributions of our volunteers, it's also a time to reflect with pride on progress since our formation, just days before the devastating storm surge of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald in 2013. The rehabilitation work to strengthen the resilience of our foreshore continues today.

I hope this overview of the past 12-months serves to inform and engage newer members and remind others of Coastcare effort, perhaps motivating individuals to take-up the challenge to preserve our unique island environment.

Special thanks to those who are active either on the dunes and in the wetlands weeding, picking up litter, maintaining equipment, cooking treats, manning market stalls, assisting fundraising - all those behind-the-scenes contributors including our Junior Rangers. Your efforts are valued.

I'd like to thank the members of the committee who work so well together as a team to keep the Coastcare ethic alive on Coochie. To Lois, Heather, Phil, Chris, Graeme, David I'm delighted all of you, except for Juliet who is overseas, have nominated for re-election.

A couple of months after last year's AGM, Secretary Ian Shapcott resigned for residency reasons and Lois Toop who'd been on committee since 2015 took on the casual vacancy. We're indebted to Ian, an environmental planner for his continuing effort and thank Juliet Wiseman for her contribution initiating the development of an Integrated Weed Management Plan with Council.

Onto the highlights of our year. Undoubtedly strengthening volunteer effort with monthly working bees attracting on average 17 with the biggest 29 people. During the year Coastcare has logged over 600 official hours weeding, planting over 1000 trees, shrubs and grasses and tending the dunes.

In June 2017 we welcomed the budgeted start of the long-awaited Shoreline Erosion Management Plan. There's been three meetings of the Community Reference Group and a growing exchange of background information to assist the consultancy, expected to be announced before the end of the financial year. For islanders who volunteered for the

committee it's a chance to share local knowledge to support the development of long-term erosion management of our valued natural assets, our sandy bush beaches.

We're fortunate to have two very qualified locals on the committee, Drs Michael Gourlay and Mark Pillsworth. We're grateful for the occasional operational beachworks that's seen sand moved from the barge ramp to other zones, attempting to maintain the integrity of the dunes. We also acknowledge the efforts of Marine Infrastructure and Planning officers to engage openly with community.

In August we shared another great Care4Country event with the Tangalooma EcoMarines to celebrate the Quandamooka Festival sponsored by Redland City Council. It saw junior ambassadors from 28 schools throughout south-east Queensland gather at "Mudlo" for a day of cultural heritage and environmental activity. We're pleased to see this has developed into a two-day event this year and Carolyn Brammer has taken the lead to host it again

On 23 October 2017 Coastcare submitted a consultant's report highlighting environmental health risks to the Melaleuca wetlands from confirmed heavy metal contamination in the vicinity of the closed landfill site. The findings were noted in reports commissioned by Council over both in 2001 and 2017. In March, engineering consultancy GHD reinstated old wells and sunk new ones to undertake further groundwater monitoring and surface water testing in the Melaleuca wetlands. Ecologists were also engaged to investigate vulnerable and endangered species. We understand preliminary results will be available in July. Full detail on the study is available under the Timeline on Coastcare's website. It's been a pleasure liaising with officers from Council's Water and Waste Infrastructure. Lance, thank-you for your efforts here.

In the latter half of 2017 we made submissions on the Integrated Weed Management Plan and participated in a Focus group meeting. At that stage we held high hopes the developing Plan would herald a new way forward in collaborative effort and operational spend to address long-term weed infestation while reducing the use of herbicides as the favoured first response.

There's disappointment with a process that saw Council officers accept a final draft in January to be used as background for City-wide planning, and lacking amongst other things, costings. The question remains unanswered, were they aware of contamination investigations? The recommendation that school groups advise Council a week in advance of a visit to avoid coming into contact with weed spraying contractors on Coochie raises concerns for all.

Unfortunately, we recently saw repeat damage to a Wetlands watercourse in James Street when weeds were slashed and herbicide sprayed without warning, despite a commissioned report from 2012 recommending otherwise.

Coastcare celebrated the start of the year with the launch of the saturated steam weeding project on World Wetlands Day, February 2 with Kim Richards MP, then Deputy Mayor Wendy Boglary and Cr Lance Hewlett

The Community Sustainability Action Grant from the Queensland Government of \$27,988 grant allowed the purchase of a saturated steam weeding machine used by trained Coastcare volunteers and Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) rangers to undertake chemical free weeding around the island foreshore.

Initial work on the project, *“Promoting sustainable vegetation management and ecosystem resilience on Coochiemudlo Island”* focuses on areas currently maintained by Coastcare, as well as Bushcare zones on Main Beach. Revegetation of denuded areas will occur simultaneously with the planting of over 2,000 native ground covers, grasses, shrubs and trees, including many propagated by the island’s native nursery.

On Thursday 1 February we invited community to a presentation by Jeremy Winer, the CEO of Weedtechnics Australia on *“Reducing risk and cost through a non-chemical approach to vegetation management”* The evening was supported by our peak body, Queensland Water and Landcarers and drew a good crowd including Kim Richards MP and Cr Hewlett and Sheena.

Three months of saturated steam weeder is returning some pretty impressive results. We’re witnessing a dramatic reduction to the carpets of Mothers of Millions and plantings have benefited from recent rain.

Our test sites, staked for photo-monitoring will be observed over the long-term with assistance from Indigiscapes to ensure outcomes are correctly recorded. Three of our four sites have already been treated twice along with one Bushcare zone with others to follow. Restoring ecosystem health through chemical-free weeding and revegetation is helping repair the landscape. Our thanks to QYAC rangers who’ve worked with us to gain their Certificate of Operator Competency on the weeder.

In January, Coastcare was provided an annual permit from Redland City Council to continue maintenance works along almost a kilometre of foreshore (hectares) from just east of Main Beach through Flinders, Norfolk and the Melaleuca Wetlands.

Outside our regular working bees, since the last AGM we’ve held 12 management meetings, two general meetings, a presentation on saturated steam weeding; seven meetings with Cr Hewlett, launched the Queensland government funded project and enjoyed another great Christmas party on the way. Our presence on island market days helps us stay in touch with grassroots community concerns and there’s always a spare chair or two for anyone wanting to chat. We’re indebted to Secretary, Lois for our website, keeping members regularly updated with newsletters and Facebook postings

If you'd like to contribute in any special way to the ongoing operation of Coastcare please don't hesitate to step forward. The door is always open.

There are other issues that are permanently on the agenda – rationalisation of compliance signage, looking for a permanent home to house our trailers and equipment as well as day-to-day environmental matters, beach fires and illegal camping to name just a couple.

Lastly, but certainly not least on behalf of the Management Committee I offer sincere thanks to Cr Hewlett for his accessibility and guidance. None of the achievements of the past year would have been possible without his support.

We have a membership base of 310. The Treasurer advises it usually takes until September to collect the majority of annual dues. As of today 155 members currently financial, including 81 Life Members.

The Management Committee advises members that the Association has current public liability insurance of \$30 million. This coverage is provided through our membership of Queensland Water and Landcarers with funds provided by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines.