

President's Annual Report

I'd like to wind back the clock, just over 18-months ago to January 13, 2013 when 13 of us gathered on my front verandah to form Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Inc. We sensed the urgency for a community organisation committed to the preservation of the unique natural coastal environment that is Coochiemudlo Island.

Just over 13-days later we were struck by a storm surge from ex-Tropical cyclone Oswald. That event hit hard, wiping out almost a kilometre of our eastern shoreline, exposing fragile ecosystems and threatening the island's economy. The early days were tough. We believed Coochie was being ignored, but we soon gathered strength from a growing membership to take what we saw as the "battle for our beaches" to Council chambers.

We drew on State and Federal Members of Parliament for support and contacted government departments collecting valuable information to short-circuit bureaucratic process.

Thankfully with support from our local Councillor, Lance Hewlett, the Mayor, Karen Williams & Redland City Councillors listened.

The rescue package put together by SEQ Catchments', Joel Bolzenius with Federal funds & assistance from Wetland Care Australia sealed the deal. To SEQ Catchments, those senior Council officers, especially Lex Smith and the wonderful team of contractors who spent six weeks shifting sand, setting trees upright and reinstating beach access – many thanks

We'd all like to think we've come a long way from the early days of the collaborative partnership between Council, Coastcare and SEQ Catchments. It's a continuing work in progress.

As custodians of this precious piece of earth we need to take greater responsibility for our footprint. Coastcare believes developing a more resilient foreshore is important to our future - just as crucial as retaining the vegetated Emerald Fringe as a protective buffer and maintaining the integrity of our Melaleuca Wetlands, as part of the larger Moreton Bay Ramsar site.

That's why we're committed to the development of a meaningful Shoreline Erosion Management Plan, now in Draft form with copies at our local library & soon-to-be released online. We're grateful Council instigated this study – the City's second after Amity Point, and despite delays we're hopeful we're now heading in the right direction.

Unfortunately December 2013 saw Coastcare executive back in Council chambers seeking the release of funds to address rapid erosion on historic Norfolk beach - 31/2 metres of dune had been lost in 12 weeks of benign weather conditions. We knew Council had sought quotes for geo-fab work.

Again, Councillors listened to our plea and voted to release funds for urgent works. We were grateful

A month later we discovered this 60-metre stretch of Norfolk beach had been identified in the Draft Shoreline Erosion Management Plan as one of the five vital Control Points holding the island.

Our tiny island, mid-way between two PDA's (Priority Development Areas) Weinam Creek and Toondah Harbour, is under pressure like never before from south-east Queensland's burgeoning population growth and our own urbanisation.

The challenge for us all & planners especially, is how best to retain the valued natural resource of our sandy bush-lined beaches, the closest to Brisbane city, for future generations. What we have is precious!

It seems that until the economic value of our foreshore is fully appreciated and visitation pressures acknowledged, Coochiemudlo will continue to miss out on the management it deserves.

Coastcare is committed to working with all levels of government while drawing strength from organisations like SEQ Catchments, Healthy Waterways, Mangrove and Seagrass Watch to ensure this happens.

At the same time we need politicians & government leaders - regardless of political persuasion - prepared to make the right decisions to put the environment and preservation of our valued natural resources, first. Our island's survival depends on it. So does the future health and prosperity of not only Redland City but South East Queensland.

We also need to remember there's a myriad of Commonwealth and state legislation, policies, strategies, best practice guidelines as well as our own 2004 Land Management Plan to guide action.

I'd just like to note some numerical highlights of Coastcare's hectic first 18-months -

- Our members provided the Executive with moral strength and our constitution the guidance. In the first 12 months, 144 adults and 17 children not only joined but many participated in multiple working bees to replant and tend almost a kilometre of damaged coastline. Our monthly Dune care continues to attract about 20 regular volunteers each month. New members are warmly welcomed.

Since that meeting on my verandah in January 2013, 167 adults and 17 children have joined Coastcare.

- We've planted over 6,500 dune grasses, creepers and trees, successfully acquitted a \$10,000 Environmental Grant from Redland City Council to cover replacement plantings, participated in a collaborative dune fencing project with Council and SEQ

Catchments and organised a Dune Care” train the trainers’ “workshop with Griffith University’s School of Coastal Management.

- In between times we’ve held 13-executive meetings, four general meetings, welcomed three notable guest speakers, participated in Island market days and SEQ Catchment events as well as welcoming Healthy Waterways host a Field Day on sediment issues around Coochiemudlo Island. We’ve also met with Council and Queensland Department of Transport officers on environmental concerns and continue to liaise regularly with Councillor Lance Hewlett.
- The Management Committee advises members that the Association has current public liability insurance of \$20 million. The coverage is provided through our membership of Queensland Water and Landcarers with funds provided by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines
- We were also proud to see Coastcare shortlisted for an Australia Day Environment Award

Thank-you

Carolyn Brammer
President, Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Inc