

## **President's Report to 2016 AGM of Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Inc**

Welcome to the third Annual General Meeting of Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, of elders past and present

A special welcome to our guest speaker, long-time islander and marine ecologist, Doctor Mark Pillsworth.

It's been another busy, exciting and at times challenging year for Coastcare.

I'd like to pay special tribute to all our members, in particular those on the management committee - Secretary, Heather Smith; Treasurer Graeme Roberts-Thomson and general committee, Juliet Wiseman, David Mansford, Lois Toop and David Kemp. Coastcare is fortunate to have so many caring and motivated members like yourselves, islanders who value the unique environment we call home and recognise the need to preserve Coochie's natural resources for future generations.

Special thanks to Juliet who spearheaded the drive towards an Integrated Weed Management Plan for the island to reduce the use of herbicides and Rae Wear for the successful submission for a Conservation grant from Redland City Council, "What's Living in the Melaleuca Wetlands" This \$10,000 grant has enabled us to engage zoologist, Dr Ronda Green to undertake four seasonal wildlife surveys.

In November, after almost three years on the management team Rae resigned and Lois Toop came aboard to fill a casual vacancy. Thanks to Lois' efforts along with Secretary, Heather Smith we now have a Junior Coastcare Ranger program to encourage the younger generation to care for our island. Environmental planner, Ian Shapcott provided a welcome guiding hand to the committee and has been a popular speaker at gatherings. There are so many others who continue to contribute in their own special way – Bruce Wollstein, founding President Carolyn Brammer & David Mansford, who's standing down today as Membership Secretary and Margrit Lack who heads the Native Nursery - we appreciate your surprises from the Hot House.

I'd like to acknowledge Councillor Lance Hewlett for his support, guidance and understanding. We look forward to continuing our positive working relationship and to the Member for Redlands, Matt McEachan for your genuine interest in Coochiemudlo Island and in particular Coastcare.

Our monthly working bees continue to attract a solid core of volunteers – the largest 25 but averaging 18. During 11-monthly sessions with a few mid-week events maintaining one kilometre of foreshore we've amassed over 430 volunteer hours tending dunes, weeding and picking up litter. Another 200 volunteer hours have been spent on the first of the two seasonal wildlife surveys of the melaleuca wetlands.

After three years of Coastcare, the rewards are tangible, the most visible being the rehabilitation and growing diversity of a once-eroded foreshore.

We've lost count of the hours that go into meetings, research, discussions, submissions and responding to government, mostly to Council. Since last July there have been 10 management meetings and three general meetings including an open House on preparing for CityPlan 2015 led by Cr Hewlett.

We held a successful film night to open the eco-lodge, Gindabarra with the award winning documentary "Sandwars" in November and a well-attended Christmas party at Mudlo. Our presence on island market days helps us stay in touch with grassroots concerns and there's always a spare chair or two for anyone wanting to chat.

We have a membership base of 278 adults and 52 children. As of today 170 adults and 25 children are currently financial, including 49 Life Members & three children.

Over the past year Coastcare lodged a formal submission on CityPlan, advocated the need for an Integrated Weed Management Plan reducing the use of herbicide spraying, highlighted vegetation destruction, sought Council solution to storm-water run-off while clarifying detail on the foreshore Plan. We continue to seek information on Council's Curlew Creek rehabilitation plans and work to keep shoreline erosion issues on the Council agenda.

To say there's frustration over the future of shoreline erosion management on Coochie is an understatement. Since 20 August 2014 when full Council (10 Councillors and Mayor) unanimously voted to establish a SEMP reference committee for Coochie we've waited for action. Obviously, patience hasn't been a virtue in this case and it seems the island's continuing erosion issues – Red Rock, the golf course and the island's north-east are in bureaucratic limbo.

Coochie may be small in population compared to the parts of Redland City but our bush-lined sandy beaches, the closest to Brisbane City attract heavy visitation, especially during peak holidays. It's disconcerting to continually have to highlight the economic value of these prized natural assets, to decision-makers.

Upon reflection the highlights of the year have been -

- Having the presence of the endangered Phaius orchid on Coochie officially recognised by the Queensland Herbarium
- Seeing Council publically recognise the environmental values of Curlew Creek and decouple its rehabilitation from the Main Beach Foreshore redevelopment
- Witnessing a vegetated fore dune develop in front of beach fencing on parts of Norfolk and the southern wetlands, burying the bottom wire in places. This confirms we can grow better beaches with best practice fencing & restricted access paths.
- The awarding of a \$10,000 Conservation grant from Redland City Council to establish “What's living in the Melaleuca Wetlands”
- Agreement by Council to implement an Integrated Weed Management Plan, reducing the use of herbicide spray
- Forming the Junior Coastcare Rangers & planning a special youth day in collaboration with Tangalooma EcoMarines during the Quandamooka Festival. This day of environmental and cultural heritage activities on Sunday 11 September will be an exciting milestone for our island

Looking ahead, the interpretive signage project for the Melaleuca Wetlands funded by a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Landcare grant from the Australian Government is a priority for completion this year. A welcome sign developed in collaboration with Traditional Owners, Quandamooka will soon be installed. I'd like to thank QYAC CEO Cameron Costello and Cultural Heritage Officer, Michael Costelloe for their assistance. An extension for completion was sought from the Commonwealth and approved after contractual issues caused delay. Our thanks also to Cheryl Bolzenius from WetlandCare Australia, our project officer for her guidance. “Promoting Ramsar Environment and Cultural Heritage values” will make a difference and we thank Cr Hewlett for his contribution of entrance signage boards to augment the project.

In December we received a Conservation grant from Redland City Council to determine “What's Living in the Melaleuca Wetlands”. Zoologist, Dr Ronda Green has completed two of the four seasonal surveys with volunteer assistance and we look forward to the next visit in July. Despite

motion sensor cameras picking up bandicoot and swamp wallaby, to date there have been no small mammals trapped. Granted it's been incredibly dry and winter is better when males are more active. We'll keep you posted.

Last year I also spoke about developing closer work relations with Council after 12 months of discussion. In November we were advised a Memorandum of Understanding was needed. We believed this could enhance collaborative work practice but last month Council decided a legal Agreement was more appropriate. Negotiations are continuing. As we're now dealing with a more complex document requiring legal and insurance advice it will take time.

I'd like to thank Council's Gary Photinos, Manager Environment & Regulation and Dave Katavic Manager Parks & Conservation for their assistance

Coastcare has current public liability insurance of \$20 million, accident & officer cover through our membership of Queensland Water and Landcarers funded by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines. It covers members on all official Coastcare duties on the dunes, wetlands, market days, meetings and events.

Summing up, I'd like to thank our members not just for their efforts on the dunes but for their support and encouragement.

Vivienne Roberts-Thomson

President Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Inc