

President's Report to the 2020 AGM of Coochiemudlo Coastcare Inc

Welcome to the seventh 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.

The 15 months since our last AGM has been challenging but despite COVID-19 we've been able to expand workzones, embrace new projects and sustain our volunteer community. There's no doubt connecting with nature keeps us grounded and for those continuing to care for the environment and each other, it's been rewarding.

To make it easier I'll touch on some highlights in chronological order starting with last October, when we received a Redland City Council Community Conservation grant of \$6,100 to develop a publication to create greater awareness of the rights and responsibilities of living in such a special place, surrounded by Marine Park and Ramsar Wetlands. The eight-page guide for residents, "*Living on the Edge*" is being developed in liaison with Council, state government and other stakeholders with the aim to preserve foreshore values and ensure the needs of both marine and terrestrial wildlife are better understood. It will offer information on a range of topics from bush-stone curlews and shorebirds, sustainable fishing and crabbing and the importance of wildlife linkages. Thanks to the members of the sub-committee, Ann Wright, Keith Stebbins and Heather Smith for helping progress the project which is due for completion early next year. It's hoped "*Living on the Edge*" will also clarify the reasoning behind local laws relating to compliance issues like beach fires, camping, vegetation clearance and animal management.

Thanks to a Councillor's Small Grant of \$750 from Cr Hewlett we were able to purchase a specially designed sling for our turtle monitors, Chris Leonard, Andrew Ross and Annie Jamieson to move sick or stranded animals. Since October 2019 - 10 stranded, dead or injured turtles have been attended to and the sling has certainly proven its worth.

In December, we were awarded a \$65,000 grant as part of the Healthy Land and Water Moreton Bay Ramsar Project to undertake chemical-free weeding to restore the Melaleuca Wetlands. I'm pleased to report the first year was successfully acquitted. In July we embarked on the second year of the four-year project, *Protecting Threatened Species and Restoring Ramsar Values*, supported by Healthy Land and Water through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare program. To successfully tackle the weed-infested hotspots in this 19-hectare site demands a co-ordinated and staged commitment. We're grateful for the collaboration with Redland City Council officers who augmented the project with complementary works. I'd like also acknowledge the guidance and on-ground support offered by Healthy Land and Water staff and the efforts of chem-free contractors Bushtekniq helping us meet the milestones.

The Project was officially launched on Saturday 1 February to celebrate World Wetlands Day and attracted 28 volunteers to a working bee.

In January, we received welcome news from the Queensland Government's Community Sustainability Action grant program that we'd successfully acquitted the two-year project,

“Promoting sustainable vegetation management and ecosystem resilience on Coochiemudlo Island” This had enabled us to purchase the saturated steam weeder, train operators including five QYAC Rangers and expand our work footprint on island. The steamer is now an integral part of our toolkit used around the wetlands fringe, six watercourses and existing dunal workzones stretching over one and a half kilometres from Main Beach east to the trees’ graveyard in the north-east.

In May, Healthy Land and Water provided \$453 funding for project signage to be used at Coastcare work sites, while in July we were surprised by a donation of \$500 from the Redland Bay, Victoria Point Lions Club. A wonderful gesture from a caring organisation.

In June we negotiated another 12-month work permit with Council covering six hectares of conservation coastline, including two new zones for solo weeders covered under Coastcare’s insurance. The permit also covers work throughout weed hotspots in the Melaleuca Wetlands.

Since the 2019 AGM, we’ve held 14 management, one general and three joint meetings with Cr Hewlett and Kim Richards MP plus countless meetings with council officers and network partners. Members enjoyed another great Christmas party at Mudlo in December thanks to Carolyn Brammer and participated in Markets up until Australia Day when COVID-19 saw us step back from crowds.

Our greatest resource is our people & today I’d like to pay special tribute to the late Bruce Wollstein who passed away in July. Fondly referred to as our Elder, Bruce’s single-handed weeding efforts along the western mangroves over 28 years, wisdom and guiding hand is sorely missed.

I’d like to acknowledge the effort of members of the management committee. In January, Bill Whyte resigned as Treasurer due to work commitments and Betty-Ann Bellette was appointed to fill a temporary vacancy in accordance with the Model Rules under which we operate. We’re indebted to Bill for his guidance and particularly wife Lyn who continues to assist. I’d also like to acknowledge the efforts of Andrew Ross who stands down from the committee today after two years. We appreciate Andrew’s ongoing commitment as a turtle monitor and saturated steam weeding operator. Thanks also to Gaye Richardson, who is standing down as Secretary but will remain on the management committee.

I’d also like to acknowledge the efforts of my husband, Graeme who retires from the committee today after seven and a half years. He’s recently been appointed to the board of South East Queensland Catchment Members Association (SEQCMA) representing the Coastal and Marine Division. SEQCMA is an alliance between community, government and industry focussed on finding solutions to issues affecting South East Qld environment. The organisation is the owner/member of Healthy Land and Water. Graeme has also been appointed SEQCMA’s representative on Healthy Land and Water’s newly-launched \$1.2 million project “Implementing Priority Actions to Reduce Threats to Migratory Shorebirds in the Moreton Bay Ramsar Site.”

On behalf of the membership I sincerely thank Bill, Andrew and Graeme for their contribution to Coastcare. We're also indebted to Keith Slack who provides us with great mapping and the island's wonderful Native Nursery for supplying over 300 plants.

Main issues this past year, outside the grant projects and supporting volunteers during the pandemic, centred around the developing Shoreline Erosion Management Plan; environmental health risks in the Melaleuca Wetlands and locating a permanent home for Coastcare.

The storm surge from ex-TC Oswald devastated our eastern beaches in 2013, and after restoration works, Coastcare advocated for a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan. The first SEMP started later that year with consultants, WBM BMT but was downgraded to an Erosion Study by Council resolution in 2015.

Three years ago a SEMP Community Reference Group was formed and we started the process again with the same consultancy. Coastcare has been represented at 11 meetings and provided feedback at each stage. It's been an arduous process and the final SEMP was presented by consultants, BMT during a Skype meeting this week. It now goes to state government before being returned to Council for approval.

A record of the CRG meetings can be found on Council's website
<https://yoursay.redland.qld.gov.au/Coochiemudlo-Island-Shoreline-Erosion-Management-Plan>

The key finding, first highlighted by Dr Mark Pillsworth at the August 2019 CRG meeting is that there is "no external source of sand for the eastern side of the island" This fact was discussed and agreed to by consultants, Malcolm Andrews, Jessie Cullen and locals, Drs Pillsworth and Gourlay and is included in the revised February 2020 Shoreline Erosion Study (SES), part of the SEMP. The implications are serious as the only sand feeding Morwong and the southern beaches comes from erosion of the eastern shoreline.

Coastcare looks forward to recommended beach nourishment before the storm season to restore the resilience of the frontal dune, from Control Points 2-4 along Norfolk Beach and to preserve the integrity of the RAMSAR-listed Melaleuca Wetlands, heritage-listed Emerald Fringe and Matthew Flinders 1799 landing site. It's reassuring to know Council already has permits in place to undertake nourishment of 5000 cubic metres per annum.

We hold grave concern, however, at suggestion the Queensland government could call for removal of the two geobag walls on Norfolk as Development Applications submitted by Council are still unapproved. One wall, beside the eroded track is totally buried under sand and covered with vegetation while the other abutting Control Point Three protects valued community and council infrastructure as well as iconic eucalypts on a heritage-listed beach. Neither structure, according to the consultants, is causing detriment to the beach.

We're calling for a commonsense approach and don't believe the potential damage to beach amenity, environment, infrastructure and nearby property has been assessed.

Groundwater testing continues in the Melaleuca Wetlands following a commitment by Council to investigate a report commissioned by Coastcare highlighting environmental

health risks from confirmed heavy metal contamination in the vicinity of the closed landfill site. A review of water quality of the reserve by deveco (2017) found heavy metal (copper and zinc) levels to exceed the 95% protection of freshwater species. Heavy metals concentration in the area has been elevated for a long duration and is thought to have been impacting the ecosystem for over 16-years.

Engineering consultancy GHD undertook extensive works and two reports were released by Council in March last year. Groundwater testing continues. On Council's recommendation Coastcare this week initiated a Right to Information process to access water quality data since December 2018.

At last year's AGM, I reported on progress for the search for a block of land for a shed that started four years ago. Between the saturated steam weeder, equipment trailer and everything else we've accumulated, Coastcare is desperate for a home but the journey is long. This year, discussions have progressed with Council over a possible site shared with the island's Native nursery. Whatever happens Coastcare will need to access grant funding to build premises and negotiate agreement with Council.

As at 10 September, current financial membership totalled 167 including 113 Life members. Coastcare has a healthy membership base & historically it usually takes until September to collect the majority of annual dues. Another family renewal was collected on the day, taking financial members to 169.

Since last year's AGM, Coastcarers have contributed 769 official volunteer hours to hands-on environmental work. Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures 2017-18, volunteers are now worth \$41.72 per hour so that translates to \$32,082. Add external funding of \$65,953 (excluding Council) and that equates to a contribution of \$98,035.00 ex GST to the care of Coochiemudlo Island.

The Management Committee advises members that the Association has current Public Liability Insurance of \$30,000,000. This coverage is provided through our membership of Queensland Water and Land Carers with funds provided by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Management Committee sincere thanks to Cr Hewlett and Kim Richards for their guidance and support. To those supportive Council officers who've helped us achieve such positive outcomes and to our network partners, Healthy Land and Water and Queensland Water and Landcarers, thank-you.

Our gratitude goes to the volunteers who tend the dunes, conservation reserves and wetlands and all those who work quietly behind the scenes.

Vivienne Roberts-Thomson