



President's Report June 2022 AGM

Welcome to the 2022 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, present and emerging.

COVID and unprecedented weather events took their toll on Coastcare activity this year hampering effort at times to meet environmental challenge but I'm pleased to report we survived the increased workload.

At the outset, I'd like to extend sincere thanks to members of the management committee who have worked so well as a team and provided the strength and resolve with decision-making, well beyond meeting attendance, liaising with external stakeholders at times and also providing leadership to our all-important volunteers who contribute so much to the environmental care of the island.

I'm delighted that Bryan Dyball, Helen Pickford, Treasurer, Betty-Ann Bellette and Secretary, Jane Caldwell are standing for re-election and sad to farewell Gaye & Peter Richardson. Gaye had also been secretary in 2019 while Peter served 3 years on the SEMP Community Reference Group before joining the Committee last June. Thank-you for your contribution, Gaye and Peter and we're reassured by your promise to remain active. I'd also like to acknowledge the IT efforts of Stephen Nuske, who within weeks of being elected at last year's AGM was lured overseas for work.

We're pleased that Nici Buirski and Tom and Jay Lima and have nominated for committee roles bringing with them a passion for the environment and wildlife.

Tonight, is the opportunity to acknowledge the effort of all members, including those who provide the moral support that sustains our organisation. Coastcare wouldn't be viable without you. Maintaining 11/2 kilometres of conservation foreshores over 61/2 hectares including the wetlands is a role we take seriously. To those who participate in working bees, solo and steam weeders, turtle monitors and motivated individuals like Keith Slack who is painstakingly monitoring shoreline change with Michael Gourlay and now surveying veteran trees around the Emerald Fringe, we offer sincere thanks.

It's been a busy week on several fronts. On Thursday, Redland City Council bought down its Budget which included \$384,000 in funding to implement the recommendations of Coochiemudlo's Shoreline Erosion Management Plan. We understand it includes increased monitoring, sand renourishment and vegetation and stormwater management. We're expecting further detail shortly. Next January is the 10th anniversary of the devastating storm surge from ex-TC Oswald and a harsh reminder of the need for shoreline resilience.

On Monday, we submitted the acquittal report finalizing the third year of a four-year weeding grant for the Melaleuca Wetlands, "Protecting threatened species and restoring Ramsar values." This \$65,000 project is supported by Healthy Land and Water through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program with assistance from chemical-free contractors, Bushtekniq and supported by Redland City Council. Coastcare is targeting weeds in hot-spot locations, including waterways to reduce threats and restore habitat. The past 12 months has seen diverse and prolific natural regeneration of previously weeded areas. However, operations since June 2021 have been hampered by heavy rain of over two metres making conditions unworkable at times but providing a wonderful boost to vegetation growth.

Thanks to Cr Hewlett with \$3,300 funding from the Mayor and Councillors Community Benefit Fund we were able to augment the project and extend saturated steaming to the east of the Laurie Burns oval, abutting the wetlands fence to reduce an infestation of Singapore Daisy. In December, Council also installed weed matting around perimeter fencing of the Waste Transfer Station to reduce weed spread.

Last July, we were pleased to confirm a \$2,500 funding grant from Healthy Land and Water to engage a specialist consultant arborist to survey and provide an amenity value of significant foreshore trees. Priority included at-risk trees along the eastern shoreline. We saw this as assisting Council-endorsed recommendations of the Shoreline Erosion Management Plan for immediate beach replenishment "to repair remnant existing erosion on Norfolk Beach and return the beaches to functional units." You can't separate the trees from the beach – they're part of our Heritage-listed Emerald Fringe and anyone who's walked the eastern beaches can see what's at risk.

The valuation method used for the assessment is the revised Burnley Method (*used by Councils around Australia & referred to in Courts of Law*) and is achieved by determining the cost per cubic metre or crown volume for the same species, purchased from a nursery, multiplied by the crown volume of the subject tree. The valuation is then multiplied by modifiers for form and vigour, useful life expectancy and location suitability to determine the amenity value. We're indebted to Arbor Australis Consulting for the assessment report which was originally based on 15 trees, but 74 were itemised. It should be noted the valuation does not take into consideration ecological, historical or commercial crop value – it's purely an amenity value.

With emphasis on protecting "hard" infrastructure – toilet blocks, fences, picnic settings the report provides serious reading considering our most valuable amenity tree, a Northern grey Ironbark comes in at \$701,792. Coastcare believes the Arbor Australis report is a start to providing a new level of care for our veteran trees. We're currently awaiting feedback from Council on the findings which includes recommendations for tree management. We look forward to sharing the full report on our website soon.

In late September we hosted a visit to Coochiemudlo by Cr Hewlett with Council officers led by General Manager, Infrastructure and Operations, Nicole Davis along with representatives from Healthy Land and Water. The purpose was to discuss the current state of erosion and opportunities to support Ramsar values during implementation of the Shoreline Erosion Management Plan. The group also inspected the wetlands weeding project. Talks continued between Council and Healthy Land and Water and funding subsequently became available to engage consultants to undertake a foreshore restoration project for the Melaleuca Wetlands to increase the resilience of the frontal dune. We understand negotiations continue between Council and Healthy Land and Water and look forward to an update soon.

At the same time, we were advised that after 71/2 years, the Queensland government finally approved the geobags on Norfolk Beach. At the last SEMP Community Reference Group Meeting in 2020 Coastcare had been invited to support Council's DA submission and we were pleased to do so. The rain events and subsequent erosion damage has proved that effective storm water management is integral to managing the conservation foreshores of the Emerald Fringe.

In September we were approached by Conservation Volunteers Australia with whom we'd worked previously to assess our interest in an environmental partnership to support restoration efforts in the Melaleuca Wetlands. It was one of 10 sites chosen across Australia for a three-year initiative to engage locals to contribute to conservation action supporting habitat improvement for threatened and endangered species, as well as innovative blue carbon research. The project supported by Chevron Australia, builds-on existing restoration of our freshwater wetlands, part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site, recognized as internationally significant under the "The Convention of Wetlands of International Importance." After weeks of discussion and with Council support we agreed, and the project was launched on Coochie on World Wetlands Day at our first working bee of the year. It saw a great roll-up of supporters including Member for Redlands, Kim Richards, Cr Lance Hewlett, Queensland Chief Scientist, Professor Hugh Possingham and Quandamooka representative Matt Burns who provided a Welcome to Country.

Professor Possingham paid tribute to indigenous Australians as "the first scientists, stewards and educators of land" and talked about traditional knowledge slowly being passed onto assist management of the modern world. He stressed the importance of freshwater wetlands which have shown the greatest decline in biodiversity. According to the Living Planet Index 75% of freshwater life has been lost in the last 50 years.

Since then CVA helped us celebrate International Women's Day in March with leading wetlands scientist, Dr Fernande Adame providing a fascinating address on blue carbon research after joining wetland weeders for a couple of hours. The monthly visits by CVA volunteers to plant and weed are proving beneficial.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest disappointments of the year was the inability to acquit the \$6,100 Council Conservation grant for the "Living on the Edge" publication in time and the unspent funds were returned. The eight- page booklet to create greater awareness of the rights and responsibilities of living in such a special place, surrounded by Marine Park and Ramsar wetlands is sorely needed and we've been encouraged to reapply. Thanks to the sub-committee, Keith Stebbins, Heather Smith and Ann Wright who contributed so much.

In October we received a surprise grant of \$1000 from RedVic Lions. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of this hard-working service club of 14 members to support environmental care on island. In turn we helped market their renown Christmas cakes and puddings.

Since the last AGM, outside regular monthly working bees with weeding and planting and four extra events with CVA, we've held 10 management meetings, maintained the wetland project and enjoyed a successful Christmas breakup. We find market days are beneficial for helping keep in touch with the wider community and we hope to restore quarterly general meetings over the coming months.

We currently have 162 financial members including 122 life members. Historically it takes until September to collect annual dues, eg at December 30 we had 189 financial members.

Since last year's AGM, Coastcarers have contributed 473 volunteer hours to hands-on environmental work. With volunteers now valued at \$41.72/hour by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that equates to a contribution of \$19,733 to the environmental care of the island.

The long-term quest for a permanent home for our two trailers and accumulated equipment is hopefully coming to an end following successful meetings with council officers during the year. The next step is for Council to approve the allocation of a parcel of land where we can develop a shed nestled back amongst native vegetation on Elizabeth Street, just south of the Energex depot. Thanks to the building sub-committee, Graeme Roberts-Thomson, Gaye and Peter Richardson and Bryan Dyball for their assistance as well as guidance from architect Kurt Piccardi. We'll need approximately \$40,000 for the build and look forward to showcasing native vegetation from the island nursery. We're so grateful for the 1200 tubestock provided this year by the native nursery.

Over Christmas and thanks to generous sponsorship by Kim Richards, Member for Redlands, supported by Cr Hewlett, Coastcare facilitated wader bird signage on both the Coochiemudlo and Victoria Point jetties while Council installed the anodised aluminium signs.

Raising public awareness of the importance to preserve shorebird habitat and not disturbing migratory shorebirds is the key to their survival.

Coochiemudlo island is surrounded by important shorebird feeding mudflats including feeding areas for the critically endangered Eastern Curlew. You can help by observing quietly from a distance, reducing boat speed near shorebirds and avoiding flocks. Dogs can frighten shorebirds. Disturbance of shorebirds or habitat can attract an on-the-spot fine.

Our three turtle monitors, Annie Jamieson, Andrew Ross and Chris Leonard recorded 17 mortalities, mostly green turtles since July 1, 2021. The trio respond to call outs from the public and phone contacts are recorded on the jetty noticeboard and Coochiemudlo Island News. Annie, Andrew and Chris have undergone specialized training with National Parks and Wildlife to deal with marine strandings and mortalities and feed important data to Marine Parks.

Coastcare will be upgrading its website with greater information about wildlife care, shoreline erosion and current projects shortly, thanks to receipt of a \$3,300 Redland City Council Community support grant last week. This will increase Coastcare's ability to deliver information services and connect with network partners allowing islanders to benefit from online access to current, relevant environmental information. Increasingly, the community is concerned about our unique island home and preserving its diverse but vulnerable ecosystems.

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

I'd like to close by thanking Kim Richards MP and Cr Lance Hewlett for their guidance and support over the years and also Redland City Council officers who work with us at the coalface, as well as Healthy Land and Waters and Conservation Volunteers Australia

Vivienne Roberts-Thomson