

President's Report 2023 AGM

Welcome to the 2023 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.

Welcome to the Member for Redlands, Kim Richards MP and Councillor Lance Hewlett. I'd like to extend a special welcome to our guest speaker, the Honourable Pat Comben, Heritage Society President, Jan MacIntyre, members and friends.

Today is a time for accolades. In the midst of our 10th anniversary year, I'd like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to past management committees as well as those currently committed to environmental effort and progressing important initiatives on island.

I'm pleased that Vice-President, Bryan Dyball; Secretary Jane Caldwell; Treasurer, Betty-Ann Bellette and Nici Buirski are standing for re-election. Although sad that Tom and Jay Lima are standing down, we're reassured by promises this duo won't be far from the action. We also appreciate the commitment of Helen Pickford who's retiring after four year's service to focus on home-building and grand-parenting duty.

We look forward to welcoming Bruce Stevens, Denise Johnston and John Fletcher who have nominated for election, bringing refreshed vigour to your committee.

I'd also like to acknowledge the ongoing, tireless effort of members participating in island restoration, planting and weeding, turtle monitors, individual weeders, steam weeders, photographers, writers and all those who contribute quietly behind the scenes to the environmental care of our island.

Sadly, we lost two valued members during the year, Ian Rowland who generously donated his time and effort recording important events like today, and Diane Gilham whose love of nature, keen eye and artistic talent showcased the environment we strive to preserve. Their works remain core references.

Since the last AGM, our anniversary year has been full of milestone memories. Previously, we reported in chronological order but today we're retracing the moments, starting with the latest and biggest surprise just a week ago. Overnight, Redland City Council announced beach restoration works, as recommended in the [2020 Shoreline Erosion Management Plan \(SEMP\)](#) starting the following day on Friday 16 June. Coastcare had advocated strongly for the budgeted \$384,000 to be rolled-out before 30 June, otherwise operational funding would be lost.

Due to reported budget constraints and cost blow-outs we haven't see the full implementation of the SEMP's top recommendation for the nourishment of 2,400 cubic metres along the eastern shoreline. However, over eight days the Wetlands Beach from the creek north received 340 cubic metres of sand, with works still to be finalised.

Results will be closely monitored by drone survey with citizen science capturing sand movement at soon-to-be installed Coastsnap stations erected along the Wetlands and south-east Norfolk beaches and at the jetty. Our high-value freshwater Melaleuca Wetlands, part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site was targeted as the area at greatest risk where salt-water intrusion, as well as loss of significant vegetation could occur. This is a work in progress and Coastcare is committed to ensuring the full

recommendations of the SEMP, endorsed the Queensland government are implemented on Coochiemudlo Island.

I'd like to acknowledge the effort of Cr Hewlett who chaired the SEMP Community Reference Group over three years from 2017, council officers for overseeing the roll-out of SEMP initiatives and Healthy Land and Water for continued funding commitment that has allowed Coastcare to undertake planned revegetation of the newly-replenished wetlands dune.

Little did we know that we'd be winding-up our four-year wetland weeding project supported by Healthy Land and Water with funding from the Australian Government's Landcare program at the same time as fast-tracking a new restoration project. With revegetation starting next Thursday we're calling for assistance from volunteers to bed approximately 2,5000 dune species. Thanks to our native nursery we have a healthy tray of *sporobolus virginicus*, our toughest local marine couch. I'd like to thank the native nursery for the hundreds of tube stock they've provided Coastcare.

At the start of the 2022-23 year we were buoyed by an increased spend of \$20,000 to tackle weed infestation in hot spot locations of the Melaleuca Wetlands under the "Protecting threatened species and restoring Ramsar values" project. Over \$85,000 has now been spent over four years improving eco-system health supported by Healthy Land and Water through funding from the Australian Government's national Landcare Program. Chem-free contractors, Bushtekniq have worked closely with Coastcare to target hot-spot locations to preserve both endangered species and ecological community – the Threatened Coastal Swamp Sclerophyll Forest of New South Wales and South-East Queensland, protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection or EPBC Act.

While weed infestation is one of the main threats to our Melaleuca Wetlands and reduction effort is enabling native revegetation to re-establish, improving the integrity to the wetland ecosystem and habitat to fauna, there are other issues at play which aren't uncommon in south-east Queensland, we're told. The wetlands surround a waste transfer station and are downslope of an unsupervised landfill, now sportsfield. Several years ago Coastcare raised concern over the environmental health risk of confirmed heavy metal contamination in ground-water in the vicinity of the closed landfill and further downstream. Regular monitoring continues.

As an organisation, we're passionate about undertaking ecosystem protection and restoration without the use of chemicals. During the course of the project we've seen Council install weed matting and undertake complementary works around the waste transfer station to reduce weed spread and additional chem-free weeding adjacent to the oval. As with all weed control, ongoing maintenance is critical. The challenge now, is how best to continue the momentum and see lush native regeneration replace the disturbed wetlands edge of garden escapees. We share a collective responsibility with government and property owners fringing the wetlands to ensure there's no backward step.

A major highlight of our reporting year was the decision by Council in September to grant Coastcare a lease of 340 square metres of land on the bushland corner of Elizabeth Street, adjacent to the track to the community shed, opposite the Energex site. We're currently involved in contractual negotiations with Council and hope to progress building an Environmental Hub over the existing concrete pad of the old gym before the end of the year. After seven years, we'll finally have a home-base for our equipment, work trailer and saturated steam-weeder as well as a meeting and training facility.

Without doubt, our close working relationship with Conservation Volunteers Australia through the Revive the Wetlands campaign sponsored by Chevron has energised our group with additional

volunteer support and environmental activity, in particular cultural heritage experiences. The support for on-round weeding and planting that has seen corporate and school groups in our council-approved work-zones is greatly appreciated.

Again, we were grateful for RedVic Lions donation of \$500 and this was spent upgrading first-aid qualifications for five members, including two of our turtle monitors Chris Leonard and Andrew Ross. Along with Annie Jamieson, the specially-trained monitors share the often-thankless task of dealing with strandings and mortalities around Coochiemudlo Island. Since 1 July 2022 they have buried 19 turtles including three trapped in crab-pots, four boat strikes, two possible boat/jet ski strikes and 10 deaths unknown with only one released alive. We acknowledge the valuable work the team undertakes recording data and reporting to Marine Parks. Thanks Chris, Andrew and Annie.

I'd also like to thank Angela Hoskins who has been assisting us with funding from a \$3000 Community Support grant from Redland City Council to upgrade Coastcare's website.

Since the last AGM on 25 June 2023 33 Coastcare volunteers have contributed over 478 hours of documented on-ground effort across 1 ½ kilometres of shorelines and wetlands in Council-approved workzones. The effort, calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics at \$46.72 per hour equates to a physical contribution of \$22,284.36 towards the environmental care of the island.

Our management committee has held 13-meetings and monthly Dunecares continue to attract solid support as we work our way around the island from Main Beach east to the "Trees Graveyard" on the north. We've participated in two Ramsar network forums organised by Healthy Land and Water that bring together stakeholders, including government and community groups undertaking project works around the Moreton Bay Ramsar site. As well, Nici and I attended a Ramsar workshop on Minjerriabah a couple of weeks ago with a mix of scientists, local government officers and community representatives from as far afield as Pine Rivers which further heightened awareness of the value of our Ramsar surrounds.

Undoubtedly, the social highlight of 2023 was our 10th birthday celebration on the verandah of Carolyn Brammer's "Mudlo," the site of our first meeting a decade earlier when 13-people gathered on 13 January 2013 to form a local Coastcare organisation. I'd like to pay tribute to Carolyn, Coastcare's founding President for her generosity on the night and her leadership after a storm surge from ex-TC Oswald devastated the eastern side of the island, just days after we formed. That surge gouged sand off more than a kilometre of the shoreline and precious Emeral Fringe, downing trees, compromised our Ramsar-listed freshwater Melaleuca Wetlands and destroyed infrastructure.

We reached out to council, state and federal government as well as WetlandCare Australia and SEQ Catchments. The short-term risk at Coochiemudlo was deemed high and after thorough assessment of affected areas in SE Queensland, SEQ Catchments fortunately decided to invest in recovery on island. A collaborative course of action was set with Redland City Council and Coastcare.

Funding pulled from other projects provided a lifeline for Coochie as a team of contractors worked for six weeks restoring beaches, moving sand, standing trees upright and reopening access paths. The community rallied with mass plantings restoring the dunes to create a more resilient shoreline and that work continues today. We're now seeing the roll-out of the SEMP recommendations, supported by the Queensland Government.

The Management Committee advises members that the Association has current Public Liability Insurance of \$20,000,000. This coverage is provided by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Management Committee, our thanks to Cr Hewlett and Kim Richards MP for their ongoing support and guidance as well as the Member for Bowman, Henry Pike who recently undertook an inspection of Australian government-funded Coastcare projects.

We're indebted to our network partners, Healthy Land and Water who are responsible for overseeing federally-funded environmental grants and Queensland Water and Landcarers who provide our insurance and governance advice.

Thank-you all.