

Cooks River Alliance

Annual Report 2013-2014



 **CooksRiver**
ALLIANCE

Ashfield
Bankstown
Canterbury
City of Sydney
Hurstville
Marrickville
Rockdale
Strathfield

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Cooks River Alliance Annual Report reports on activities of the Cooks River Alliance (the 'Alliance') for 2013-2014, the third year of operation.

The Cooks River Alliance is a partnership of eight of the thirteen councils in the Cooks River catchment. The members are Ashfield Council, Bankstown City Council, City of Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville City Council, Marrickville Council, Rockdale City Council and Strathfield Council.

This report covers achievements under the first Cooks River Alliance Action Plan, adopted by the Alliance Board in September 2012. That Action Plan can be downloaded here: <http://cooksriver.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Attachment-C-Cooks-River-Alliance-Action-Plan.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

The Cooks River Alliance mission statement is: *"Councils working together with communities for a healthy Cooks River catchment"*. The mission statement recognises that councils have a key role in the management of stormwater on public and private lands; can harness the collective action of communities; have regulatory relationships with the NSW State Government; and are well placed to collaborate with stakeholders to implement change at the household, streetscape, neighbourhood and regional scale.

The 2013-2014 period consolidated the first triennium of the Alliance, which has been characterised by establishing, developing and refining organisational direction, staffing and operations. Highlights for 2013-2014 included gaining grant funding from Australian and NSW Governments, and employing a full complement of member-funded Alliance staff, as well as strong achievements in stakeholder and community engagement and communications. Also, the effectiveness of the Catchment Stakeholders forums has resulted in greater collaboration to improve the health of the Cooks River catchment.

Key achievements

Key achievements of the 2013-2014 reporting period included:

- Receiving \$2 million in Australian Government funding and starting the Cooks River Place.People.Connections project, running until 2017
- Confirming that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the Appropriate Regulatory Authority for areas of the River that are not under Sydney Water or councils responsibility
- Working closely with Georges River Combined Councils' Committee (CRCCC) for a jointly funded independent review of the River Health and RiverScience programs
- Increasing community engagement and communications activity
- Working with the Ethnic Communities Council and local communities, schools and general community to increase understanding of catchment health
- Working with councils to write and implement the Alliance Social Media Plan and Policy
- Promoting, quantifying and explaining the value of the Alliance to members
- Development and renewal of strategic planning documentation, resulting in the new Management Plan 2014 and Action Plan 2014-2017
- Receiving a \$110,500 grant from the EPA for the *Cooks River: Cutting the Litter* project

- Re-establishing the Intensive Corrections Order clean-up teams with the Department of Corrective Services
- Winning the Local Government NSW annual Natural Policies, Planning and Decision Making Award for the original Cooks River Alliance Management Plan and Action Plan

“The councils received the award for the Cooks River Alliance management and action plans, which enable the Alliance to achieve its mission of councils working together for a healthy Cooks River catchment... ‘The team effort from all members provides for a combined approach to maximise resources’” (Canterbury Bankstown Express, 14 January 2014)

THE ALLIANCE

In 2011, the Cooks River Alliance was formally established through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the eight member councils.

The Alliance is made up of eight of the thirteen councils who have land in the Cooks River catchment. In April 2014 the Alliance formally invited the remaining councils to join: Auburn City Council, Burwood Council, City of Botany Bay, Randwick City Council and Kogarah City Council. Although none took up the offer through 2013-2014, discussions with potential new members of the Alliance are always welcome.

Governance

The Alliance secretariat is generously hosted by Strathfield Council. The Alliance operates at four levels: Board, Executive Management, Steering Committee and staff.

The Terms of Reference “detail the framework for collaboration between each party in relation to the operation of the Cooks River Alliance organisational and decision making roles and responsibilities”.

The Alliance Code of Meeting Practice “provides for the convening and orderly conduct of meetings of the Cooks River Alliance Board and Executive Committee”.

The Board adopted the Terms of Reference and Code of Meeting Practice at their March 2013 meeting.

The Board

The Cooks River Alliance Board is the key governance and decision-making body of the Alliance. The Board is made up of one councillor from each member council and three community representatives.

Alliance Board members:

- Councillor Brian Robson, Mayor of City of Canterbury (Chair of the Board)
- Councillor Philip Sansom, Hurstville City Council (Deputy Chair of the Board)
- Councillor Lucille McKenna, Mayor of Ashfield Council
- Councillor Khal Asfour, Mayor of Bankstown City Council
- Councillor Christine Forster, City of Sydney
- Councillor Victor Macri, Mayor of Marrickville Council (to September 2013)
- Councillor David Leary, Marrickville Council (from October 2013)
- Councillor Shane O’Brien, Mayor of Rockdale City Council

- Councillor Andrew Soulos, Strathfield Council
- Helen Hume, Community Representative
- John Butcher, Community Representative
- Paul Thomas, Community Representative

Alliance Board member alternatives:

- Councillor Monica Wangmann, Ashfield Council
- Councillor Naji Najjar, Bankstown City Council
- Councillor Linda Eisler, City of Canterbury
- Councillor Linda Scott, City of Sydney
- Councillor Chris Woods, Marrickville Council
- Councillor Liz Barlow, Rockdale City Council
- Councillor Daniel Bott, Strathfield Council

Board Meetings

Board meetings are attended by Board members, member council staff and Alliance staff. In the 2013-2014 financial year, Board meetings were held on:

- **19 September 2013**, hosted by Hurstville City Council. Board members in attendance: Cr Robson, Cr Sansom, Cr Barlow, Cr Soulos, Mr John Butcher and Mr Paul Thomas
- **20 November 2013**, hosted by City of Sydney. Board members in attendance: Cr Robson, Cr Sansom, Cr McKenna, Cr Najjar, Cr Leary, Cr Forster, Cr Soulos, Ms Helen Hume, Mr John Butcher and Mr Paul Thomas
- **20 March 2014**, hosted by Marrickville Council. Board members in attendance: Cr Leary, Cr Najjar, Cr Forster, Cr Soulos, Mr John Butcher and Mr Paul Thomas
- **18 June 2014**, hosted by Ashfield Council. Board members in attendance: Cr McKenna, Cr Najjar, Cr Robson, Cr Forster, Cr Sansom, Ms Helen Hume, Mr John Butcher and Mr Paul Thomas

Executive and Steering Committees

The Executive Committee oversees the progress of Alliance operations, manages the composition of Board meeting agendas, and supervises the Project Manager. The Executive Committee is made up of the Alliance Chair Cr Brian Robson, Deputy Chair Cr Philip Sansom, a representative from the host council Strathfield, and representatives from two other member councils. It meets before each Board Meeting.

The Steering Committee meets eight times a year to undertake and facilitate delivery of the Alliance Management and Action Plans, direct the work of Alliance staff and action groups, and to make recommendations to the Alliance Board. The Steering Committee comprises at least one representative from each member council and all Alliance staff.

Council personnel who were part of both the Executive and Steering Committee:

- Nell Graham, Team Leader Environmental Strategy, City of Canterbury
- Jim Fraser, Acting Manager Environmental Services, Marrickville Council
- David Dekel, Coordinator Environmental Strategy, Rockdale City Council
- Cathy Jones, Corporate Strategy Coordinator, Strathfield Council

Council staff who participated in the Steering Committee included:

- Janene Harris, Team Leader Sustainability, Ashfield Council
- Sarah Kamarudin, Sustainability Officer, Ashfield Council
- Vila Gupta, Catchment Management Planner, Bankstown City Council
- Lisa Currie, Manager Water Strategy, City of Sydney
- Alison Hanlon, Manager Environmental Sustainability, Hurstville City Council
- Kathryn Godfrey, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, Hurstville City Council
- Mimy Wang, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, Hurstville City Council
- Jean Brennan, Coordinator Water and Catchments, Marrickville Council
- Victoria Currie, Team Leader Biodiversity Environmental Services, Marrickville Council
- Alex Vandine, Environmental Strategist, Rockdale City Council
- Mark Latham, Sustainability Officer, Strathfield Council

Alliance Staff

The Cooks River Alliance employs a small team to manage the day-to-day activities of the Alliance, drive the implementation of the Cooks River Alliance Management Plan and Action Plan, and to maximise the efficient use of member councils' limited resources.

In 2013-2014, the Alliance Team included:

- Chris Hudson, Project Manager from February 2013 – present
- Jasmine Payget, Community Engagement & Education Coordinator from October 2013 – present
- Meg Wray, Communications Support Officer (part time) from October 2013 – present
- Shefali Chakrabarty, Environmental Engineer from October 2011 – August 2014

PROGRAM 1: CAPACITY BUILDING

Context

Cooks River councils have been learning from each other, to the benefit of the catchment, since at least 1998 when The Cooks River Foreshores Working Group was formed. Sharing information and increasing the ability of council staff to effectively and efficiently do their jobs are central factors behind the formation of the Cooks River Alliance.

Achievements

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) integrates water cycle management into urban planning and design. Raingardens are an element of WSUD which capture and filter stormwater, prior to it entering the River. To increase members' capacity for Water Sensitive Urban Design, the Alliance established a project to assess the performance of raingardens and to communicate changes needed for increased raingarden effectiveness. A formal partnership was forged with the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and research protocol has been confirmed in partnership with members and the University. The work with UWS will provide practical guidance on how to improve raingarden design and performance. The research is part of the Cooks River Place.People.Connections project funded by the Commonwealth.

At the December 2013 Alliance Capacity Building Action Group meeting, it was decided that the Alliance would not undertake a needs and gap analysis, as indicated in the Action Plan. Instead, the Alliance undertook a program of activities meeting the needs of member councils. Through 2013-2014, the Alliance has provided recommendations and funding for training opportunities, as shown in the table below.

| Date | Event | Attendance | Details |
|---------------|---|---|---|
| November 2013 | MUSIC (Model for Urban Stormwater Improvement Conceptualisation) | 14 Bankstown City Council staff including engineers, and planners | Training across of range of employees from different Council departments increased internal capacity |
| November 2013 | Arup presentation on 'Demonstrating Climate Change Adaptation to Interconnected Water Infrastructure' | 19 participants | Attendance at the workshop instigated member interest in the associated decision making tool |
| April 2014 | Sydney Weeds Committee – forum | 6 participants from member councils | This meeting informed the August 2014 Alliance Catchment Stakeholders Meeting, and encouraged greater Alliance member participation in the Sydney Weeds Committee |
| June 2014 | Water Sensitive Cities CRS & Monash Water for Liveability Centre: 2014 Winter School | 5 participants from the Alliance, Bankstown City Council, Hurstville City Council, City of Canterbury, Marrickville Council and Strathfield Council | The 2014 Winter School taught on water management from an interdisciplinary perspective and linked to lessons from the international community |

The Alliance also pursued membership in the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities, which provides events and seminars on best practice for water sensitive urban design.

Performance measures

- Training events
- Formal partnership established with the University of Western Sydney
- All councils participated in training activities and events

PROGRAM 2: CATCHMENT-WIDE MONITORING

Context

The Alliance has been working with the GRCCC to operate the River Health monitoring program in the Cooks River since 2011. The program monitors ecological factors to provide an assessment of catchment health. In 2013 member's funds were expended to support the program for the first time, following cessation of GRCCC's grant funding of River Health.

In September 2013, the Alliance contracted CTENVIRONMENTAL, to continue River Health sampling with GRCCC and deliver technical reports for the Cooks River, until September 2014.

The RiverScience Ecological Monitoring Program ran from 2005-2011 to provide Canterbury, Kogarah, Marrickville and Rockdale councils with baseline data on the ecological health of the River.

Achievements

River Health Report Card

In August 2013, the 2012-2013 River Health Report Card was released, illustrating results from the second year of River Health monitoring in the Cooks River. The report card has been used at education and engagement events to explain both the River and local issues. The card can be downloaded here: <http://www.georgesriver.org.au/River-Health-Report-Cards.html>

River Health and RiverScience review

In 2013, the Board determined that on-going member funding of River Health would be contingent upon an independent review of the River Health and RiverScience programs. Working together, GRCCC and the Alliance commissioned consultancy BMT WBM Pty Ltd (BMT) to review the programs. BMT were briefed to provide recommendations for an effective and sustainable ecological monitoring program for the Georges and Cooks Rivers. As part of the process, extensive consultation was undertaken with the Alliance and GRCCC member councils, including two workshops in December 2013 and February 2014. Members were also surveyed on their perspectives of the programs.

The final BMT review was delivered in June 2014. The Alliance and GRCCC worked closely with member councils to assess the review's recommendations. The majority of recommendations have been accepted, with

implementation currently underway. The dormant RiverScience program was not recommended for revival, although some elements were identified as relevant for the River Health program.

The review developed a vision, objectives, and a comprehensive suite of specific actions. The adopted vision for River Health Program is: *To be a primary means of engagement and collaboration for understanding and improving the ecosystem health of the Georges and Cooks Rivers flowing into Botany Bay*”.

The adopted objectives for River Health Program are:

- To measure and document long-term changes in the ecosystem health of freshwater and estuarine waterways in the Cooks and Georges Rivers catchments
- To provide information on ecosystem health and pressures in the Cooks and Georges Rivers that can guide investment decisions
- To engage, empower and educate community members in relation to the health and management of the Cooks and Georges Rivers through on-site activities and provision of regular and accessible reports
- To increase government, industry and academic engagement and interaction with the Program so as to improve its appeal, integration and focus in relation to catchment and waterway management

The Alliance and GRCCC are confident the vision and objectives will serve the program well, and provide a springboard for future development of River Health – including seeking additional partners.

Community sampling events

The Cooks River Alliance ran four community sampling days in 2013-14 with two days each spring and autumn. Community members joined the program under the supervision of an aquatic ecologist with detailed experience of monitoring in the whole Botany Bay catchment (Georges and Cooks Rivers).

For Bardwell Creek, Rockdale’s Bushland Officer shared his knowledge about local conditions and actions taken to protect the creek. For Yarrowee Wetland, Strathfield staff attended to provide local information about the wetland.

The four sampling sessions increased community understanding of local biodiversity as well providing for participants to undertake the practical work of sampling for macro-invertebrates and physio-chemical indicators. The information gathered by community members contributes to River Health reporting. The sites were chosen to ensure ease of access by community members.

| When | | Where | Numbers | Comments |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------|--|
| Spring 2013 | 3 rd November | Yarrowee Wetland | 6 | Passing walkers were interested (particularly in frogs) and asked questions about the process |
| | 26 th October | Bardwell Creek | 8 | Passing walkers were interested in riparian vegetation and bird habitat |
| Autumn 2014 | 5 th April | Yarrowee Wetland | 6 | The wetland was too dry to take samples, so samples taken from the re-naturalised section of the River |
| | 24 th May | Bardwell Creek | 5 | Monitoring was rescheduled twice due to high intensity rainfall |

Support for citizen science: Streamwatch

Community organisations undertake StreamWatch which is supported by the Australian Museum program. While this is not funded through the Cooks River Alliance, the Alliance acknowledged and promoted the citizen science opportunities in the catchment.

Performance measures

- Publication of River Health report card
- Completion of an independent review of Cooks River ecological monitoring
- Agreement on vision and objectives for Cooks and Georges Rivers monitoring
- Four community sampling events

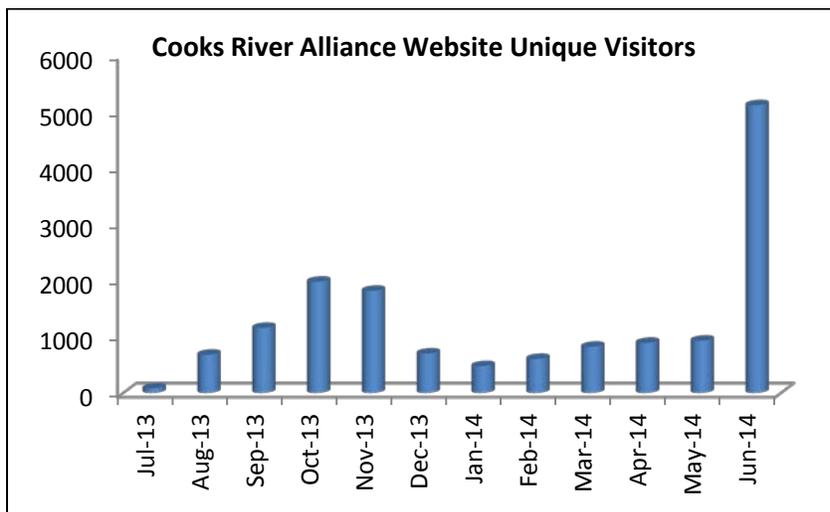
PROGRAM 3: DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFORMATION PORTAL

Context

Planning for a new Alliance website was undertaken as part of development of the Alliance Action Plan 2014-2017. Members decided that a framework for catchment information would be developed first, to inform what information will be published on a new Alliance website.

Achievements

In 2013 the Alliance website was moved to a new host. The website was also updated with links to Alliance social media and an events calendar. Website statistics show that there was a total of 15,266 unique visitors to the Cooks River Alliance website during the 2013-2014 reporting period.



Cooks River Alliance website unique visitors July 2013-June 2014

The Alliance has initiated work on the framework for catchment information – identifying information priorities such as mapping data and regionally significant materials. In June 2014, the Alliance Communications Support Officer attended a Forum with librarians in order to investigate partnerships opportunities with member council libraries for an online digital education project.

Performance measures

- Review and update of website, including website statistics tool

PROGRAM 4: IMPLEMENTATION OF SUB-CATCHMENT PLAN ACTIONS & OTHER PRIORITY WORKS

Context

Prior to the formation of the Cooks River Alliance, the OurRiver project was undertaken between 2007-2011 to improve the health of the Cooks River catchment. That project produced six sub-catchment management plans, and undertook ten on-ground works. Sites for additional on-ground works identified in the sub-catchment management plans were assessed and formed the basis of an 2013 application for funding to the Commonwealth Government.

In 2013 the Alliance received a \$2 million Commonwealth grant for the Cooks River Alliance Place.People.Connections 2014-2017 project.

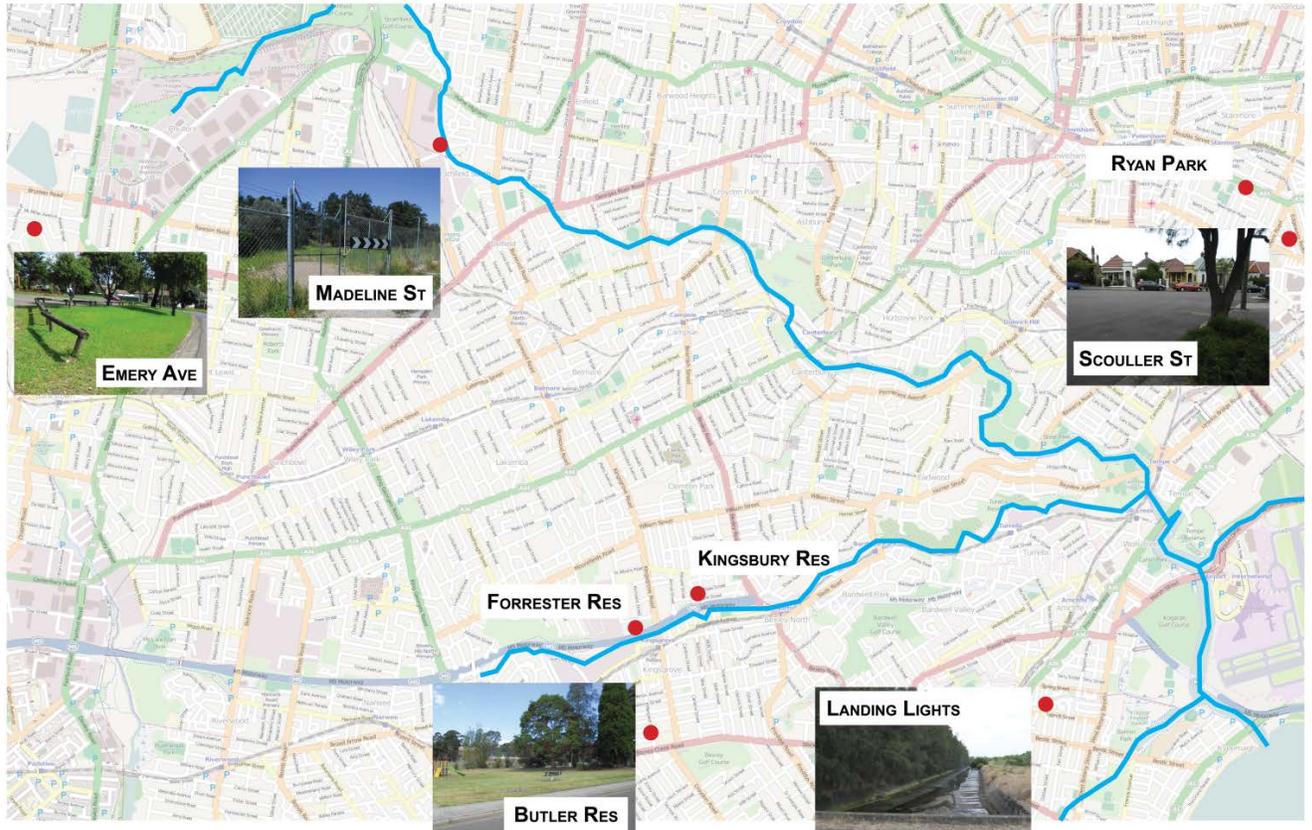
The project will deliver rain gardens at seven priority sites in the catchment, as well as remediation at Landing Lights Wetlands in Rockdale, to reduce pollutants entering Cooks River and Botany Bay. The project takes a dual approach, combining on-ground works with local engagement and education.

Achievements

Gaining the Commonwealth funding is a significant fillip for the Alliance. The grant funding will exceed expectations in Action Plan Program 4: Priority Works. On-ground works will be delivered to six of the eight Alliance members, with Ashfield Council and City of Sydney taking part in the community engagement components.

A large and successful project launch meeting was held in 2013, including five members, three community groups, the (then) Catchment Management Authority, and Parramatta River Catchment Group. The project name was created – Cooks River: People.Place.Connections. The ideas generated are informing continued development of the project.

COOKS RIVER ALLIANCE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT GRANT ON-GROUND WORKS 2014-2017



During the 2013 to 2014 reporting period, significant progress was made in the planning and design of the raingarden sites:

- Emery Ave raingarden (Bankstown) – The Emery Avenue rain garden site at the source of the Cooks River will be the first to commence construction. Detailed design of this raingarden has been completed, and Bankstown Council will be project managing the tender and construction process. Alliance staff have worked with Bankstown City Council to determine local activities
- Butler Reserve raingarden (Hurstville) – Functional design completed
- Scouller St raingarden (Marrickville) – Marrickville Council are managing design and construction
- Madeline St raingarden (Strathfield) – A consultant’s brief for the functional and detailed design has been completed. Community engagement, in partnership with Marrickville Council, was initiated at this site.
- Forrester Reserve raingarden (Canterbury) – Functional design completed
- Kingsbury Reserve raingarden (Canterbury) – Design and construction of this raingarden is scheduled for 2015-2016
- Ryan Park (Marrickville) – Marrickville Council has nominated this site for building a raingarden, and the concept is at a preliminary stage

- Landing Lights Wetland (Rockdale) - Contains some of the last remaining saline wetlands on the Cooks River, including threatened salt-marsh. Significant weed control and vegetation removal has been undertaken over 2013-2014.

Performance Measures

- 3 functional designs and 1 detailed design for raingardens completed
- 4 grant applications submitted for works
- Cooks River People.Place.Connections Australian Government grant received

PROGRAM 5: EXPANSION OF THE INTENSIVE CORRECTION ORDERS PROGRAM

Context

Corrections NSW has worked in partnership with councils in the Cooks River since 2005. During a State Government restructure in 2013, the program ceased due to staff changes. Liaison with member councils showed the Intensive Correction Order (ICO) program to be welcome contribution to maintenance of reserves and parks.

The rubbish collection, mulch spreading and weeding work by ICO participants in reserves and parks would not otherwise be regularly undertaken, greatly enhancing and improving recreation spaces.

Achievements

Following concerted Alliance efforts, the program recommenced in 2014. Since January 2014, three teams have been working in council areas of Strathfield, Canterbury, Marrickville and occasionally Rockdale. The teams are supervised by a Corrections NSW staff member.

A trailer for equipment (sponsored by Sydney Water) was housed temporarily at Strathfield depot and then moved to the secure location, Long Bay Correctional Complex. Equipment was re-stocked, using Alliance funds as well as contributions by Marrickville, Strathfield & Canterbury.

An information sheet about the program was produced for the Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA). In this way, the CRVA was able to provide Mudcrabs bush care groups with information when requested.

Works occur in the following parks along the Cooks River, Bardwell Creek and Wolli Creek:

| LGA | Park |
|--------------|---|
| Strathfield | Cooke Park Strathfield Park Ford Reserve Begnell Field |
| Canterbury | Pat O'Connor Reserve, Canterbury Hughes Park, Earlwood Ewen Park, Hurlstone Park Boat Harbour, Hurlstone Park Waterworth Park, Earlwood |
| Marrickville | Marrickville Golf Course Tempe Reserve, Tempe Steel Park, Marrickville Kendrick Park, Tempe Mackey Park, Marrickville |
| Rockdale | Coolibah Reserve Bardwell Valley Bardwell Valley Parklands |

Summary of Weeding/Cleaning/Mulching January-June 2014

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Number of days worked | 53 |
| ICO Participants hours | 1861 |
| Supervision hour, DCS staff (Including on site as well as prep, cleaning, transporting) | 291 |
| Volunteer labour value (PDC team \$30/hr) | \$55,830.00 |
| Supervision labour value (# hours x \$50/hr) | \$14,550.00 |
| Total Labour value (PDC team and supervision) | \$70,380.00 |
| Bags of litter | 731 |
| Bags of weeds | 546 |
| Mulching (Cubic metres spread) | 680 |

Performance measures

- ICO Program recommenced
- 4 Councils participating in the ICO program
- Work undertaken (rubbish removed, weeding and mulching)

PROGRAM 6: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Context

Following the recruitment of the Alliance Communications Support Officer and Alliance Community Engagement & Educator Coordinator in October 2013, significant headway began in communications and community engagement activities. Achievements included the Alliance's entry into social media, a new email newsletter, a showcase event, and Place.People.Connections grant activities. The reporting period also saw communications successes at the regional scale, through the Catchment Stakeholder Meetings.

Achievements

Communications Strategy & Social Media Plan

Existing relevant information was reviewed, such as the *Cooks River Integrated Interpretation Strategy*, to inform development of communications guidelines for the Alliance.

The Alliance also made an exciting move into social media, following the finalisation of an Alliance *Social Media Plan & Policy*. The Alliance's presence on social media – including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – works to create strong, engaged communities around the Cooks River. All member Councils were consulted in the development of the *Plan & Policy*, and implementation is carried out by all Alliance staff and integrated across all Alliance communications.



The Alliance on social media

Delivering Communications

The Alliance designed and distributed a new email newsletter. Two newsletters were sent out in March and May 2014, to over 370 subscribers, communicating Alliance accomplishments and events.

Communications such as flyers and brochures were produced for Alliance events and Cooks River People.Place.Connections grant activities.

Cooks River Alliance wins Excellence in the Environment Award



Snapshot from Cooks River Alliance May 2014 email newsletter - Shefali Chakrabarty, Alliance Environmental Engineer, receives Award

Advocacy also plays a role in Alliance communications. The Alliance continued to advocate, together with partner organisation Boomerang Alliance, for a Container Deposit Scheme.

“10 cents given to each person who hands in drink bottles and cans instead of throwing them into waterways would improve rivers, according to the Cooks River Alliance” (Bankstown Canterbury Express, 15 July 2014)

Showcase Event with Corporate Volunteers on the Cooks River

In July 2014, Councillor Brian Robson, Chair of the Alliance, and Ian Kiernan AO thanked cosmetics company LUSH for donating employees’ time to help clean up the Cooks River. The Alliance presented certificates of appreciation to the group of around ten corporate volunteers. The volunteers worked under the guidance and leadership of City of Canterbury, Alliance Community Engagement & Education Coordinator, and community groups.

“Mayor Robson said a lot of people from community groups such as Mudcrabs through to all levels of government were doing their best to clean up the river. ‘The top of the River is starting to come good with birds and fish returning,’ he said.” (Inner City Weekender, 18 July 2014)

“The council is part of Cooks River Alliance and offers a number of activities that corporate volunteers can undertake, such as weed removal, mulching and revegetation” (The Leader, 9 August 2014)

“The LUSH factory overlooks the river in Canterbury, where employees developed concern for the waterway” (Cooks River Valley Times, 16 July 2014)



Corporate Volunteers from LUSH with Councillor Brian Robson & Ian Kiernan AO

The event promoted both the Alliance and community groups, such as the Mudcrabs and Wolli Creek Preservation Society, who do regular cleaning and bush care.

Litter Grant

The Cooks River Alliance has been successful in gaining a one year \$110,500 grant from the NSW EPA Waste Less, Recycle More Litter Prevention Program. *Cooks River: Cutting the Litter* will deliver culturally appropriate, creative and locally relevant education, enforcement and community participation activities. The grant has a strong place based focus using evidence on amounts of litter at specific sites as success measures.

CALD communities and water wise homes

The Alliance partnered with Ethnic Communities Council NSW and commenced train-the-trainer workshops, to increase the capacity of the bilingual workers to lead programs about the Cooks River. The training sessions included two field trips (lower and upper catchment tours).

Cooks River.Place.People.Connections grant activities

With Bankstown Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee and Office of Environment and Heritage, the Our Place Our Country workshop was held in Bankstown on 5th June 2014. Preparation and planning for the Scouller Street site meeting and consultations were completed.

Schools

Work undertaken with schools included:

- Delivery of catchment education sessions -consulting on the catchment model with Canterbury Public School and presenting at the Canterbury Boys High School community expo
- Presenting at the Canterbury Teachers Network meeting
- Promoting the schools based curriculum resources of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society and of Marrickville West Public School
- Planning a joint presentation and workshop session for the Youth Eco Summit. The partners include other catchment groups Parramatta River Catchment Group and GRCCC, as well as Australian Museum StreamWatch program and Sydney Water

Regional Communications – Catchment Stakeholder Meetings

Member councils identified the need for a central forum where State agencies can partner to find areas of common cause, and established Catchment Stakeholders Meetings. Meetings were held in August 2013, December 2013, and May 2014. Significant progress has been made through communications at these meetings:

- The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has accepted that it is the Appropriate Regulatory Authority (ARA) for areas of the River that are not under Sydney Water or council responsibility
- Sydney Water initiated a Cooks River Improvement Plan, including other agencies



Catchment Stakeholders Meeting May 2014

Performance measures

- Resolving of a longstanding jurisdictional issue
- Communications program commenced, including social media and a new e-newsletter
- Significant community engagement activities
- Showcase event with corporate volunteers

PROGRAM 7: CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

Context

Climate change is leading to rising sea levels and increases in rainfall intensity which impact on stormwater and road infrastructure in the Cooks River catchment.

Achievements

To assess climate change projections in the catchment, the Alliance conducted a comprehensive review of: member councils' available flood studies; the 'Cooks River Flood Study' by Sydney Water; relevant Coastal Zone Management Plans; and the Sydney Coastal Councils Group 'Demonstrating Climate Change Adaptation of Interconnected Water Infrastructure' report. The studies were examined to determine their underlying climate change assumptions, and to assist members development climate change resilience. Based on the outcomes of this review, the following recommendations were made to member councils for their flood studies:

- Councils assess the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise and increase in rainfall intensity
- Councils adopt the sea level rise benchmark of 40cm increase by 2050 and 90cm increase by 2100, from the 1990 mean sea levels, as a default position
- Councils adopt a 30% increase level in rainfall intensity as a default benchmark

The Alliance organised and promoted a successful "Cooks River - Adapting through Uncertainty" presentation with Arup in November 2013, with 19 attendees.

Performance measures

- Promotion to members of a consistent approach on flood studies
- 19 participants at Arup event

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Late in 2013, the Steering Committee instructed the Project Manager to lead production of a revised Action Plan for the 2014-2017 period. This was because a new Alliance three year term was pending and activities were increasing due to funding from the Commonwealth.

Alliance staff worked closely with the Steering Committee on developing the new Action Plan, including at two half day workshops in January and February 2014. Draft Plans were presented to the Board at their March 2014 meeting with finalisation of the Plan in June 2014. The Plans outlined new focus areas and Programs for the Alliance.

The new Alliance focus areas are:

- Sustainable urban water management
- Biodiversity
- Community action
- Capacity building
- Catchment information
- Catchment resilience

The new Alliance Programs are:

- Capacity Building
- Catchment Monitoring
- Information & Website
- On-ground Works
- Collaboration & Community Engagement
- Communications
- Catchment Resilience

The Alliance Management Plan 2014 and the Alliance Action Plan 2014-2017 can be downloaded here:

<http://cooksriver.org.au/alliance/publications/>

LOOKING FORWARD

At the conclusion of the first three years of the Alliance, a majority of member councils indicated willingness to continue with the Alliance for a second triennium. With staff positions established and a sound new strategic direction, the Alliance is in a very good position to achieve the outcomes described in Action Plan 2014-2017.



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