

Cooks River Alliance

Annual Report

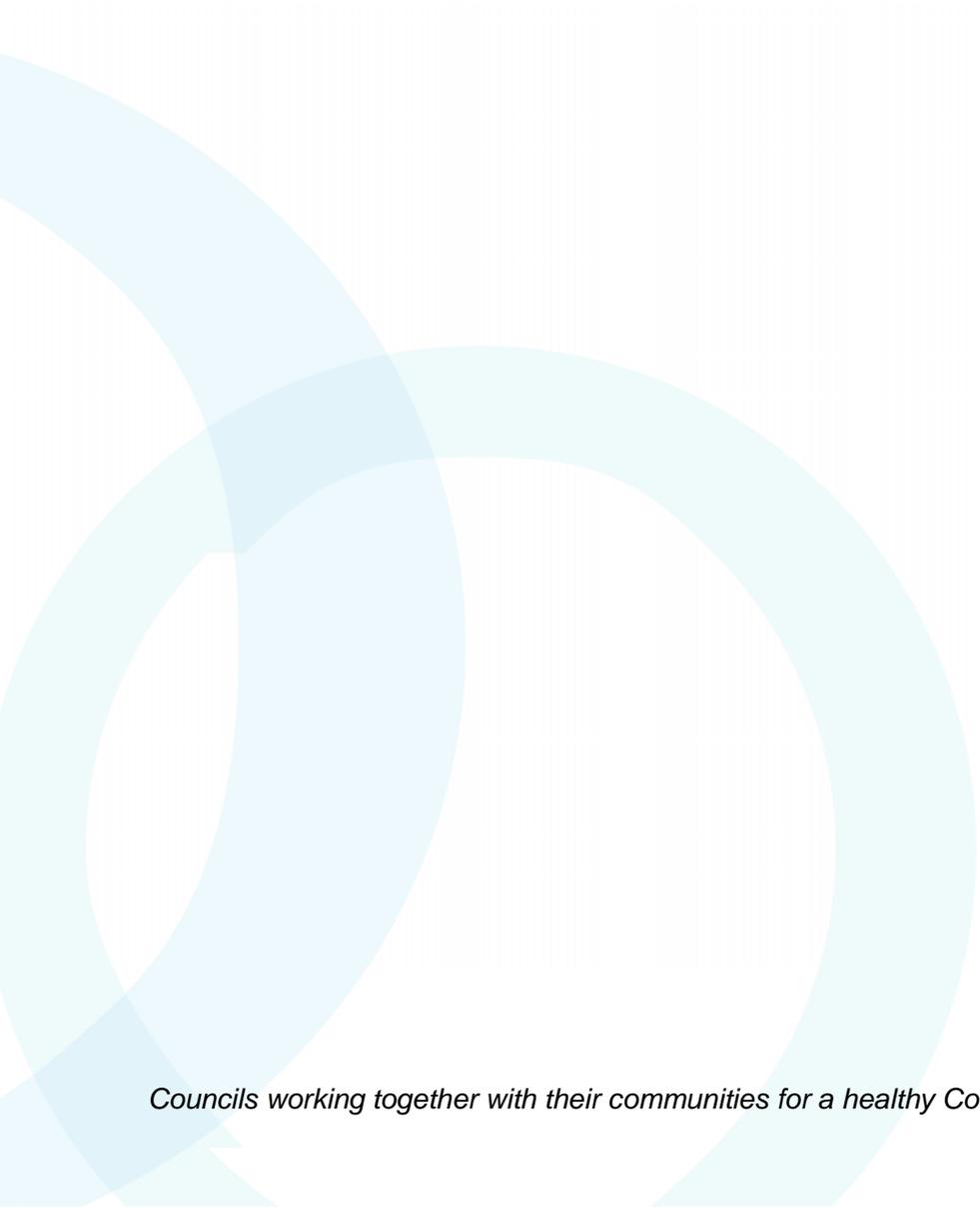


 **CooksRiver**
ALLIANCE

Ashfield
Bankstown
Canterbury
City of Sydney
Hurstville
Marrickville
Rockdale
Strathfield

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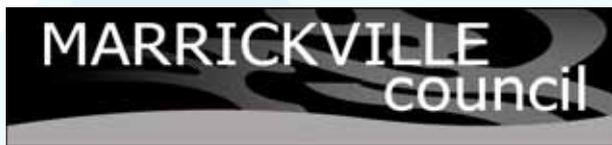
About this Report

This Cooks River Alliance Annual Report reports on activities of the Cooks River Alliance (the 'Alliance') for 2011-2012, the first year of operation.

The Cooks River Alliance is a partnership of eight councils in the Cooks River catchment including Ashfield, Bankstown, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield. The Alliance builds on the substantial work carried out by the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group (CRFWG) and its highly successful 'OurRiver project' Cooks River Sustainability Initiative' (CRSI) project.

As the CRFWG and CRSI project were reaching completion in 2010, a new Cooks River Alliance was proposed whereby councils provide funding, initially for three years, to transform the CRFWG into a stronger coordinating group that has support from senior staff and councillors and has a dedicated source of funding for staff.

The new Cooks River Alliance commenced operations in September 2011 with appointment of staff, following the completion of CRFWG and CRSI in mid-2011.



About the Cooks River

The Cooks River is one of the smallest rivers in NSW but has one of the highest population densities. Over 500,000 people inhabit or work in the Cooks River catchment which comprises over 130,000 dwellings and more than 100,000 commercial and industrial premises. Urbanisation and human activities have had, and continue to have, a significant effect on the river.

The river begins as a small watercourse near Chullora Railway Workshops and flows some 23km in a generally easterly direction to enter Botany Bay just south of the Kingsford Smith Airport.

On the way, it is joined by a number of tributaries, the most important being Cox's Creek, which drains the Punchbowl area, Cup and Saucer Creek, which enters near Canterbury, Wollie Creek, which begins in Beverly Hills, and Sheas Creek, which drains the Alexandria area and enters the Cooks River via the Alexandra Canal.

The Cooks River runs through southwestern Sydney, receiving rainfall and groundwater from portions of 13 local government areas (Ashfield, Auburn, Bankstown, Botany Bay, Burwood, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Kogarah, Marrickville, Randwick, Rockdale and Strathfield).

While the point source pollution has predominantly stopped, widespread, diffuse pollution from the heavily urbanised catchment continues to be a major problem. An assessment of pollution entering Sydney waterways from sewer overflows, stormwater, and rainfall revealed that a large proportion of the pollution was caused by urban stormwater.

In natural non-urban catchment, most rainwater soaks into the ground or evaporates from leaves and plants with only about 20% running off into waterways. However, in urban areas like the Cooks River Catchment, the large areas of paved surfaces and roof prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground. In the Cooks Catchment, about 70% of rainwater runs off as stormwater into the River causing erosion and carrying pollutants including litter, nutrients, and oil and petroleum derivatives. These pollutants have a negative effect on the River's water quality, its appearance and on the fish and birds that use it.

The Cooks River has been degraded over many years through vegetation removal, artificial channel modification and concrete banks and the dumping and overflows of sewage, stormwater, and industrial and domestic waste. Many natural resource management (NRM) issues, such as water quality and stormwater pollution, exist across the catchment and therefore working solely within local government boundaries has limited outcomes.

In Sydney, the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of drainage infrastructure has historically been shared between local government and Sydney Water, with Sydney Water providing and maintaining the larger channels and pipes, and councils developing and maintaining local drains that feed into the larger drainage system.

The majority of the catchment is highly developed, so the remnant bushland and surrounding modified areas are regionally important. They have significant diversity and support an abundance of native fauna.

Councils working together to achieve regional improvements

Since 1998, a number of councils in the Cooks River Catchment have collaborated on projects through the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group (CRFWG) - an officer-level group that facilitates communication and coordination between councils, state government agencies and the local community for a more strategic and coordinated approach to the management of the Cooks River, its foreshores and recreational areas. In 2007, the CRFWG obtained a three-year \$2m grant through the NSW Environmental Trust for *OurRiver – Cooks River Sustainability Initiative*, a project focused on sustainable urban water management with eight partner councils (Ashfield, Bankstown, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale, Strathfield).

The OurRiver project achieved its objectives and produced significant outcomes related to water conservation and river health improvement, council and community capacity building, informed decision making and regional governance. Some of the key achievements are listed below:

- Six subcatchment management plans developed (covering 15% of the Cooks River Catchment) collaboratively by ~500 individuals from councils and subcatchment communities.
- Improved capacity of partner councils to implement SUWM by engaging ~1,100 council staff in SUWM related activities – many for the first time.
- Increased awareness and understanding of SUWM in subcatchment communities and involved community stakeholders in local planning at a level not seen before in many local government areas (LGAs).
- Ten WSUD projects constructed including raingardens and stormwater harvesting systems that treat runoff from ~5.5 hectares (~31,000 KL/year), and save ~10,000 KL/year.
- Developed a new model for regional governance and secured financial commitment from eight partner councils to form the Cooks River Alliance in 2011.

Sustainable Urban Water Management (SUWM) encompasses the governance (or administrative) and technical aspects of water management. The technical side of SUWM involves the “total water cycle” and includes:

- Reducing reliance on imported potable water (through water conservation and using water that is fit-for purpose).
- Reducing the impact of stormwater on waterways.
- Reducing the volume of wastewater leaving the catchment.

The success of the CRFWG and the Our River project led councils to form the Cooks River Alliance, intended to be a long-term, permanent organisation which can coordinate works and projects to improve the health of the Cooks River.

About the Cooks River Alliance

In March 2010, a meeting of the Cooks River Regional Mayors gave in-principle support for the establishment of the Alliance. In May 2011, the Cooks River Alliance was formally established through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by member councils.

The foundation Alliance Councils includes Ashfield, Bankstown, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Strathfield and Rockdale. The MoU sets out the organisational and financial commitments for membership of the Cooks River Alliance. Under the MoU, the Alliance project and staff is hosted by Strathfield Council. The Alliance Terms of Reference were adopted in late 2011 which outline the roles and responsibilities of its key participants.



Member Council's General Managers signing the Memorandum of Understanding May 2011

In forming a formal regional collaboration, the Alliance has adopted the mission statement of:

"Councils working together with their communities for a healthy Cooks River Catchment"

Consistent with the Alliance's MoU, the focus areas of Alliance activity are:

1. Sustainable Urban Water Management (SUWM)
2. Biodiversity
3. Community Action
4. Capacity Building
5. Knowledge Management
6. Climate Change Resilience

The Alliance is committed to improving the Cooks River and is committed to the realisation of the following long term outcomes:

- The quality and volumes of water flowing to the Cooks River from all parts of the catchment better reflect the natural water cycle.

- Natural habitats are thriving and connected across the catchment.
- The community actively participates in initiatives to improve the health of the catchment.
- The Alliance councils have a high capacity for and are known for their leadership in sustainable urban water and catchment management.
- Accessible, centralised and up-to-date information about the catchment is readily available.
- The catchments resilience to climate change has increased.

Alliance Approach

The Alliance has adopted a sustainable governance model to achieve its long term outcomes. To demonstrate this, the following approaches will be used.

- Place-based Solutions
- Education and Training
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creative Resourcing
- Evidence-based Decision Making



Tempe Wetland

How the Alliance Operates

Alliance Board

The Cooks River Alliance is made up of councillors from each member council on the Cooks River Alliance Board. The Board is the key decision making body of the Alliance and sets the Alliance's strategic direction. The Board meets on a quarterly basis. Each member council is entitled to representation on the Board by a councillor. A Chair and Deputy Chair is elected by and from the councillor representatives on the Alliance Board on an annual basis.

A meeting was held at Strathfield on 15 September 2011 of Mayors and/or their representatives from Cooks River Councils to discuss operational matters pending appointment of the Alliance Project Manager.

The first full Alliance Board meeting was held in November 2011. The Mayor of the City of Canterbury, Councillor Brian Robson was elected as the first Chair of the Board, with Councillor Patrick Kelso from Ashfield Council to take up the position of Deputy Chair.

In a statement on behalf of the newly formed Board, Cr Robson said "The formation of this Alliance is an important step in improving the health and quality of the river and its tributaries and demonstrates our willingness to work together to find solutions to the problems confronting the river".

In 2011-2012, the Board has met on the following occasions:

- 23 November 2011 at Marrickville Council
- 1 March 2012 at Ashfield Council
- 7 June 2012 at Canterbury Council

The 2012 third quarter meeting was not held due to the September 2012 local government election.



Members of the Cooks River Alliance Board 2011-2012
Cr Karl Asfour (Bankstown Council), Cr Brian Robson (City of Canterbury Council) and Cr Mary O'Sullivan (Marrickville Council)

Alliance Staff

The Alliance began work in mid-September 2011 with the appointment of a Project Manager. The Environmental Engineer was appointed in October 2011.

In 2011-2012, the Alliance team included:

Project Manager: Joanna Lamb (until July 2012)
Environmental Engineer: Shefali Chakrabarty

Alliance Working Group

The Alliance Working Group is made up of senior staff from each of the member councils and Alliance staff members. The Working Group works with Alliance staff in developing management and action plans, provides input into the operations of the Alliance and contributes ideas, resources and expertise to projects and issues.

The Alliance Working Group meets approximately every six weeks, with meetings held on:

- 13 October 2011, Strathfield Council
- 15 December 2011, Marrickville Council
- 8 February 2012, Canterbury Council
- 22 February 2012, Hurstville Council
- 13 April 2012, Rockdale Council
- 2 May 2012, Ashfield Council
- 22 June 2012, City of Sydney Council
- 9 October 2012, Hurstville Council

The Working Group also held a series of workshops to develop plans and formed subcommittees for the development of the Alliance Management and Action Plan and for the review of the two current monitoring programs: RiverScience and River Health.

Alliance Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is made up of the Alliance Chair and Deputy Chair and three staff representatives from the Working Party. The Executive meets as required to assist the Project Manager with administrative determinations, advise on issues to be reported to the Board and confirm Board meeting agendas. The council staff representatives of the Executive Committee oversight the recruitment and performance of the Alliance Project Manager.

The Alliance Executive Committee (Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board, plus three members of the Working Group) meets at the request of the Project Manager. Meetings were held on:

- 3 November 2012
- 19 January 2012
- 12 March 2012
- 15 June 2012
- 5 July 2012

Resourcing

Funding for the Cooks River Alliance is derived from annual contributions from member Councils. Member councils' contributions are calculated on the basis of an in-principle sharing of costs in proportion to the share of catchment area within each LGA. The Alliance is resourced to cover staff and administrative costs, which ensures a stable ongoing source of funding for coordination and ensure local government control of its activities.

The host council employs Alliance staff on fixed contract basis, coordinates with recruitment activity with involvement of the Executive Committee, administers Alliance funds, provides office space and furniture, telephone, fax, email, IT support, training and other basic requirements.

The Alliance Action Plan sets out the Alliance budget and estimates costs of programs. These Plans are presented to the Alliance Board and are reviewed periodically.



Playground at Steel Park

Map of the Cooks River Catchment

This map shows the boundaries of the Catchment and the Local Government Areas within it.



Alliance Management Plan and Action Plans

The primary task of the Alliance in 2011/2012 was to develop the Alliance Management Plan and associated Action Plans which set out the goals, scope and projects which will be undertaken in the first three years of the Alliance and how they will be delivered and resourced.

The Alliance Management Plan and Action Plan were developed by the Cooks River Alliance Working Group over a period of six months. Input was obtained at the following workshops:

- 26 April 2012 – Identifying focus areas and long term outcomes and identification of possible Programs
- 29 June 2012 - Development of Programs and associated actions
- 25 July 2012 - Prioritisation of Programs into Priority Programs and Future Programs

- 29 June 2012 - Refinement of Prioritisation of Programs and Actions undertaken on 25 July to close gaps in achieving long term outcomes and receive comments on draft Work Plans.
- 9 October 2012 – Endorsement of Cooks River Alliance Action Plan subject to incorporation of comments in review period.

The Alliance Management Plan

Setting the mission and directions of the Alliance is a key role of the Alliance Board. In first year of operations, the priority for the Alliance has been the development of the framework for Alliance activities through development of the Management Plan.

The Alliance framework builds upon research into the outcomes of OurRiver (CRSI) project community visioning sessions held across the catchment in 2009; and the proposed activities agreed prior to the formation of the Alliance as outlined in the Cooks River Alliance Discussion Paper (2010). The Alliance Board have considered proposals and resolved on the following matters in relation to the Alliance Management Plan:

- Consideration of key priorities from each Council (23 November 2011)
- Consideration and in-principle agreement of draft structure, vision, objects and activities (1 March 2012)
- In-principle agreement to Strategic Direction/Cooks River Alliance Management Plan and Action Plans (7 June 2012)

The Alliance Action Plan

The Alliance Action Plan supports the Management Plan by detailing the priority projects to be undertaken by the Alliance, how they will be achieved, resourced and delivered.

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Outcomes of Workshops

Priority Programs

During the workshops, seven programs were prioritised as Priority Programs that could be achieved during the current term of the Alliance, which extends until September 2014.

These were:

- Development of a council Capacity Building Program
- Development of a Catchment Monitoring Program
- Development of an Information Portal for the Cooks River Catchment

- Implementation of Subcatchment Actions and Priority Works
- Expansion of Intensive Correction Orders Project
- Development of a Communications Strategy
- Development of a Climate Change Resilience Program



Alliance Working Party planning workshop April 2012

Future Programs

The following programs were identified during the workshops as important programs to be considered more fully in the future:

- Creation of a learning forum for volunteers.
- Investigate the feasibility of the development of a Coastal Zone Management Plan for the Cooks River Catchment.
- Development of new Subcatchment management plans

Projects and Achievements 2011-2012

Cooks River Interpretation Strategy and Signage

The Cooks River Interpretation Strategy and Signage Project involved planning, design and implementation of new coordinated regional family of wayfinding and river identification signs for the entire Cooks River path from Strathfield to Botany Bay. This project identified to upgrade the signage along the entire Cooks River cycleway, giving consistent maps and information about facilities, crossings, heritage and points of interest. The signs improve access and clearly identify landmarks (e.g. parks, facilities and points of interest) and assist path users to better navigate, explore and enjoy the Cooks River foreshores and beyond.

This project commenced under the CRFWG and was funded by contributions from Burwood, City of Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils, NSW Department of Planning and the Roads and Maritime Services (formerly RTA). Each council undertook installation in their LGA but the design, artwork and production was coordinated regionally.

Catchment Monitoring

The Alliance has been working on monitoring across most council areas. The RiverScience ecological monitoring program that takes place in the estuary and has been running since 2005 is a joint program



Catchment Monitoring at Freshwater Park Strathfield

between Marrickville, Canterbury and Rockdale councils. It provides an assessment of the ecological health of the estuary and is intended as a long term monitoring program. Results of the 2011/2012 monitoring are finalised and the report card will be released in October 2012.

The Alliance has also been working in partnership with the GRCCC (Georges River Combined Councils' Committee) as part of their RiverHealth project which was extended to the Cooks River catchment in late 2011 after much success monitoring river health across the Georges River. This program monitors water quality and aquatic macroinvertebrates and assists in building a clear picture of the health of the Cooks River catchment. The work is undertaken by experienced scientific staff and also includes volunteer sessions where members of the community can take part in sampling events.

The first RiverHealth report card will be published in late 2012.

The monitoring of the Cooks River and Georges River Combined Councils Committee make this is comprehensive project for the entire Botany Bay Catchment.

Cooks River Catchment Volunteer Litter Removal

In July 2004, the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group initiated the Cooks River Enviro Workers (CREW) project. This was a partnership between councils and NSW Department of Corrective Services to remove waste from the Cooks River catchment.

Management of this partnership has been undertaken by the Alliance on behalf of Alliance councils and is now known as the Intensive Correction Order (ICO) project.

The Alliance was awarded a \$13,000 grant from Sydney Water for a trailer to support this project.

Summary of ICO outcomes to 30 June 2012

Performance Indicator	2011/2012
Litter	6.81 tonnes
Sharps (no.)	43
Bundles of braches	6
Bags of branches/weeds removed	26
Supervised hours	125
Volunteer hours	1530

Container Deposit Legislation

In June 2012, Cooks River Alliance Board members unanimously voted to call for the introduction of container deposit legislation in NSW. The Board, consisting of councillors from the eight Alliance member councils, acknowledged the enormous impact of pollution on the health of the Cooks River and its catchment, in particular their concern regarding the number of beverage containers which collect on the banks and in the river itself.

Pollution is one of the key issues facing the Cooks River, with the most visible pollutant being single-use plastic containers. Alliance members are well aware of the concerns of many local residents and community groups who have clearly demonstrated the impact these containers have on our river system. Container deposit schemes are already in place in South Australia and the Northern Territory and have demonstrated a number of key benefits:

“Alliance chairman and Canterbury Mayor Brian Robson said more needed to be done to ensure the health of rivers and waterways. He said backing the scheme, where money is refunded for recycled containers, was a ‘natural step’ for the Alliance”.

Canterbury-Bankstown Express, 19 June 2012



Litter and bottles in mangroves at Canterbury near the Racecourse.

- As a litter management program, it cleans the environment of a very obvious pollutant and potentially saves many thousands of dollars in clean up costs for local councils
- The reduction of container litter benefits the environment and protects wildlife
- It creates a number of new jobs involved in the collection of containers
- It provides a wide range of educational, community, sporting and cultural groups with the opportunity to raise funds through direct collection and return of containers.

A range of investigations at both State and National level to explore opportunities to implement a national uniform container deposit scheme have produced no clear outcome. At a local government level it is noted that councils, through the annual NSW Local Government and Shires Association conference, have long supported the introduction of a container deposit scheme.

Following the Board resolution, the Alliance wrote to the Minister and Shadow Minister for the Environment as well as the State and Federal members whose constituencies fall within the Cooks River catchment.

Community Events

RiverHealth community volunteers

The Alliance co-hosted a number of events which directly involves community volunteers as part of the RiverHealth monitoring project. Events were held on:

19 November 2011 – Coolibah Reserve, Turella

20 November 2011 – Bardwell Valley Parklands, Bexley

14 April 2012 – Coolibah Reserve, Turella

6 May 2012 – Freshwater Park, Strathfield

19 May 2012 – Bardwell Valley Parklands, Bexley



Sampling at Coolibah Reserve, Turella on a Community Monitoring Day

Cooks River Fun Run

The Cooks River Fun Run – hosted by Strathfield Council was held on 24 June 2012. This year more than 400 people took part in the Fun Run set along the foreshore of the Cooks River, starting and finishing at Freshwater Park at Strathfield, which showcases the bay to bay cycleway and some of the parks and open spaces in Strathfield. The Fun Run involves participants in the 5km and 10km events.

The course is an International Association Athletics Federation (IAAF) certified 2.5km long from Freshwater Park in Strathfield to Ford Park in Strathfield South.

Strathfield Mayor Paul Barron, who took part in the walk, said `It's so great to see so many keen runners turn out for the Cooks River Fun Run on a beautiful Sunday morning...whether it was people in training for bigger races, or those just wanting to enjoy their surrounds, the fun run was certainly a great success for the council and all who participated."

Cooks River Eco-Festival

The Cooks River Eco Festival was hosted by Strathfield Council on 13 November 2011 at Freshwater Park Strathfield. The objective of the Cooks River Eco Festival was for a fun, environmentally focused and educational family day to discover the natural wonders of Strathfield, the Cooks River and the ways the community can help the local environment.

The 2011 Cooks River Eco Festival was a sustainable, waste wise, carbon neutral green energy event carrying the GreenPower logo.

The Festival also launched a website at <http://www.cooksriverfestival.com.au>.

The Festival included entertainment, Eco-Workshops on Protect Our Coral Sea, Greening Your Backyard, Sustainability in Strathfield (presented by Strathfield Council and Alliance staff) and Sustainability in the Home. A series of community talks were given which included:

- Cooks River Alliance
- WIRES Inner West
- Wilderness Society
- Cash for Containers Campaign
- Sydney Wildlife
- Cooks River Valley Association

There were two Cooks River Walking Tours conducted including a walking tour along the Cooks River to the Yarrabee Wetland and Chain of Ponds and demonstration of a Bushcare Planting Site.



Cooks River Alliance Stall at the Cooks River Eco Festival November 2011

Communications

Alliance Logo

The Cooks River Alliance's logo was adopted in late 2011. The logo is used on a variety of communications including website, reports, letters etc.

The logo incorporates design elements of the former 'Our River' logo, which connects the Alliance to prior Cooks council projects.

Website



Alliance Website at www.cooksriver.org.au

In 2011, the Alliance launched a new website at www.cooksriver.org.au. The website provides information about the Alliance, the catchment and the member councils. It is aimed at improving public access to engaging and up to date information about the Cooks River and its catchment. The website helps inform the community and stakeholders on the health of the river and the nature and the outcomes of regional efforts to improve its health and amenity. It also aims to promote the Cooks River and its catchment as a great place to

visit, recreate and volunteer. This site will continue to be developed to further the objectives of the Alliance.

Arrangements were made to archive the 'Our River' website to maintain a permanent record of the project's web files. The 'Our River' website was archived on 3 November 2011 by the National Library of Australia's Pandora project. The archived site can be accessed via the National Library's Trove Directory at <http://www.trove.nla.gov.au> or directly at <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/130313/20111103-0001/www.ourriver.com.au/cooks-river/index.html>

E-newsletter

The Alliance commenced publication of a quarterly e-newsletter. In 2011-2012, e-newsletters were published in January 2012, Special Edition March 2012, April 2012 and July 2012. Copies were sent to all persons listed on the database.

Interested parties can register to receive copies of the e-newsletter on the Alliance website.

Media Mentions

The activities of the Cooks River Alliance has been regularly reported in local media as part of a media strategy to ensure that the catchment community are kept up-to-date with the activities and successes of the Alliance and/or commentary on issues affecting the Cooks River.

Articles on the Alliance and Cooks River were published in local newspapers in the Cooks River Catchment including Canterbury-Bankstown Express, Inner-West Courier, The Glebe, Strathfield Scene, Burwood Scene, St George and Sutherland Shire Express.

The following articles have been published over the last twelve months.

Source	Date	Header	Content
Sydney Morning Herald	24/10/11	Sewerage makes a stink of river	The Cooks River has become an open sewer that carries high levels of raw sewage and household pharmaceuticals into Botany Bay. While the river has been polluted for more than a century, a new study by researchers at the University of NSW has identified the source of contamination and the accompanying stench.
Inner West Courier (p1)	28/6/12	Cooks River Run was a cracker	Fun run event a big success – Records Tumble as Hundreds Join In.
Inner West Courier (p17)	28/6/12	Cooks River Fun Run	Record times and numbers were set at the Cooks River Fun Run last Sunday.
Inner West Courier (p2)	9/8/12	Editors Desk	The Inner West Courier has joined sister paper Canterbury Bankstown Express in the fight to clean up the Cooks River. For too long, the 23km waterway has been a corrupted artery.
Inner West Courier (p8)	9/8/12	'Petitioning for sewage limit – save the Cooks'	THE Cooks River Valley Association has given the state government a petition in hopes of limiting sewage flows to make it safe for swimming and boating.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p24)	19/6/12	Alliance against littering - Cash for Containers Scheme	The Cooks River Alliance has thrown its weight behind the introduction of a container deposit scheme.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p1)	14/2/12	River becomes a dumping ground	A visit to three random sites along the Cooks River has led to the discovery of tonnes of waste including engines, filing cabinets and thousands of plastic bottles.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p3)	28/2/12	Coalition of willing vows to breathe life into river – Alliance to adopt 'strategic' approach to clean up	Strength in numbers gives the newly-formed Cooks River Alliance a shot at making a real difference to the quality of the Cooks River, says inaugural chairman and Canterbury mayor Brian Robson.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p7)	31/7/12	Breath of life for our waterway – push for national bottle and can swap scheme – save	Another Cooks River clean-up event held on Saturday has netted hundreds more plastic containers that continue to blight our river.

Source	Date	Header	Content
		the Cooks	
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p1)	17/4/12	Refund on rubbish to clean Cooks	Dumped plastic bottles have been an eyesore on the banks of the Cooks River for years and residents have had enough.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p1)	25/10/11	'Nothing like a run along Cooks River'	The Cooks River, in Canterbury, has topped the list of favourite places to walk/run or bike ride in the region.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p1)	28/2/12	'Cooks River clean-up team'	Meet the new alliance aiming to turn the Cooks River into a jewel in Sydney's waterways crown.
Canterbury – Bankstown Express (p3)	14/2/12	Cooks River Rescue Alliance Promises a 'new dawn' for dangerously polluted waterway	THESE are the shocking images that have provoked an overwhelming response of disgust from our readers. Tonnes of waste... The formation of a new authority late last year, the Cooks River Alliance, promises a new dawn for the river's management. The alliance has representatives from eight councils and Canterbury Mayor Brian Robson is its head. Cr Robson said the key task for the alliance in the first half of this year would be to develop its strategic plan for 2012-14. "This will detail the projects we will undertake over the next three years," he said.
Strathfield Scene	May 2011	River buoyed by rescue plans –	Councils join forces in environmental care plan for threatened Cooks River – launch of Cooks River Alliance
Strathfield Scene	October 2011	Cooks River Eco-Festival	Crocodiles, pythons and lessons in sustainability will be part of the show at the Cooks River Eco-Festival at Strathfield.
Strathfield Scene online	24/6/12	Record Numbers Compete at Cooks River Fun Run	Record numbers of runners at the Cooks River Fun Run. Event gets popular each year.
Strathfield Scene	August 2011	Turning the tide on the sad trickle that will soon be beautiful again	Cooks River Bay to Bay Cycle and Walkway
Strathfield Scene	July 2012	Chariots on fire as run takes off	Cooks River Fun Run
Burwood Scene	31/5/12	Cooks River Fun Run course certified	Cooks River Fun Run course is now certified.
St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	5/6/12	Seal Ahoy in the Cooks River	Sightings of seals in the Cooks River
St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	26/12/2011	Filth flowing freely in Cooks River	A report on the Cooks River which found high levels of raw sewage and traces of pharmaceuticals in its waters came as no shock to those who live nearby.

Source	Date	Header	Content
St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	16/11/2011	Despair for Cooks River laden with filth	As Summer approaches, how about a nice dip in the Cooks River? It is an idea that fills most people with horror. And it isn't likely to start getting better until 2016 if Sydney Water sticks to its current timetable.
The Glebe (p2)	9/8/11	Editors Desk	The Inner West Courier has jointed sister paper Canterbury Bankstown Express in the fight to clean up the Cooks River. For too long, the 23km waterway has been a corrupted artery.
The Glebe (p1)	5/4/12	Grim tidings for river	If you were thinking of heading out on your boat on the Cooks River this long weekend, you might want to think again.
The Glebe (p15)	15/3/12	A flow of ideas to help - an Alliance is in place to tackle Cooks River Issues	Unfortunately this is an-all-too common sight bottles and rubbish clogging up what should be the beautiful surroundings of the Cooks River.
The Glebe (p4)	9/8/12	Push for limits on pollutants	Petition supported – save the Cooks – call for container legislation
The Glebe (p8)	14/6/12	Is this visitor fur real	It's as rare as seeing the Loch Ness monster, but a seal has been sighted in the Cooks River.
The Glebe (p8)	24/5/12	Child's dream for a clean river	Hurlstone Park 10-year-old Nell Bryson-Smith dreams that one day the polluted Cooks River will be clean enough to swim in. She's not allowed to jump in "because I'll get a disease".
The Glebe (p15)	15/3/12	A flow of ideas to help – An Alliance is in place to tackle Cooks River Issues	The Cooks River Alliance formed late last year with councils pooling their talents to address the problems the river is facing. "It has been 200 years in its deterioration and degradation, so to think that in a very short period all the problems will just disappear is wrong, but what we will be doing in working on long term improvements".

External Funding Applications

One of the roles of the Alliance is to apply and secure additional funding to enable the Alliance and member councils to develop large projects such as Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) works, for example wetlands, raingardens and stormwater harvesting and reuse structures.

The Alliance Environmental Engineer is currently in the process of creating a database of all the WSUD projects identified through the CRSI Project subcatchment planning process between 2009 and 2011. These projects will then be prioritised based on discussions with relevant staff from Alliance member councils. The aim will be to create a list of feasible on-ground WSUD projects across the whole catchment, for design and construction, as and when funding becomes available.

In December 2011, the Alliance submitted a consortium bid for \$1.5 million from the Federal Government Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse grant in cooperation with three member councils. The proposal was to install four stormwater harvesting tanks across three local government areas, irrigating 75,610 sqm of sports field with water saving of 25.5 ML/year. This application was unsuccessful.

Information Gathering and Capacity Building Across Councils

The Alliance Environmental Engineer has met with environmental and engineering staff across the member councils to provide council staff with background information on the Alliance and the role of the Environmental Engineer. The meetings also provided the Alliance with an understanding of each council's organisation structure and resourcing to identify key roles/people involved with stormwater management. The Alliance Environmental Engineer has gathered information on available GIS data, current stormwater management practices, associated engineering documents, flood studies and existing WSUD devices, and information on the on-ground projects identified through the CRSI sub-catchment planning.

This information will also be used to identify opportunities for capacity building across member councils. The Alliance Engineer is also in the process of collecting updated GIS data from member councils.

Stakeholder Relations

The Alliance has worked to continue and develop the strong relationships built by the CRFWG with key stakeholders in the Cooks River catchment, including federal, state and regional departments and agencies, neighbouring catchment management groups and community organisations. This has involved a two-pronged approach – firstly the Project Manager has met and/or corresponded with key contacts within stakeholder organisations in order to introduce the work of the Alliance and learn more about how they might work together with the Alliance in the future. The Working Group has developed a Stakeholder Engagement strategy in order to set out how the Alliance will communicate and work with each stakeholder organisation in order enable the Alliance to better meet its objectives.

Sydney Coastal Councils' Group (SCCG)

The Alliance Environmental Engineer along with representatives from Marrickville, Bankstown and Canterbury participated in the Sydney Coastal Councils' Group (SCCG) "Demonstrating Climate Change Adaptation of Interconnected Water Infrastructure" project. The Alliance assisted the Cooks River case study of the project on behalf of the Alliance member councils. This involved assistance in gathering data, identifying and prioritising adaptation measures, addressing barriers that may limit the effectiveness of preferred adaptation measures, addressing barriers that may limit the effectiveness of preferred adaptation measures and determining the most appropriate method.

Cooks River Catchment Activities

In early 2012, the Alliance compiled a snapshot of activities occurring across the Alliance councils. They included:

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) projects

Educational programmes

Volunteer groups supported by councils

Biodiversity programmes

Water quality monitoring

Research Projects/Partnerships

Joint projects with other LGAs

Stormwater infrastructure work/upgrades

Other projects – e.g. Bank naturalisation/restoration, foot/cycle path upgrades, fish ladders etc, where applicable

Funding applications for the above activities

National Urban Water and Desalination Plan – Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse grant applications including:

- Cooks River Alliance bid for four stormwater harvesting projects (Canterbury, Marrickville and Rockdale)
- Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority bid (Hurstville, Canterbury and Bankstown) for a number of WSUD projects in the catchment which were conceptualised as part of the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative (CRSI)

RiverHealth monitoring across catchment, partnership with the Georges River Combined Councils' Committee (GRCCC)

Cooks River Signage Project – ongoing project to integrate signage along the Cooks River Cycleway. Final signs were installed in 2012.

'Drain is just for Rain' markers produced by CRSI projects - will be used by all councils as an educational tool

RiverScience Cooks River Ecological Monitoring Program (Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale)

Specific Council projects and activities

Council	Projects and Activities
Ashfield	Ashfield Council (along with Canterbury and Marrickville Councils) is a partner and host of the GreenWay – Cooks River to Iron Cove bio-corridor project. This includes the support of GreenWay Bushcare via the provision of materials, training, resources, site planning and working bee supervision
Ashfield	Research partnership with Macquarie University as part of the GreenWay Project, to devise a Sustainable Governance Model for the GreenWay Corridor
Ashfield	Support of the week long GreenWay Festival which includes cultural and educational events
Bankstown	Graf Park raingarden was completed in May 2011. The raingarden treats runoff from a catchment approximately 1.3 ha in size from residential areas and the Hume highway
Bankstown	Bushcare site at Norfolk Reserve - volunteers weed and improve the only remaining bushland in Greenacre. Council co-ordinate the bushcare calendar and supply tools for rubbish collection and weeding
Bankstown	Bankstown has been running a water quality monitoring program since 1999 which is currently being reviewed
Bankstown	Submitted grant application for raingardens in Powell Street Yagoona (conceptualised as part of CRSI project)
Canterbury	9 WSUD projects currently or recently undertaken, with an additional 4 planned and/or awaiting funding
Canterbury	Runs a number of tours and workshops about WSUD and water sensitive gardening for the community, weeds education and native plant gardening
Canterbury	Supports a wide range of bushcare and volunteer groups
Canterbury	Currently developing a biodiversity strategy
Canterbury	Held a Biodiversity Photo Exhibition with the Ethnic Communities Council
Canterbury	Wolli Creek Fishway Monitoring Project – annual fish monitoring via nets, of the Wolli Creek Fish ladder at Turrella Reserve, Earlwood
Canterbury	Research Project on Johnston Street Bio-retention data collection and analysis with Macquarie University and SMCMA.
Canterbury	Bank Naturalisation Project in partnership with Sydney Water
Canterbury	Hand over to Council of Cup & Saucer Creek Wetland completed in partnership with Sydney Water and SMCMA

Council	Projects and Activities
Canterbury	A partner in the GreenWay Sustainability Project with Ashfield and Marrickville councils
Canterbury	Installed Interpretation signage at 3 volunteer Bushcare sites, Campsie Remnant Bushland and Cup & Saucer Creek Wetland
Canterbury	Participates in RiverScience Ecological Monitoring in the estuary annually
City of Sydney	City of Sydney has integrated raingardens in major capital works projects such as footway renewal, pedestrian crossings, traffic calming and cycleways and is currently implementing a number of stormwater harvesting projects across the LGA
City of Sydney	Draft Decentralised Water Master Plan has been developed and following its public exhibition, the master plan will be put to Council in December meeting for endorsement.
City of Sydney	City of Sydney runs the 'Green Village Program' to promote sustainability with a variety of workshops, including targeting low income and non-English speaking communities
City of Sydney	16 community gardens, three footpath community gardens, two Landcare teams and a community nursery producing native plants
City of Sydney	City of Sydney is working with the University of Western Sydney to develop some sampling and monitoring protocols for measuring water quality performance of WSUD actions implemented on the ground
Hurstville	Bundarra Reserve Raingarden was completed in 2010
Hurstville	Butler Reserve and St Elmo Parade Raingardens are currently in the planning stage and awaiting funding
Hurstville	Bushcare program whereby council provides supervisors and tools to undertake restoration works throughout the LGA
Marrickville	8 WSUD projects currently or recently undertaken, with an additional 2 planned and/or awaiting funding
Marrickville	Marrickville Council has been running the 'Waterevolution' Urban Water Education program since 2008 which includes workshops and support for the community in building WSUD on their properties
Marrickville	Other educational programmes include Thornley St Weeds Group and Marrickville Landcare working bees
Marrickville	Council supports a wide range of bushcare and volunteer groups
Marrickville	Council employs two part-time Biodiversity Supervisors who operate the Marrickville Community Nursery which provides ongoing training to a group of dedicated volunteers - vision for the nursery is to be a centre for biodiversity of the lower Cooks

Council	Projects and Activities
	River valley in partnership with the community
Marrickville	Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2021 and Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2015 – adopted in November 2011
Marrickville	Research partnerships include ‘Cities as Water Supply Catchments’ and ‘CRC for Water Sensitive Cities’
Marrickville	A partner in the GreenWay Sustainability Project with Ashfield and Canterbury councils
Marrickville	Coordinates the RiverScience Ecological Monitoring in the estuary annually
Marrickville	Subcatchment planning for 6 subcatchments of the Marrickville Valley
Marrickville	Four subcatchment community working groups – the Riverside Crescent Subcatchment Working Group ran its grant funded ‘Project WOW – Walking on Water’ festival
Rockdale	Raingarden at Gilchrist Park recently completed, revitalisation of Rockdale town centre will incorporate WSUD
Rockdale	A membrane bioreactor water recycling plant will be built into the new Discovery Point development at Wolli Creek to treat and recycle sewage from the high-rise apartment blocks. The plant will produce recycled water to use in toilet flushing, laundries, car washing, cooling tower make up and irrigation. Recycled water will also be piped across the Cooks River Bridge to Tempe to provide non-potable water for the irrigation of five Marrickville Council parks and a golf course
Rockdale	Rockdale Council’s current natural restoration projects include environmental and noxious weed control and planting to protect remnant vegetation, endangered ecological communities and threatened species habitat
Rockdale	Community education has included Bushcare workshops, wetland tours, bird watching breakfasts and a number of workshops on pool to pond, waterwise homes and energy efficiency
Rockdale	Volunteer groups supported by the council include Friends of Bardwell Valley, Friends of Coolibah and Friends of Stotts Reserve.
Rockdale	Comprehensive Water Quality program – 17 sites across the City
Rockdale	Bardwell Creek Bank Restoration Project Stage 2 currently underway
Rockdale	Participates in RiverScience Ecological Monitoring in the estuary annually
Strathfield	Strathfield’s WSUD DCP was adopted as part of Consolidated Development Control Plan (DCP) by Council and became operational in July 2011
Strathfield	Field visits and MUSIC modelling training was held to increase awareness of WSUD and assist in the assessment of development applications by Council staff

Council	Projects and Activities
Straathfield	Council monitors the entry and exit points of Yarrowee wetland in order to test wetland efficiency as part of Council's 'Water Ways Monitoring Program'
Straathfield	Council runs an ongoing Bushcare program providing tools and training for regular volunteers
Straathfield	Submitted funding applications include Coxs Creek Wetland Rehabilitation Project and Straathfield Golf Club Cooks River Re-vegetation Corridor
Straathfield	Finalised installation of interpretative signage in 2012 along the Bay to Bay at Dean Reserve, Freshwater Park, Chain of Ponds, Water Street, Ford Park and Elliot Reserve.
Straathfield	Managed the Cooks River Eco-Festival 2011 at Freshwater Park Straathfield
Straathfield	Promoter of the Cooks River Fun Run in June 2012
Straathfield	Adoption of new Community Strategic Plan which has strong focus on regional alliances and catchment planning.
Straathfield	Operating Straathfield Native Nursery and seed bank
Straathfield	Maintaining rainwater gardens at Drew Street, Cave Road and Yarrowee Wetlands
Straathfield	Worked with ICO projects to remove litter and waste along Cooks River

Contributions

Cooks River Alliance Board

The following Councillors served on the Cooks River Board from November 2011 to September 2012.

Chairman

Cr Brian Robson (City of Canterbury Council)

Deputy Chairman

Cr Patrick Kelso (Ashfield Council)

Board Members

Ashfield Council - Cr Patrick Kelso

Bankstown Council - Cr Khal Asfour

Canterbury Council – Cr Brian Robson

City of Sydney Council – Cr John McInerney

Hurstville Council – Philip Sansom

Marrickville Council – Cr Mary O'Sullivan

Rockdale Council – Cr Lesa de Leau

Strathfield Council – Cr Bill Carney/Cr Helen McLucas

Alliance Executive Committee

Cr Brian Robson

Cr Patrick Kelso

David Dekel (Rockdale Council)

Cathy Jones (Strathfield Council)

Nell Graham (Canterbury Council)

Alliance Working Group

Ashfield Council

Melanie Winthorpe, Waste & Environment Projects Officer

Janene Harris, Team Leader Environment

Sarah Kamarudin, Sustainability Officer

Bankstown Council

Cherie Blackburn, Catchment Management Planner, Sustainable Development

Canterbury Council

Nell Graham, Team Leader, Environmental Strategy

City of Sydney

Bhakti Devi, Manager Water Strategy and Project Manager Decentralised Water Master Plan

Hurstville Council

Nicole Boyd, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator

Marrickville Council

Jan Orton, Manager Environmental Services

Jean Brennan, Water and Catchments Coordinator, Environmental Services

Victoria Currie, Biodiversity Coordinator, Environmental Services

Rockdale Council

David Dekel, Coordinator Environmental Strategy

Strathfield Council

Cathy Jones, Corporate Strategy Coordinator, Strategy and Sustainability Unit