



# 2010 ANNUAL REPORT



Cover photo: Cup and Saucer Creek stormwater treatment wetland under construction, June 2010.

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## About this Report

Improving and managing the Cooks River system requires the cooperation and collaboration of a multitude of stakeholders.

The Cooks River Foreshores Working Group (CRFWG) aims to provide the structure, focus and coordination needed to facilitate and support this cooperation and collaboration.

This Annual Report presents an overview of our work during FY2009/10, including:

- Activities and operations of the CRFWG to provide this structure, focus and coordination, and
- Outcomes achieved through the efforts of the CRFWG and its' member and participating organisations.



# Coordinator's Message

What a year! While new on-ground works were rolling out one after another (see all the project updates below), the awards and recognition were rolling in.

It was momentous when our flagship and trailblazing project, the OurRiver – Cooks River Sustainability Initiative, won the esteemed 2010 NSW Government's Green Globe Award for Local Government Sustainability in July 2010, and got positive national and local media coverage for the project and the River as a result (including a headline, four-column article and photo in the Sydney Morning Herald).

There were lots of other awards too - for OurRiver itself, for on-ground works delivered or inspired by OurRiver, and for many other river and catchment improvement projects by CRFWG partners. Some of these are mentioned inside and some will appear in the 2010/11 annual report.

But the BIG ONE for all of us came in August 2010, when the CRFWG, on behalf of all its member councils and government and community partners, was selected as a finalist for the 2010 National Riverprize. The National Riverprize is a prestigious and highly competitive award, presented by the Australia-based International Riverfoundation to acknowledge and support outstanding achievement in river basin management.

For the Cooks River and the CRFWG to reach the finals in this esteemed award is a great honour, of which everyone who has been working to revive the River, together or in parallel over many years now, should feel proud. It testifies to the high caliber of work being done to protect and restore the River and its catchment environment, and to the effectiveness of the collaborative spirit, partnerships and capacity that have been cultivated and nurtured through the CRFWG.

Addressing over 200 people at the Cooks River Valley Association's Cooks River Community Forum in May 2010, the local Member for Canterbury, Linda Burney MP, exclaimed, 'What's really exciting is the level of collaboration around the River now – it's just astonishing!'

It is astonishing! And it's this collaboration, between all levels of government and community, that's delivering a (benevolent) flood of new on-ground works, plans and designs for future actions, and monitoring and research programs to provide the science needed to inform future management decisions, which, in turn, are contributing to the gradual transformation of the Cooks River Catchment into a healthy, water sensitive, bio-diverse and sustainable urban environment.

The CRFWG has been pivotal in initiating and fostering this 'astonishing level of collaboration'. Collaboration requires strong relationships, good communication and capacity to work together. These are precisely what the CRFWG has been building over the past 12 years, by bringing key individuals and organisations together, consistently, over time, to share information and ideas, work for common aims, tackle common issues and provide mutual support.

But the effectiveness of the CRFWG is a direct reflection of the level of commitment, support and participation offered by its member councils and its many other partners. And for this support – from council and state agency officers and senior management; local, state and federal elected representatives, and above all, our passionate, vocal, hands-on, engaged catchment community - we must all be grateful.

Through a highly collaborative process facilitated by the OurRiver initiative, we've been working with council officers, senior management and councilors to establish a new regional governance framework for the Cooks River Catchment that we hope will be even more effective at delivering sustainable catchment management and a healthy river system. From July 2011, the CRFWG will be officially transformed into an expanded and better-resourced Cooks River Alliance, strengthened by the active participation of elected local government officials and the addition of new staff with technical expertise. Demonstrating their commitment to improving the health of the River, all eight CRFWG member councils have formally committed to support the new Alliance at levels greatly exceeding their current CRFWG contributions and other councils are considering joining as well!

The future is looking good for the Cooks River. Your ongoing support and involvement will keep it that way!

With gratitude and pride,

**Judy Pincus**  
*CRFWG Coordinator*

## Our vision

The Cooks River will be a vital and dynamic river system, representing, in all its dimensions, a healthy natural environment within its urban landscape.

The river and its foreshores will provide a rich recreational resource valued by both the local and wider community, catering for all interests from walkers to cyclists, sports groups to picnickers and anglers to boat users.

As a generous river corridor, the foreshores will create an ideal opportunity to restore and conserve a range of native plant communities and wildlife habitats, establishing a link from the River's beginning in Bankstown to its issue into Botany Bay.

The river and its catchment will be managed to assist the natural recovery of water quality, aquatic life and riverbed profile, enhanced by riverbanks that reflect a more natural character.

In all of its dimensions, the long Aboriginal and European history of the river will be recognised through informative, educational and artistic programmes and features along the river's length, bringing to the community that shares and enjoys its many attractions a sense of pride in helping to secure a sound future for this valuable city landscape.

*Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan, 1997*

# Our Purpose

The Cooks River Foreshores Working Group (CRFWG) is a voluntary association of councils in the Cooks River Catchment who are working together with state government agencies and the local community to improve the health and amenity of the Cooks River, its foreshores and catchment environment.

Guided by the vision, objectives and strategies of the Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan (Clouston, 1997), the CRFWG facilitates and supports regional collaboration by key stakeholders to establish a more strategic and integrated approach to the management of the River.

The CRFWG provides a forum for catchment councils and state government agencies responsible for managing the Cooks River, its foreshores and catchment to come together to:

- Exchange information and discuss issues and ideas;
- Develop partnerships, projects and programs to address common issues and achieve common objectives;
- Develop joint applications for funding;
- Develop joint submissions advocating desired Cooks River and foreshore outcomes;
- Publicise and promote the Cooks River and the CRFWG to build support for ongoing improvement initiatives; and
- Encourage and promote research in the Cooks River catchment.

The CRFWG aims to address the full range of issues relevant to river and catchment management, including water quality and riverbank management; biodiversity conservation and restoration; access and recreation; interpretation, promotion and education; cultural heritage and landscape character; community engagement, and the planning and administration needed to move from strategies on paper to actions on the ground.

Through regional collaboration, the CRFWG seeks to ensure coordination of efforts, professional management, optimal use of resources and greater impact on governmental policies and decisions affecting the River than could be achieved by each partner working separately.

The CRFWG plays a pivotal role in driving Cooks River improvement. Its efforts and initiative have helped to attract significant council, State and Federal investment and have contributed resources and momentum to the many local community initiatives flourishing around the catchment.

'The Power of Collaboration' was the key message of the CRFWG Coordinator's presentation at the National Riverprize Finalists' Session of the 2010 International Riversymposium.





# Map of the Cooks River Catchment

This map shows the boundaries of the Catchment and the Local Government Areas within it. CRFWG member councils' names are outlined.

Source: SMCMA (2008)



**Legend**

- Cooks River Catchment Boundary
- Local Government Boundaries
- Drainage Lines

Aerial Photo: Sinclair Knight Merz Pty Ltd, January 2008

## COOKS RIVER CATCHMENT





# Achievement Highlights

## OurRiver - Cooks River Sustainability Initiative

OurRiver is helping CRFWG member councils and their communities improve the health of the Cooks River and conserve water resources through an innovative and collaborative approach to managing water in our highly urbanised catchment. Among its many achievements during FY2009/10, this three-year, \$2 million-plus project has:

- Completed collaborative visioning and planning forums in six diverse subcatchments across the Cooks River Catchment;
- Completed construction of two projects identified and partially funded through OurRiver:
  - ◊ Permeable paving of Tom Foster Community Care car park, Marrickville, and
  - ◊ Construction of a raingarden in the median strip of Drew Street, Strathfield (Ed. Note: Winner of the NSW Stormwater Industry Association 2010 Excellence in Infrastructure Award, September 2010);
- Completed detailed design of eight other on-ground projects to be constructed with funding from OurRiver;
- Secured \$120,000 in additional grant funding for construction of three OurRiver on-ground projects;
- Developed -100 concept designs for other potential on-ground works identified through the subcatchment planning process;

- Developed a proposal to transform the existing CRFWG into a more potent regional alliance of catchment councils, strengthened by the active participation of elected officials, senior council staff and major landholders and the addition of new staff with technical expertise. Secured in-principle endorsement of the proposal from the Regional Cooks River Mayors Group.
- Received two AWARDS for the OurRiver project: the 2010 Green Globe Award for Local Government Sustainability, and Highly Commended in the Keep Australia Beautiful, 2010 Sustainable Cities, Grundfos Water Conservation Award.

## Cooks River Urban Water Initiative

- 4 councils, 3 state agencies, 2 major community groups and one university engaged as partners
- 2 bioretention systems created
- 2 freshwater wetlands created
- 1 freshwater wetland refurbished
- 2 saltmarshes created
- 6 major GPTs and 6 gully baskets installed
- 1 saltmarsh buffer being restored
- 1 sediment capture basin constructed



## Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program

- Developed water quality improvement decision support system (DSS) for use by councils and catchment managers to test water quality scenarios at catchment, subcatchment or council scales.
- Funded a number of water quality improvement devices through devolved grants to councils and land managers, including three of the on-ground works arising through the OurRiver project.
- Installed a network of five real-time water quality monitoring stations for the Botany Bay Catchment – two each in the Cooks and Georges Rivers and one in Botany Bay.

## Other CRFWG & council projects

- Removed 22.7 tonnes of litter, dumped and organic materials, and 151 sharps from the River and foreshores, through the CREW program;
- Completed rehabilitation of a further 240m of foreshore along the upstream section of Gough Whitlam Park, including revegetation, riverbank rehabilitation and construction of two new saltmarshes (Canterbury City Council)
- Reactivated the Riverlife Interpretive Tour Program with seven tours delivered to 77 participants including the first bi-lingual tour, in Mandarin;
- Completed preparation of the Cooks River Estuarine Vegetation Management Guidelines;
- Sampled sediments and heavy metal contamination in the bed of the lower Cooks River to assess the risk of future contamination through mobilisation of heavy metals into and out of the water column, through an expanded RiverScience Program;
- Constructed / upgraded 925m of foreshore pedestrian and cycle path, continuing the implementation of recommended path improvements from the CRFWG's Cooks River Pathway Development Strategy;
- Began development of a new CRFWG - Cooks River website ([www.cooksriver.org.au](http://www.cooksriver.org.au)), to serve as the primary portal for information about the Cooks River.

## Awards

### CRFWG

- Finalist, National Riverprize 2010, International Riverfoundation (July 2010)

### OurRiver

- 2010 Green Globe Award for Local Government Sustainability (July 2010)
- Highly Commended, 2010 Sustainable Cities Grundfos Water Conservation Award (July 2010)

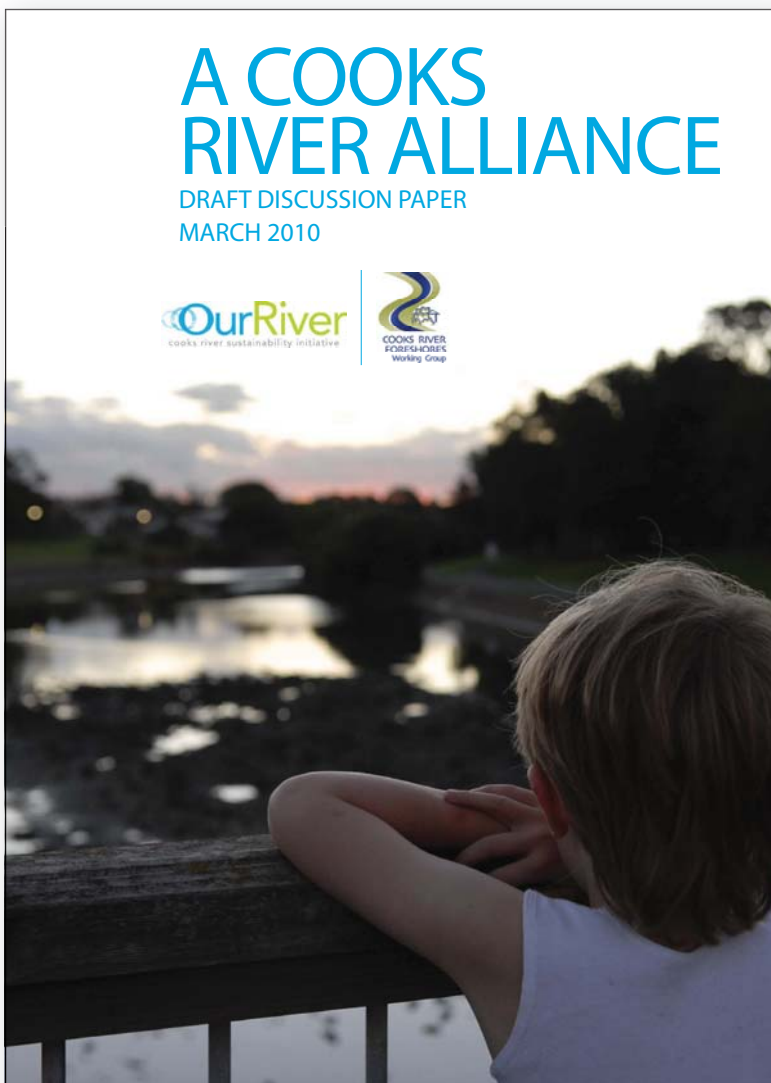


CRFWG Coordinator Judy Pincus (right), and OurRiver Project Manager Rachel Wisniewski-Jakuba (left), elated after receiving the CRFWG's National Riverprize 2010 Finalist Trophy at the International Riversymposium, in Perth, October 2010.

## Looking ahead

During FY2010/11, the CRFWG is planning to:

- Continue working with councils to develop the proposal for evolving the CRFWG into a strengthened and expanded Cooks River Alliance, secure councils' support and commitment and prepare to launch the new Alliance in FY2011/12;
- Complete the grant-funded Our River – Cooks River Sustainability Initiative, and continue to pursue its aims and use its methods through the CRFWG, council initiatives and the proposed Cooks River Alliance;
- Install the new regional family of wayfinding and river identification signage developed through the Cooks River Path Signage Project;
- Continue working with councils, SMCMA, DECCW and potentially the GRCCC, to develop and implement a coordinated catchment-wide monitoring framework to support informed decision-making for better management of the River and catchment;
- Recruit and train new volunteer tour guides for the RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program, and offer more RiverLife tours in languages other than English to better reach the catchment's culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- Continue removing rubbish from the River and foreshores through the CREW project;
- Create a new and engaging CRFWG – Cooks River website ([www.cooksriver.org.au](http://www.cooksriver.org.au)) to serve as the primary portal for information about the Cooks River, the work of the CRFWG and future Cooks River Alliance.





# CRFWG Activities

## Providing coordination and fostering collaboration

### Bringing stakeholders together for regular face-to-face meetings

CRFWG members and participating organisations meet regularly through the year to share information and ideas and plan and manage solutions to priority issues. In 2009/10, CRFWG meetings were held quarterly, with the locations rotating between member councils, as follows:

Date	Host
Bankstown Council . . . . .	29 July 2009
Ashfield Council . . . . .	30 September 2009 (Councils only)
Marrickville Council . . . . .	25 November 2009
City of Sydney . . . . .	9 March 2010
Strathfield Council . . . . .	25 May 2010

### Informing and educating members and partners

- Presentation on the new Sydney Region Native Vegetation Mapping being developed by DECCW for SMCMA, to the full CRFWG – Daniel Connelly, Manager, Information & Assessment Section, Metropolitan Branch, DECCW.
- Presentation (update) on the Cooks River to Iron Cove Greenway, to the full CRFWG - Lauren McIver, Project Manager, Greenway Sustainability Project
- Presentation on the Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program, to the full CRFWG – John Dahlenburg, SMCMA.
- Presentations on Approaches to Minimizing User Conflict on Shared Paths, by Warren Salomon, Sustainable Transport Consultants P/L, and Shared Paths in the City of Sydney, by Fiona Campbell,

- Transport Planner – Cycling, City of Sydney, at the Cooks River Path Safety and Improvement Planning Workshop (October 2009), organised by the CRFWG for council and state agency officers.
- Presentations to the SMCMA Board and Cooks River Catchment councillors and Mayors about the CRFWG and its achievements (Judy Pincus, CRFWG), the OurRiver Cooks River Sustainability Initiative (Rachel Jakuba, OurRiver) and the Cooks River Urban Water Initiative (Phill Birtles, SMCMA) (April 2010).

## Supporting regional initiatives by our partners

During the year, the CRFWG Coordinator represented the CRFWG on the following partner-led regional project committees relevant to the Cooks River:

- Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program, Reference Committee (SMCMA)
- Cooks River Bank Naturalisation Project, Working Group (Sydney Water)
- Cooks River Urban Water Initiative, Reference Group (SMCMA)

The CRFWG Coordinator also supported the SMCMA by participating in an interview about its services and effectiveness, as part of a statewide audit of NSW Catchment Management Authorities for the NSW Natural Resource Commission.

## Supporting regional communication and collaboration

CRFWG meetings provide an effective and convenient forum for State agencies, community groups and other stakeholders to communicate directly and efficiently with the Cooks River Catchment councils about current and planned activities and issues of concern.

*CRFWG Council meeting, March 2010.*



The CRFWG Coordinator and OurRiver Project Manager participated in quarterly meetings of the Botany Bay Catchment Coordination Group, which was established by the SMCMA, in September 2008, to facilitate information-sharing and cooperation among river catchment committee coordinators and the project managers of large State and Commonwealth-funded programs operating across the Botany Bay Catchment.

The CRFWG Coordinator maintains ongoing liaison with the Executive Officer of the Georges River Combined Councils Committee and the Coordinator of the Parramatta River Catchment Group, to facilitate sharing of information, advice and resources between the three main catchment groups in the Sydney region. The overlapping membership of these groups, along with the broader regional oversight provided by the SMCMA, also helps ensure that their activities are complementary, duplication is minimised and learnings and resources are shared across the region.

### Working to improve catchment monitoring

- Fifteen council, SMCMA, I&I NSW and NGO (Oceanwatch) staff, DECCW researchers, community members and the Coordinator of the GRCCC's Georges River Community River Health Monitoring Program, put their heads together at a CRFWG-organised workshop, held in August 2009, to take the first steps towards developing an integrated, strategic monitoring framework for the Cooks River Catchment. A coordinated catchment-wide framework would recommend who monitors what, where and how often, as well as how the resulting data should be managed and reported, to support informed decision-making for better management of the River and catchment in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

DECCW scientists Peter Scanes, Head of the Coastal Waters Science Unit, Waters & Catchments Science, and Sonia Claus, Environmental Scientist, outlined the NSW estuary monitoring framework and introduced a conceptual model (visually presented as a flow-chart) for understanding catchment-estuarine processes, then led workshop participants in an initial attempt to apply the model to the Cooks River system.

Following the workshop, smaller groups of council, CRFWG, OurRiver and SMCMA officers worked to further develop and refine a draft Cooks River estuary/catchment model, which will be finalised and used as the basis for a monitoring framework pending receipt of feedback from DECCW scientists.

- In November 2009, the Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA) wrote to the NSW Minister for Health requesting advice regarding a range of recreational water quality issues in the Cooks River. Following this representation, NSW Health consulted the CRFWG

and a number of other stakeholders about the issues and, with the Minister's approval, convened a meeting of community and local and state government stakeholders in June 2010, to consider longer term recreational water use issues, including the possibility of resurrecting a swimming location. The CRFWG Coordinator and the OurRiver Project Manager both participated in this meeting.

At the stakeholder meeting the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water's (DECCW) Beachwatch Programs agreed to conduct an investigation into the recreational water quality at a number of potential swimming sites using the National Health and Medical Research Council's 2008 Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Waters, in particular Chapter 5 – Microbial Water Quality. These (and the previous) guidelines have never been implemented for the Cooks River because the River has long been considered unsuitable for primary contact recreation, such as swimming or other activities involving whole-of-body immersion.

In the coming year, the CRFWG will work with the CRVA, the PHU and the Beachwatch Program, to establish monitoring points, carry out an initial sanitary survey and determine an appropriate approach to long-term data collection, evaluation and reporting about this important issue.

- In late 2009, CRFWG and OurRiver staff began meeting with officers from the GRCCC, Oceanwatch, and the SMCMA to explore opportunities for applying the methodology of the GRCCC's Georges River Community River Health Monitoring Program to the Cooks River catchment.

In April 2010, the CRFWG accepted an invitation from the GRCCC to become a partner in a GRCCC grant proposal under the Federal Government's Caring for Our Country Program, to expand the GRCCC's successful River Health Community Monitoring Program to include a number of sites and community groups in the Cooks River Catchment.

If successful, the grant will fund (among other things):

- ◊ Training and supervision of community groups in the Georges and Cooks River Catchments in robust scientific sampling activities to monitor water quality, vegetation condition and macro-invertebrate community health in freshwater and estuarine ecosystems across both catchments;
- ◊ Data analysis and reporting of findings to catchment managers and the community through interpretive catchment report cards and detailed annual reports, providing an annual snapshot of the health of the catchment;

- ◇ Development of recommendations for actions councils can undertake to improve water quality; and
- ◇ Preparation of management response documents that report on subsequent council activities to improve water quality.

If successful, the project will get more people down to the river, increase awareness of river health issues, build community skills and capacity and actively involve community in the management of the Cooks River. The monitoring undertaken will complement existing water quality (eg, Streamwatch, Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program, etc.) and ecological monitoring (eg, RiverScience) to provide a better basis for assessing the effectiveness of government investment in water quality improvement programs. It will also benefit the catchment and the project partners themselves by enhancing inter-agency cooperation between the GRCCC, the CRFWG, the SMCMA and the Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program.

The current Georges River River Health Monitoring Program is a partnership of the 9 member councils of the GRCCC, the SMCMA, Sydney Water and the Georges River Environmental Education Centre, and is funded through a Federal Government Caring for Our Country grant. If the grant is successful, the eight member councils of the CRFWG would join the partnership, making this a truly comprehensive project for the entire Botany Bay Catchment.

### Coordinating Cooks River Path improvement efforts

Officers from seven foreshore councils (including two non-CRFWG members - Burwood Council and City of Botany Bay) and the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, attended a Cooks River Path Safety and Improvement Planning Workshop, organised and facilitated by CRFWG staff in October 2009. The workshop gave council officers responsible for managing the foreshore path within their own LGA the opportunity to find out what other councils and agencies were doing or planning, and engaged all participants in jointly identifying and prioritising outstanding management, safety and operational issues requiring regional coordination or collaboration. Presentations on approaches to minimising user conflict on shared paths, by Warren Salomon, Sustainable Transport Consultants P/L, and Fiona Campbell, Transport Planner – Cycling, City of Sydney, stimulated thoughtful discussion about options suitable for the Cooks River Path.

### Strategic planning

- Cooks River Alliance: Following a review of Cooks River Catchment governance arrangements, a proposal is being developed to evolve the CRFWG into a stronger, better resourced Cooks River Alliance. The new Alliance will build on the historical coordination provided by the CRFWG while adding critical new aspects, such as involvement of political and senior staff, greater focus beyond the foreshores, development of projects funded by external partners and the addition of staff with key technical skills. The proposal is being developed through a highly collaborative process involving council officers, senior management and elected councilors, facilitated through the OurRiver project. In March 2010, a meeting of the Cooks River Regional Mayors gave in-principle support for the establishment of the Alliance (As of December 2010, all eight CRFWG councils had formally agreed to participate in and commit greater resources to the Alliance from July 2011. Ed.).
- An internal review of the Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan was undertaken to get a general overview as to which objectives and actions have been accomplished and what work now needs to be done. The findings will be used to inform the development of a new Cooks River Catchment strategic plan, to be developed as one of the first priorities of the new Cooks River Alliance from FY2011/12.

### Community liaison and support

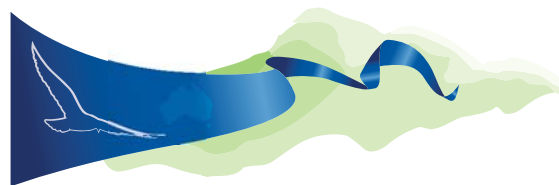
- CRFWG and OurRiver staff set up displays and spoke with members of the community at the Cooks River Valley Association's sixth annual, extremely well attended, Cooks River Community Forum, held on the 8th May 2010, at Canterbury Girls High School.<sup>3</sup>
- The Coordinator and member council representatives provided information and maintained ongoing liaison with Cooks River-oriented community groups, including:
  - ◇ Cooks River Valley Association
  - ◇ The Mudcrabs – Cooks River Eco Volunteers
  - ◇ Wollie Creek Preservation Society
  - ◇ Friends of Ewen Park
  - ◇ South West Enviro Centre
  - ◇ Bardwell Valley Bushcare Group
  - ◇ Cooks River to Iron Cove Greenway Project
- Member councils provided financial and in-kind support for many community initiatives, including bush regeneration and revegetation projects, litter removal, water quality monitoring, etc. See project updates below for details.



- Project reports, research findings and other information and resources were made available to the public via the Cooknet website.
- A variety of information was provided to residents, students, government agencies and media representatives in response to specific enquiries.
- The Coordinator and the OurRiver Project Manager spoke to a group of post-graduate students in environmental planning and management from the University of Wollongong about the complexities of urban river management, the role of the CRFWG, and the OurRiver project's innovative approach to involving community members in planning for more sustainable water management in their local areas, then gave them a tour of bank restoration and water sensitive landscaping works undertaken by Marrickville Council at Tempe Recreational Reserve.
- Organised and participated in a gathering of council officers, several Cooks River community group representatives (CRVA, The Mudcrabs), and Brian Powyer from 'The Association for the Greening Of', with visitors from PRADAN, an India-based NGO that is working to promote community development through sustainable natural resource management, and improve the livelihoods of rural poor across some of India's poorest states. The aim of the meeting was to offer ideas and inspiration to help PRADAN improve its networking effectiveness, but in the end it was PRADAN that did most of the inspiring and teaching.

### Seminar / workshop / field trip attendance

- Sydney Regional Recreation Trails Update Workshop (Department of Planning)
- Biodiversity Seminar for Local Government (including launch of the new native vegetation mapping for the Sydney Metro region (SMCMA and DECCW)
- Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (Environmental) Volunteers (SMCMA and School of Volunteer Management)
- Managing to Motivate and Retain (Environmental) Volunteers (SMCMA and School of Volunteer Management)
- Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program Seminar/Workshop (SMCMA)
- Caring for Our Country 2010 grants program information session (Australian Government)
- Launch of the NSW component of the Cities as Water Supply Catchments Research Program



## 2010 AWARD FINALIST NATIONAL RIVERPRIZE

### Award nominations submitted - National Riverprize 2010

In May 2010, the CRFWG submitted a nomination, on behalf of all its members and partners (councils, state government agencies and community groups) who are working together to protect and restore the Cooks River system, for the 2010 National Riverprize. The National Riverprize is a prestigious and highly competitive award, presented by the Brisbane-based International Riverfoundation, to acknowledge and support outstanding achievement in river basin management.

Preparing the application required a massive effort, by several people, to summarise 12+ years of activity and achievements, demonstrate effectiveness of program delivery in terms of value for money, inclusiveness and innovation, and provide documents, data, photos and media coverage to support claims and confirm results. Special thanks are due to Andrew Huggett of Insight Ecology for his generous assistance with the preparation of the application.

(Editor's Note: The CRFWG was selected as a National Riverprize Finalist in August 2010, and the Coordinator gave a well-received presentation about the CRFWG and Cooks River restoration efforts - entitled, 'There's Something about the Cooks River - The Power of Collaboration' - at the International RiverSymposium, held in Perth, October 2010. Though we didn't win (this time), our selection as finalists was a great honour and a testament to the effectiveness of the collaboration that has been fostered by the CRFWG and the high caliber of work we are all doing to protect and restore the Cooks River environment. It confirms that what we are doing here is 'up there' with the best around the world.)

# How We Do It - Operations

## Membership

Core Members consist of councils contributing financially towards the coordination and operating costs of the CRFWG and participating actively in the group, eg, through regular attendance at CRFWG meetings and participation in regional projects.

Participating Organisations include non-member councils and State Government agencies that participate actively through attending regular meetings and providing technical support, information and advice as needed.

Corresponding Organisations include other State Government agencies and NGOs that are kept informed of CRFWG activities and provide technical support, information and advice on request.

## Financial support

Funding for coordination and operations of the CRFWG is derived from annual member contributions and occasional contributions from participating State Government agencies. 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.

In FY2009/10, combined council contributions doubled over the previous year to \$87,982, allowing full-time coordination of the CRFWG to be fully funded by the councils for the first time in the Group's history. The CRFWG has been moving incrementally towards achieving this goal (fully funding administration and overheads solely through member council contributions) since 2005, to secure a stable ongoing source of funding for coordination and ensure local government control of its activities.

The Sydney Metropolitan CMA contributed \$30,000 to support CRFWG operations in FY2009/10. These funds are being used for various CRFWG programs, including development of the new CRFWG - Cooks River website.

Financial and in-kind contributions and commitments towards CRFWG coordination and operations in FY2009/10 are shown in the tables below. Financial commitments for FY2011/12 are not reported as they are currently being negotiated in conjunction with planning for the new Cooks River Alliance.



## CRFWG operational income

### Overview

Source	2009/10	% increase / decrease over previous year
Councils	\$87,982	↑ 50.9 %
State Government	\$30,000	↓ 14.3 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$117,982</b>	<b>↑ 26.4 %</b>

### Breakdown by contributor

Contributor	Cash contribution	In-kind contribution
<b>COUNCILS</b>		
<b>Full-fee Members</b>		
City of Canterbury	\$24,727	Staff time & meeting support
Rockdale City Council	20,762	Staff time & meeting support
Marrickville Council	12,415	Staff time & meeting support, admin & staff support
City of Sydney	10,433	Staff time & meeting support
Bankstown City Council	9,655	Staff time & meeting support
Strathfield Municipal Council	6,990	Staff time & meeting support, hosting of Coordinator
Ashfield Council	1,000	Staff time & meeting support
<b>Subtotal – Members</b>	<b>\$85,982</b>	
<b>Participating councils</b>		
Hurstville City Council	2,000	Staff time & meeting support
Kogarah Council	-	Staff time & meeting support
<b>Subtotal - Participating Councils</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL - COUNCILS</b>	<b>\$87,982</b>	
<b>PARTICIPATING AGENCIES</b>		
Sydney Metropolitan CMA	30,000	Staff time & meeting support
Sydney Water	-	Staff time & meeting support
RailCorp	-	Staff time & meeting support
DECCW	-	Staff time & meeting support
<b>Subtotal – Participating agencies</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>\$117,982</b>	



## Staff and administration

The CRFWG employs one full-time Coordinator to coordinate, facilitate and implement many of its activities. The current Coordinator, Judy Pincus, has served the Group since 2000.

Using one-off surplus funds that had become available, a part-time Environment Officer was employed for 12 months from November 2009, to reactivate the Riverlife Tour Program and work with the Coordinator to develop a CRFWG/Cooks River website and other educational, interpretive and promotional resources.

Marrickville Council continued to administer and provide managerial support for the employment of the CRFWG Coordinator and the Environment Officer during the year. Strathfield Council continued to host both positions as well as OurRiver project staff at its offices.

## Regional project management

Regional projects are managed and administered by an officer from one of the project partners, under the direction and guidance of a CRFWG-appointed steering committee comprised of representatives from the project partners' organisations.

The CRFWG Coordinator managed three regional projects during the period covered by this report:

- Cooks River Enviro Workers (CREW);
- Cooks River Path Signage Project;
- Development of a CRFWG – Cooks River website.

The City of Canterbury and Strathfield Councils provided assistance with the financial administration of CREW and the signage project.

## Committees

CRFWG committees that were active during FY2009/10 are shown in the table below:

Committee	Current Membership
Cooks River Path Signage - Project Steering Committee	Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale, Strathfield, Burwood, CRFWG Coordinator
Riverscience - Project Steering Committee	Rockdale, Canterbury, Marrickville
Estuarine Vegetation Management Plan - Project Steering Committee	Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale
Cooks River Sustainability Initiative - Steering Committee	Ashfield, Bankstown, City of Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale, Strathfield, CRFWG Coordinator
CRFWG Management Team	Canterbury, Marrickville, Strathfield, CRFWG Coordinator

# Regional Projects

The following are collaborative regional projects active during FY2009/10, that were initiated or run by the CRFWG or its member councils, or were partner-led projects in which the CRFWG was actively involved.

Unless otherwise stated, funding figures represent the cumulative amount (excluding GST) expended on and/or committed to the project to 30th June 2010. The figures provided are based on the best information available at the time of printing.

## OurRiver - Cooks River Sustainability Initiative

*June 2007 – March 2011*

### Project Description

The largest and most ambitious initiative by the CRFWG to date, the OurRiver – Cooks River Sustainability Initiative (OurRiver) is helping eight catchment councils and their communities improve the health of the Cooks River and conserve water resources by involving them in an innovative and collaborative approach to managing water sustainably in highly urbanised catchments.

This is being achieved through:

- Applying a proven locally-based, multi-disciplinary, participatory approach to integrated, sustainable water and stormwater management in six diverse subcatchments, across eight LGAs within the Cooks River catchment;
- Construction projects that conserve water and/or filter stormwater before it reaches the Cooks River;
- Initiatives to educate catchment residents about issues affecting the Cooks River and how our behaviour influences the river; and
- Engaging with catchment stakeholders to establish new Cooks River Catchment governance arrangements.

The OurRiver approach will establish the Cooks River Catchment as a leading model of collaborative urban water management. It is based on the innovative model for urban stormwater management developed by Marrickville Council and Monash University through Marrickville's award-winning Urban Stormwater Integrated Management Project.

### Status

During 2009/10, OurRiver:

- Completed telephone survey of 200 businesses in six subcatchments to understand the attitudes and behaviours of businesses vis á vis water use and environmental practices;

- Completed subcatchment visioning process with final vision sessions and planning forums held where local residents, businesses and council staff set goals and identified actions for improving water management and water quality within their subcatchment;
- Continued assessing the feasibility of actions identified through the above collaborative planning process, prioritising potential construction projects based on feedback from council staff and community members, and began implementing actions (e.g. held Water Wise tours of four subcatchments; developed -100 concept designs for water sensitive urban design construction projects);
- Worked with partner councils to deliver detailed designs for construction projects receiving funding through OurRiver;
- Completed construction of two projects that OurRiver provided funding towards: permeable paving of Tom Foster Community Care car park, Marrickville, and the Drew Street raingardens, Strathfield, (winner of a NSW Stormwater Industry Association 2010 Excellence in Infrastructure Award, September 2010);
- Assessed the organisational capacity of seven partner councils to implement sustainable urban water management within their LGA, with assistance from a PhD student from Monash University's National Urban Water Governance Program; reports with the results of their assessment and recommendations for improvement were provided to each council;
- Continued to build partner and stakeholder capacity through presentations, workshops, meetings and trainings;
- Facilitated the development of a regional alliance of councils that would transform the existing Cooks River Foreshores Working Group into a stronger organisation with additional staff with key skills. Produced a discussion paper on the proposed Cooks River Alliance based on detailed discussions with the OurRiver Steering Committee and OurRiver Executive Champions Committee. The proposal for a Cooks River Alliance was endorsed in-principle by the Regional Cooks River Mayors Group in March 2010. Partner councils are currently considering their potential involvement;
- Convened regular Steering, Executive Champions, Communications, Applied Research meetings;
- Worked to raise profile of OurRiver project and CRFWG accomplishments through presentations to the SMCMA Board of Directors and the Regional Cooks River Mayors Group; and
- Received two awards in July 2010: the 2010 Green Globe Award for Local Government Sustainability and Highly Commended in the Keep Australia Beautiful, 2010 Sustainable Cities - Grundfos Water Conservation Award.

Partners

- Marrickville Council (Grant administration; project staff employment)
- Strathfield Council (hosting project staff)
- Ashfield, Bankstown, Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville, and Rockdale Councils
- CRFWG
- A/Professor Rebekah Brown, Program Leader; National Urban Water Governance Program; School of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University
- Other stakeholders, e.g., community groups, residents, businesses, State agencies and other land managers in the subcatchments

Funding

- DECCW, Environmental Trust, Urban Sustainability Program (2007-2011): \$2,000,000 cash
- Bankstown: \$100,000 cash, \$30,000 in-kind
- Canterbury: \$110,000 plus in-kind
- Hurstville: \$20,000 plus in-kind
- Rockdale: \$50,000 plus in-kind
- Strathfield: \$15,000 plus in-kind
- Ashfield, City of Sydney and Marrickville Councils: in-kind
- SMCMA, BBWQIP devolved grants for on-ground works: \$120,000 (2009/10)



Strathfield Council designed and constructed two raingardens in the central median of Drew Street, Greenacre, with the aim of treating stormwater runoff from two residential subcatchments (1 hectare area) before it enters Coxs Creek and the Cooks River and thereby improve water quality in the Cooks River. This was the first raingarden to be constructed by council staff and, with the help of technical assistance from consultants Equatica Pty Ltd, served as a great capacity-building opportunity. Local residents also lent a hand at a community planting day held in July. The project began as one of 16 structural concept designs developed for the Strathfield South Subcatchment based on actions proposed by participants in a series of collaborative planning workshops facilitated by the OurRiver project. Funding for construction came from the NSW Government Environmental Trust grant for the OurRiver project and devolved Commonwealth funding through the SMCMA's Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program.



Residents of upper Wollie Creek subcatchment visit a raingarden in Marrickville, to learn about water sensitive urban design, on an OurRiver Water Wise Tour, November 2009.



Tom Foster Community Care Centre gets retrofitted with a permeable paving car park.



# Construction Projects Occurring as Part of OurRiver

## Status

Site	OurRiver Sub-catchment	Type of project	Designed to	Partner council	Concept design	Detailed design	Ground breaking	Construction	Notes
Drew Street, Greenacre	Strathfield South	2 raingardens	filter stormwater, improve amenity, enhance biodiversity	Strathfield	complete	completed in-house	Jun-10	completed in-house	Winner, 2010 Stormwater Industry Association, NSW Excellence in Infrastructure Award
Graf Park, Yagoona	Rookwood Rd	1 raingarden and car park	filter stormwater, improve amenity, enhance biodiversity	Bankstown	complete	completed in-house	-	-	-
Canterbury Park, Ashbury	Ashbury	1 vegetated swale	filter stormwater, improve amenity, enhance biodiversity	Ashfield/Canterbury	complete	completed in-house	Sep-10	completed in-house	-
Canterbury Park, Ashbury	Ashbury	1 SW harvesting scheme	conserve potable water, improve Cooks River WQ	Canterbury	complete	completed in-house	-	out to tender Aug 2010	-
Gilchrist Park, Kingsgrove	Upper Wollri Creek	1 raingarden	filter stormwater, improve amenity, enhance biodiversity	Rockdale	complete	completed in-house	-	to be completed in-house	-
Bundara Reserve, Beverly Hills	Upper Wollri Creek	1 raingarden,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 vegetated swales	filter stormwater, improve amenity, enhance biodiversity	Hurstville	complete	complete	-	out to tender Sep 2010	-	-	-
Tom Foster Community Care Centre, Newtown	Eastern Channel East	1 permeable paving car park	filter stormwater	Marrickville	complete	completed in-house	Jun-10	completed	-

## Cooks River Estuarine Vegetation Management Plan

2007 – October 2009

### Project Description

The aim of this project was to provide councils and other land managers with best practice guidelines and direction for the long-term management and rehabilitation of mangrove and saltmarsh communities in the Cooks River Estuary, through the development of a Cooks River Estuarine Vegetation Management Plan. The Cooks River Estuary extends from the upper tidal limits at Georges River Rd, Enfield, to the mouth of Cooks River at Botany Bay, and along Wolli Creek.

### Status

The Cooks River Estuary Vegetation Management Plan was completed in October 2009. An educational brochure was also produced and a community bus tour held.

The plan documents current activities, recommends management strategies and identifies and prioritises areas for rehabilitation and management - to help link remnant patches and ensure long-term species survival in the face of climate change. Priorities identified for action include:

- Conserving existing native vegetation;
- Removing threats (e.g., weeds, physical damage); and
- Rehabilitating vegetation, starting with larger, better quality areas (e.g., Wolli Creek, Gough Whitlam Park and wetlands in the proposed Cooks Cove redevelopment area).

Guidelines for preparing detailed site-specific plans are also included.

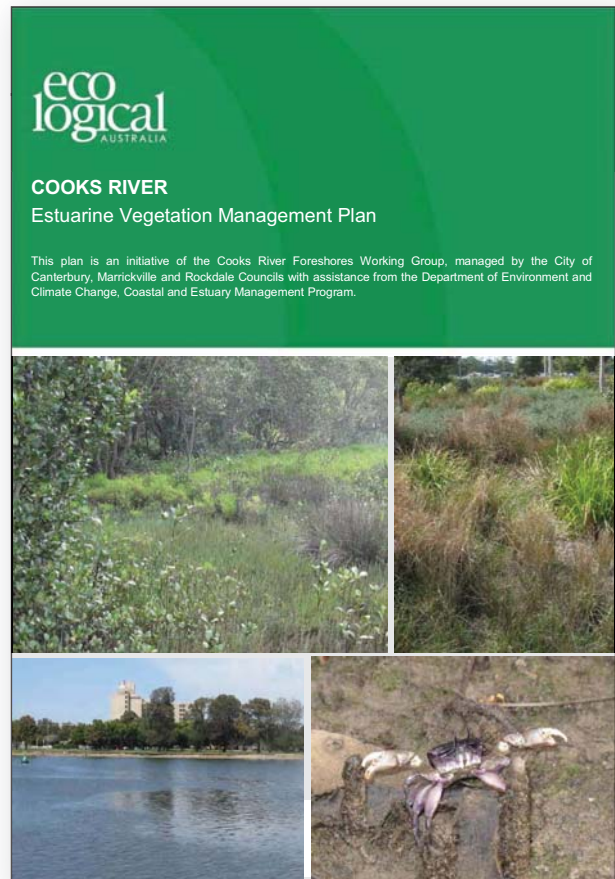
The plan highlights the importance of continued collaboration and an integrated approach to management of the Cooks River foreshore, facilitated through the CRFWG and involving all relevant stakeholders, to deliver on-ground rehabilitation projects.

### Partners

- City of Canterbury (Project management)
- Marrickville and Rockdale Councils
- Sydney Water
- SMCMA
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- CRFWG

### Funding

- DECC, Estuary Management Program: \$20,000 cash (2007/08)
- City of Canterbury: \$5,000 cash; \$10,000 in-kind
- Marrickville Council: \$5,000 cash; \$5,000 in-kind
- Rockdale Council: \$5,000 cash; \$5,000 in-kind
- Sydney Water: \$5,000 cash
- CRFWG: in-kind



## Cooks River Enviro Workers (CREW)

2004 - continuing

### Project Description

Initiated by the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group in July 2004, Cooks River Enviro Workers (CREW) is an ongoing collaborative regional effort to remove litter, dumped materials and other debris from Cooks River and its foreshores. Modeled on the successful Georges River clean-up program, CREW brings a team of volunteers from the Periodic Detention Program of Corrective Services NSW, to remove gross pollutants from the foreshores and waterway on a weekly basis. Participating councils provide tools and supplies for the workers and dispose of the rubbish collected. Corrective Services staff train, transport and supervise the volunteers. Canterbury Council manages project finances and purchasing, the CRFWG Coordinator coordinates to keep things running smoothly, and the Georges River Combined Councils Committee (GRCCC) provides some technical and logistical support through the resources of its Georges Riverkeeper Program. Sydney Water provides access to the channelised sections of the River that it owns and manages.

### Status

In FY2009/10, CREW volunteers removed an estimated 22.7 tonnes of litter and small organic matter, 1.8 tonnes of large debris and dumped materials and 151 syringes from the waterway, banks and foreshores of the Cooks River. Over the six years since CREW began, the project has cleared the river of more than 159 tonnes of litter, 22 tonnes of dumped materials and 766 syringes.

The GRCCC withdrew from the CREW partnership partway through the year to focus Riverkeeper resources on its own members' needs. To ensure continued access to volunteer workers for the Cooks River through Corrective Services' community service programs, the CRFWG subsequently established its own direct agreement with Corrective Services NSW.

### Partners

- CRFWG (Project management)
- City of Canterbury (financial administration)
- Bankstown, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils
- Georges Riverkeeper Program, GRCCC
- Periodic Detention Program, Corrective Services NSW
- Sydney Water Corporation

### Funding (2009/10)

- City of Canterbury: in-kind (administration)
- Corrective Services NSW: in-kind
- Georges Riverkeeper Program, GRCCC: in-kind
- City of Canterbury, Bankstown, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$4,100 plus in-kind
- Sydney Water Corporation: in-kind
- CRFWG: in-kind (project management)

### Summary of CREW outcomes to 30 June 2010

Performance Indicator	FY 2009/10	Total since start July 2004 – June 2010
Litter / small organic matter (tonnes)	22.7	159
Dumped materials / large debris (tonnes)	1.8	22
Total tonnes of litter and debris	24.6	181.3
Sharps (no.)	151	766
Volunteer hours	3,251	28,475

## Cooks River Path Signage Project

2001 - continuing

### Project Description

This project involves the planning, design and implementation of a new, coordinated regional family of wayfinding and river identification signs for the entire Cooks River path from Strathfield to Botany Bay. The new signs will assist path users to better navigate, explore and enjoy the Cooks River foreshores and beyond. It is hoped that their attractive design and beautiful artwork will enhance the look and feel of the river corridor to reflect and boost the community's growing sense of pride and love for the Cooks River and its environs.

### Status

Materials have been ordered and cutting of sign faces and poles has begun. Printing and application of artwork is awaiting checking and finalisation of details on map artwork and specific directional sign messages – a time consuming process! Through pooling council contributions and grant resources, it has been possible to realise cost savings through placing a combined bulk order for manufacturing. Installation will be undertaken separately by each council. It is expected that the entire signage family will be rolled out across all LGAs in early 2011.

### Partners

- CRFWG (Project management)
- Burwood, City of Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils

### Funding

- CRFWG (Project management): in-kind
- Burwood, City of Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and Strathfield Councils: \$172,000 plus in-kind (2001-2010)
- NSW Department of Planning, Metropolitan Greenspace Program: \$66,030 (2001 & 2002)
- NSW Department of Planning, CRFIP: \$35,000 (Round 2); \$30,000 (Round 4)
- RTA: \$2,669 (2002)



## Cooks River Urban Water Initiative

1 July 2008 – (April 2011)

### Project Description

The Cooks River Urban Water Initiative (CRUWI) is a federally funded three-year program, administered by the Sydney Metropolitan CMA, that aims to improve the environmental quality of the Cooks River by partnering with local community groups, councils and other land managers to undertake direct physical works designed to treat stormwater and to create and restore wetlands across the catchment.

### Status

Federal funding (\$2 million) for CRUWI was announced in October 2008, fulfilling a 2007 election promise to improve the Cooks River. This federal investment has generated significant additional investment by councils and other agencies, resulting in a total project value, so far, of at least \$2.9 million and rising. 89% of the federal funds and 100% of other partners' contributions have gone directly into the design and construction of on-ground works.

Fourteen on-ground projects have been negotiated and implemented in collaboration with land managers. By 30 June 2010, 10 of the 14 projects had been completed and were already working to improve the condition of the catchment. Of the remaining projects, two were under construction and two nearing completion of design. It is expected that all on-ground works will be completed before April 2011. The partner councils have committed to maintain all structures built and will monitor the performance of the GPTs into the future. The value of the maintenance contracts alone is worth \$71,000 per year, ongoing.

One of the outcomes driven by the CRUWI Reference Committee, of which the CRFWG is a member, was the development of a joint research project by the SMCMA, Macquarie University and Sydney Water to study the effectiveness of the stormwater improvement interventions implemented through the CRUWI. Additional funding through a NSW Environmental Trust Research Grant has allowed the project to proceed. The three-year research project will be undertaken by Lois Oulton at Macquarie University, to complete her Doctor of Philosophy studies, and should produce information valuable for guiding future management projects in the Cooks River Catchment.

More information and project news are available at [www.cooksriver.info](http://www.cooksriver.info).

### Works Completed at Specific Sites

(partner council financial contribution amounts only shown where information has been provided)

Stormwater treatment projects include the construction of pollutant traps and bio-retention systems that will filter stormwater to reduce the amount of litter, weeds, nutrients and sediment entering and degrading Wolli Creek and the Cooks River:

- Bardwell Valley Sedimentation Basin constructed (CRUWI: \$15,000; Partner: Rockdale City Council)
- Bray Avenue Gross Pollutant Trap, Earlwood, installed to prevent street pollutants from entering a significant wetland beside Wolli Creek. Complete. (CRUWI: \$50,000; Partner: City of Canterbury)
- Hannam Street Bioretention Basin, Turrella, complete and functioning (CRUWI: \$100,000; Partner: Rockdale City Council).
- Highcliff Road East Bioretention Swale, Earlwood. Street stormwater pit filters and a bioretention raingarden and stormwater swale installed in the street verge treat stormwater before it enters Wolli Creek Regional Park. Complete. (CRUWI: \$100,000; Partner: City of Canterbury).



*Bioretention Swale along Highcliff Road East, Earlwood*



*The CRUWI Reference Committee inspects a GPT installed to protect Wollie Valley bushland from impacts by stormwater coming down Highcliff Road West.*

- Highcliff Road West Gross Pollutant Trap, Earlwood. GPT installed at street level. Flow to Creek has been formalised to reduce spreading out of stormwater and associated weed problems. Completed. (CRUWI: \$50,000; Partner: City of Canterbury)
- Johnston Street Bioretention Basin, Earlwood. Channel reconstruction to slow flow, collect sediment and incorporate bioretention filter to reduce nutrients and associated weed growth, with formalisation of flowline to Wollie Creek. Street filters have been inserted in the street stormwater system. Bioretention designs are 80% complete but have been affected by contractor delays. (CRUWI: \$130,000; Partner: City of Canterbury)
- S J Harrison Reserve GPT and Hydrocon Filter. GPT installed in the park and functioning above the stormwater outlet. Detailed design of the Hydrocon pipe system is pending due to contractor delays. (CRUWI: \$180,000; Partner: City of Canterbury)
- Turrella Reserve Gross Pollutant Trap, Turrella, installed and operating (CRUWI: \$100,000; Partner: City of Canterbury: \$80,000)

Wetland projects include the design, construction and restoration of freshwater and estuarine wetland areas to reintroduce natural filtration and habitat functions that were lost when former wetland areas were filled and destroyed:

- Coolibah Reserve Wetland along Bardwell Creek at

Turrella, has been refurbished (CRUWI: \$85,000; Partner: Rockdale City Council)

- Cup & Saucer Creek Wetland, Heynes Reserve, Canterbury. Works will be completed and the wetland opened to the public in September 2010. (More detail on pX) [CRUWI: \$335,000; Partners: Sydney Water (design and project management) & City of Canterbury (\$280,000)]
- Eve Street Wetland, Arncliffe. Rehabilitation of a 0.5 hectare area on the southeast boundary of the wetland. Weed control, bush regeneration, native plantings and restoration works to prevent the spread of weeds into the wetland reserve and provide a native vegetative buffer and additional habitat are due to commence in November 2010. (CRUWI: \$40,000; Partners: Sydney Water and Rockdale City Council).
- Steel Park Saltmarsh, Marrickville. Under construction. (CRUWI: \$130,000; Partner: Marrickville Council).
- Turrella Creek Saltmarsh. Turrella Creek channel has been restored by DECCW and is awaiting planting. Detailed design is complete for a new saltmarsh on the banks of Wollie Creek and a contractor has been engaged. Completion expected in November 2010. (CRUWI: \$225,000; Partners: City of Canterbury: \$20,000, DECCW).
- Yarrowee Freshwater Wetland, Freshwater Park, Strathfield. Completed June 2010. (CRUWI: \$120,000; Partner: Strathfield Council: \$47,000 cash; \$23,000 in-kind; NSW DPI: \$2,000 cash)



*The stormwater pipe under Turrella Reserve lies exposed prior to installation of a massive CRUWI-funded gross pollutant trap to capture litter, grass clippings, leaves, gravel and sand, washed down by stormwater from the surrounding subcatchment, before they can flow into Wollie Creek. Source: SMCMA, April 2010.*



Partners

- Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA)
- Sydney Metropolitan CMA (project management)
- City of Canterbury, Rockdale, Murrumbidgee and Strathfield Councils
- Sydney Water
- NSW Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Water
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- Cooks River Valley Association
- Macquarie University
- NSW Environmental Trust
- CRFWG

Funding

*(final figures will be reported in the 2010-11 Annual Report)*

- DEWHA, Water for our Future: \$2,000,000 cash (\$1,670,000 expended to date)
- SMCMA: \$40,000 in-kind
- Councils: \$551,000 cash
- Councils (project management): \$133,000 in-kind
- Community: \$17,000
- NSW State Government: \$384,000 cash; \$161,000 in-kind
- Macquarie University: \$111,000
- Estimated total project value: \$3,098,095



Before



After

*With CRUWI funding, Rockdale City Council refurbished a small degraded and weed-infested billabong wetland (left - before) in Coolibah Reserve Wetland, Bardwell Park, to improve the quality of water flowing into Bardwell Creek and increase native habitat. The new wetland (right - after) also enhances the aesthetics of the area, which is well used by residents for passive recreation.*

*This small bio-retention wetland was installed at the bottom of Hannam St, Turella, to remove nutrients from stormwater flowing into Bardwell Creek.*





## Cooks River Website Development

NEW 2010 - continuing

### Project Description

The CRFWG is developing a new Cooks River website aimed at improving public access to engaging and up-to-date information about the Cooks River and its catchment. The new website will help inform the community and stakeholders on the health of the river and the nature and 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. To be managed directly by CRFWG staff, the website will build on and replace the CookNet website, which has been hosted and managed by the City of Canterbury for many years.

### Status

A call for proposals from website developers was circulated in April. The domain name, [www.cooksriver.org.au](http://www.cooksriver.org.au), has been secured. Development of the website will progress during the coming year.

### Partners

- CRFWG

### Funding

- CRFWG
- SMCMA



Mudcrabs, including this *Heloecious cordiformis* (semaphore) crab pictured, used to live in the tidal mudflats of the Cooks River in great numbers but because of pollution they have largely disappeared. The mudcrab was chosen as the eponym for The Mudcrabs – Cooks River Eco Volunteers to represent the former biodiverse glory of the Cooks River. The Homo sapien 'Mudcrabs' are working hard to make sure their crusty friends have a healthy home to return to. (adapted from F. Munro) (Photo: Eco Logical)

## RiverScience: Cooks River Ecological Monitoring Program

2005 - continuing

### Project Description

RiverScience is a scientific research program monitoring the ecological health of the Cooks River and its main tributaries. It uses a number of ecological indicators to measure the River's health, including the extent and composition of macroflora (eg, saltmarsh, sea grass and mangroves) and aquatic invertebrates (eg, oysters, barnacles and crabs), as well as various sediment characteristics.

Monitoring these indicators over time, for example, the population of oysters at a specific sampling site, makes it possible to track long-term changes in the ecological health of the River. As the River's health is directly affected by many land use and management practices that can be influenced by local government, Riverscience findings will help councils evaluate the impact of their management practices on the health of the River and give them information needed to make better management decisions.

### Status

A fourth round of annual monitoring took place at 16 sites across a range of river habitats in December 2009.

The full scientific report and a Report Card summarizing and interpreting the results of this monitoring for the community can be downloaded from Cooknet at <http://www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/www/html/1876-riverscience-ecological-monitoring-program.asp>.

### Partners (Round 4, 2009)

- Marrickville Council (Project management)
- City of Canterbury and Rockdale Councils
- Cooks River Valley Association
- Wollie Creek Preservation Society

### Funding (Round 4, 2009)

- Marrickville Council: \$5,000, plus in-kind
- Rockdale Council: \$4,000, plus in-kind
- City of Canterbury Council: \$4,000, plus in-kind

## Riverscience Cooks River Sediment Monitoring Program

2008 - 2011

### Project Description

This project involves sampling and studying sediments in the lower Cooks River to learn more about heavy metal contamination in the river sediments. It will attempt to identify current versus historic levels of contamination, provide information about the mobility of heavy metals in the sediment (i.e., whether they move in and out of the water column), develop a sediment monitoring protocol and assess the risk of future contamination through the mobilisation of heavy metals. The findings will be used to identify and prioritise actions needed to improve river health.

### Status

Rockdale Council received a grant, on behalf of the partner councils, from the Estuary Management Program of DECC, in late 2008. A researcher from the University of NSW was engaged in May 2009, and initial sampling has been undertaken at five sites, including:

- Near the Old Sugar Mill in Canterbury
- Ewen Park
- Marrickville Golf Course
- Mackey Park
- Cahill Park

Preliminary results have been received but final results are still pending. Results will be communicated to stakeholders and the community. This project will be complete in early 2011.

### Partners

- Rockdale (project management)
- Canterbury and Marrickville Councils
- SMCMA

### Funding

- Rockdale, Canterbury and Marrickville Councils: \$9,750 cash
- DECCW, Estuary Management Program: \$9,750 (2008/09)



*Caption: The Riverlife bilingual Mandarin-English tour in May 2010, was a 'sell-out' with almost 20 participants.*

## RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program

2003 - continuing

### Project Description

The RiverLife Cooks River Interpretive Tours program continues to be a popular and unique platform for public education and interpretation. Tours cover a variety of subjects, including heritage, local landmarks and architecture, recreational use and environmental challenges on the Cooks River. Volunteer guides develop their own tours covering a diverse and fascinating range of topics, including local social history, industrial landscape, flora and fauna and local wetlands.

The program includes walking, cycling, kayaking and sketching tours, as well as tours for children and in multiple languages. The whole length of the Cooks River is represented in the tour program, including tributaries such as Cup and Saucer Creek and Wolli Creek. All tours increase community awareness of the Cooks River Catchment environment and raise concern for sustainability.

### Status

Seven tours were delivered in 2009/10, with 77 members of the community participating. Since the Program's inception in 2003, over 127 tours have been delivered with 1,124 participants.

RiverLife expanded its outreach during FY2009/10, adding tours in Rockdale LGA and engaging CALD communities. A mentoring program was initiated to support three new guides joining the program. Steps were also taken to help secure the long-term sustainability of the program. Specific curriculum was developed to integrate messages about stormwater, water quality, sustainable lifestyle choices and biodiversity. And a partnership was established with Ryde TAFE to train a new round of RiverLife tour guides in FY2010/11, and earn volunteers formal tour guide accreditation and first aid certification in exchange for committing to deliver three RiverLife tours for the public.

The CRFWG and partner councils will continue to seek a long-term source of funding for RiverLife during the coming year.

### Partners

- CRFWG (project management)
- Strathfield and Marrickville Council
- City of Canterbury and Rockdale Councils
- Community volunteers

### Funding

- DECC, 'Our Environment: It's a Living Thing' Program: \$64,919 (June 2005)
- Marrickville Council: in-kind
- Strathfield Council: in-kind
- Community volunteers: in-kind
- CRFWG: in-kind

# Cooks River Bank Naturalisation Project & Flood Study (Sydney Water)

2007 - continuing

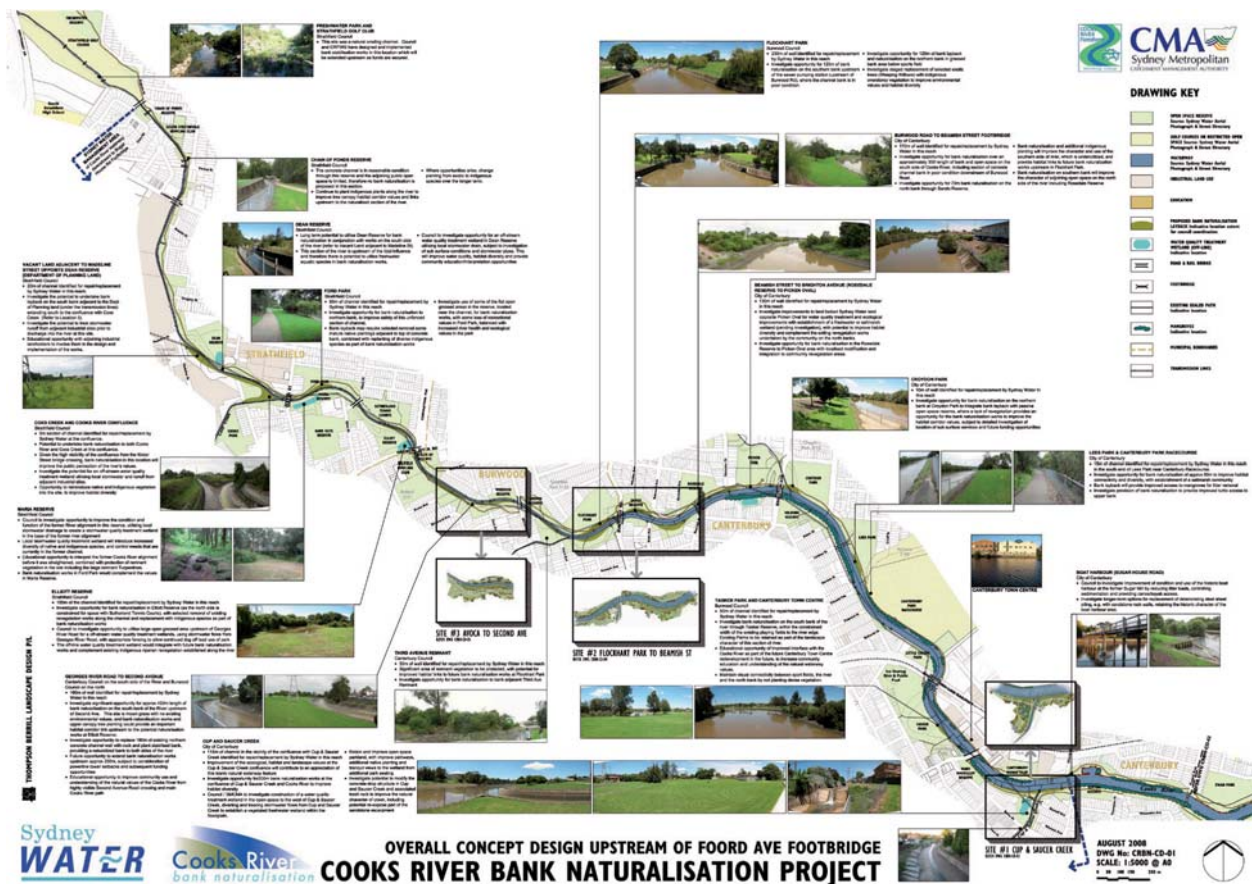
## Project Description

Significant sections of the concrete that lines the Cooks River in Strathfield, Burwood and Canterbury, are deteriorating due to aging and the harsh environment in which they are located. As part of its stormwater infrastructure renewals program, Sydney Water is investigating the potential for naturalising some of these sections rather than simply replacing them with more concrete, in order to improve the River's health and restore its natural character.

## Status

A flood study, Cooks River Naturalisation Master Plan (identifying opportunities for Sydney Water, councils and other landowners to naturalise riverbanks and create wetlands along the River between Centenary Drive, Strathfield, and Alexandra Canal) and concept designs for three priority sites have been completed. Detailed designs will be developed for the three renewal sites in 2010 and 2011, with construction planned to commence in late 2011.

Sydney Water has actively consulted and collaborated with the CRFWG, SMCMA, local councils, other land and water managers and community and at all stages of the project, both to ensure meaningful stakeholder input and to expand the scope of the project to achieve greater flood management, environmental, social, aesthetic and financial benefits than would otherwise be possible.



The Cooks River Naturalisation Master Plan identified numerous opportunities for Sydney Water, councils and other landowners to naturalise riverbanks and create wetlands along the River between Centenary Drive, Strathfield, and the Alexandra Canal. The section of the plan shown here provides concepts for naturalization at sites upstream of the Foord Avenue footbridge, Hurlstone Park.



### Cup & Saucer Creek Wetland

The concept designs for bank naturalisation at the confluence of Cup and Saucer Creek with the Cooks River included construction of an offline freshwater wetland in Heynes Reserve, Canterbury, to treat stormwater from the creek and increase habitat and biodiversity in the area.

With costs shared between Sydney Water, the City of Canterbury and the CRUWI, the \$900,000 project was nearing completion in June 2010. Sydney Water has provided project management for the tendering and construction phases of the project. Once established, the City of Canterbury has agreed to take over maintenance of the wetland.

How the wetland works: A pipe will divert water flowing down Cup and Saucer Creek into the wetland. Water will then flow through a series of different depth pools that will be densely planted. These plants, and bacteria growing on them, will remove certain pollutants from the water before another pipe allows the water to re-enter the creek just before it joins the River. Deeper pools slow down the flow of the water allowing sediment to drop to the bottom and be removed. The dense plants both in the water and on the banks of the wetland will provide valuable habitat for native wildlife.

The wetland will be monitored by the Cooks River Valley Association's Streamwatch Group via specially designed water testing pits.

It is hoped the wetland will be used widely to educate the community about the how's and why's of restoring natural systems and using natural processes to treat urban runoff.



CRUWI Project Manager Phill Birtles, SMCMA, inspects the water quality monitoring pit installed at the outlet of the Cup & Saucer Creek Wetland. This and another inlet monitoring pit will be used by the CRVA Streamwatch group to sample stormwater before and after passing through the wetland, for analysis to determine the effectiveness of the wetland at filtering out nutrients and other pollutants.

Cup and Saucer Creek stormwater treatment wetland under construction, June 2010.





## Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program (BBWQIP)

2009 - continuing

### Program Description

This initiative continues the work begun under the Botany Bay Coastal Catchments Initiative to achieve long term protection and improvement of the surface waters of Botany Bay, its estuaries and catchment. The Program is primarily focused on the impacts of pollutants washing off hard surfaces in the catchment, eg. suspended solids (sediment), nitrogen and phosphorous (nutrients) that end up in the waterways of the Botany Bay catchment.

The ultimate goal of the BBWQIP is to develop an agreed water quality improvement plan for the Bay and its catchment.

Another key aim of the project is to engage with councils and key stakeholders in the Botany Bay Catchment so they can participate in finding and implementing innovative solutions to improve water quality in the Bay and catchment.

The CRFWG is represented on the BBWQIP Stakeholder Reference Committee, which was established to inform community and government stakeholders of progress and provide regular opportunities for stakeholder input on issues as they arise.

### Status

In FY2009/10, a water quality improvement decision support system (DSS) was developed for use by councils and catchment managers. It can be used to test water quality scenarios at a catchment, subcatchment or local government area scale.

A number of water quality improvement devices were funded through devolved grants to councils and land managers throughout the catchment. Three of the on-ground works arising through the OurRiver project received combined funding of \$120,000 through these grants.

A network of five real-time water quality monitoring stations for the Botany Bay Catchment were installed – two each in the Cooks and Georges Rivers and one in Botany Bay. The approximate location of the water quality monitoring stations is shown in the map below. These are expected to become operational in July 2010, and recent data will be displayed on the SMCMA website. Parameters being measured in real-time at each site include temperature, salinity, turbidity, chlorophyll-A, dissolved oxygen and light (PAR).

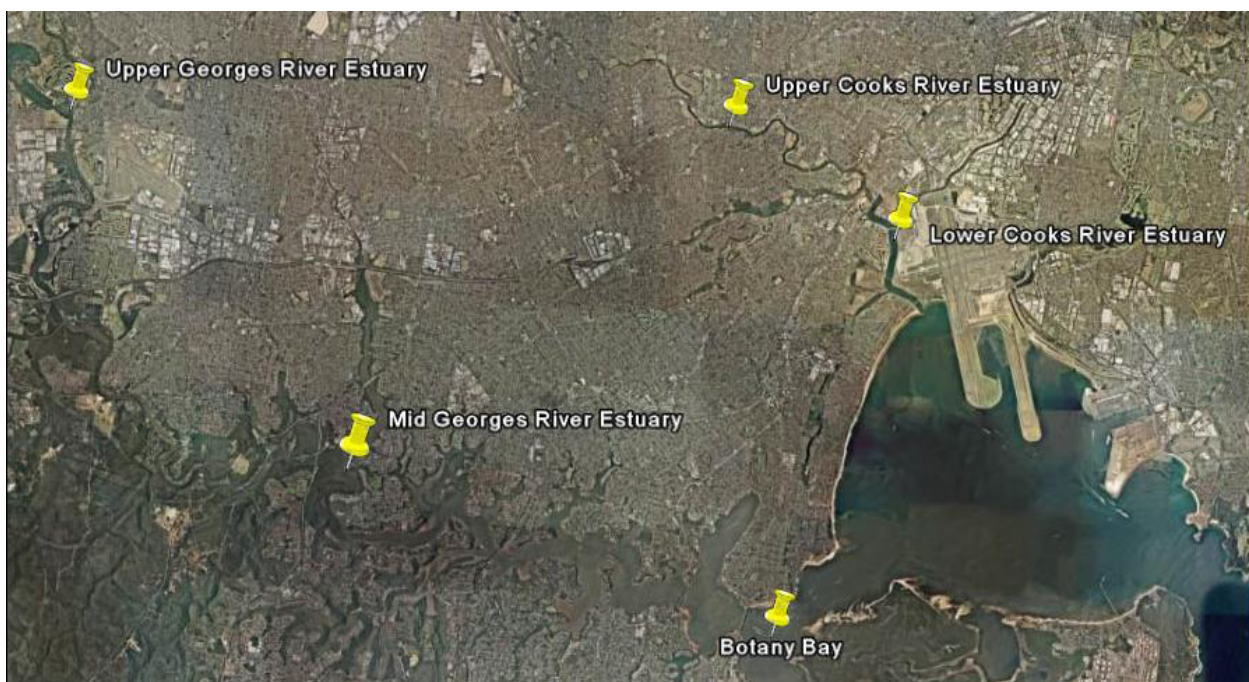
Further information can be found on the BBWQIP website at [www.sydney.cma.nsw.gov.au/bbcc](http://www.sydney.cma.nsw.gov.au/bbcc).

### Partners

- SMCMA (project management)
- Australia Government, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

### Funding

- SMCMA (part) and the Australian Government (majority): \$1,580,000 (July 2009 - June 2011)



Map showing the location of real-time water quality monitoring stations installed through the Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program.

## Member and Partner Projects

The following is a partial listing of projects active during FY2009/10 that were initiated, run and/or supported by CRFWG Members and Participating Organisations to contribute towards realising the vision of the Cooks River Foreshores Strategic Plan.

Unless otherwise stated, funding figures represent the cumulative amount (excluding GST) expended on and/or committed to the project to 30th June 2010. The figures provided are based on the best information available at the time of printing.

### Aboriginal Interpretation of Cooks River Parks *NEW 2010 - continuing*

#### Project Description

A project to develop designs and install Aboriginal interpretation at Cooks River sites in the Marrickville LGA was endorsed by the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee in June 2010 and an application for Council funding made. The project aims to identify locations, themes and concept designs for the interpretation, in consultation with the Marrickville Aboriginal community. Designs for the Kendrick Park interpretation will be developed under this program. A staged implementation program commencing at Kendrick Park is intended.

#### Status

A proposed allocation was included in Council's 2010-2011 budget. Engagement of a consultant, consultations and detailed designs for Kendrick Park are proposed to commence in 2010-2011.

#### Partners

- Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee

#### Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$30,000 staged funding (proposed)

### Alexandra Canal Path Concept Design Study *2007 - continuing*

#### Project Description

Marrickville Council has the long-term aim of creating a green space and active transport corridor alongside the Alexandra Canal. This project will take a significant step towards achieving this goal through developing designs, negotiating access and surveying the potential route.

#### Status

The Alexandra Canal Pathway Study was completed by GTA Consultants in November 2009. A range of implementation issues, including land tenure, relating to plans for the pathway have been identified by the study.

#### Partners

- Marrickville Council

#### Funding

- DOP, CRFIP (Round 4): \$15,000
- Marrickville Council: \$15,000

### Bank Restoration, Gough Whitlam Park *2002 - 2010 COMPLETED*

#### Project Description

This project entailed design and construction of works to stabilise and rehabilitate eroding riverbanks of approximately 750 linear metres of foreshore and riparian zone vegetation along Gough Whitlam Park, Earlwood, using ecologically sensitive treatments, including re-creating 2150m<sup>2</sup> of saltmarsh habitat and planting of riparian zones with local provenance native species. The works also aim to improve access and visual amenity of the foreshores and to provide visitors with opportunities to learn about restoration ecology.



One of three saltmarsh areas constructed in Gough Whitlam Park, before (2004) and after (July 2010), to provide habitat and improve water quality and amenity.



**Status**

The project was carried out in two stages and has created three saltmarsh areas, reinstated local native riparian vegetation, improved visual amenity and access to the Cooks River, stabilised the eroding banks and provided recreational and environmental education opportunities. Construction of the first stage, upstream from the bridge at Bayview Avenue, was carried out in 2007. The second stage, extending the works to the viaduct at Wanstead Reserve, was completed in April 2010.

**Partners**

- City of Canterbury

**Funding**

- City of Canterbury: \$360,000 (Stage 1) + \$300,000 (Stage 2)
- DECC, Estuary Management Program: \$150,000 (Stage 1)
- DOP, Metropolitan Green Space Program: \$238,239 (Stage 2)

**Bardwell Creek Rehabilitation Project**

*2008 - continuing*

**Project Description**

Rehabilitation of degraded banks along Bardwell Creek through Coolibah Reserve. Works include regarding steep banks, weed and willow removal and replanting with local provenance indigenous species, to improve biodiversity safety, water quality and amenity in the area.

**Status**

Council was awarded a grant under the DECCW Estuary Management Program to undertake construction works along 150m of the creek, from the weir north to the railway line. Council has applied for additional EMP funding to rehabilitate a further 200m of bank, from the weir south to Bardwell Road.

**Partners**

- Rockdale Council

**Funding**

- Rockdale Council: \$38,000 cash
- DECCW, Estuary Management Program: \$38,000 (2008/09)

**Bardwell Valley Biodiversity Project**

*July 2008 - continuing*

**Project Description**

The Bardwell Valley Biodiversity Project builds on previous riparian zone and endangered ecological community rehabilitation works aimed at restoring and maintaining the health of Bardwell Creek. Through community involvement and implementation of an educational and promotional strategy this project aims to foster a sense of green space ownership, environmental awareness and management capacity.

**Status**

543 hours of bush regeneration were completed in the riparian zone from Ellerslie Rd to Bexley Rd (approximately 400m x 2m). The main activities included:

- Removal of exotic or native species which were impeding the flow of the creek;
- Removal of annual weeds along riparian zone (800m<sup>2</sup>);
- Planting of riparian zone indigenous shrub and ground-layer plants (1,800 in total) on both sides of the creek;
- Dispersal of native groundcover seed and transplanting of native groundcover species;
- Bank stabilisation with jute mesh, sleepers and star pickets.

The Bardwell Valley Bushwalk and Wildlife Show were held in January 2009 and the Stotts Reserve Open Day was held in March 2009. A Streamwatch kit has been purchased for the newly established and trained Bardwell Valley Streamwatch Group. Council staff and Bardwell Valley volunteers were trained by Sydney Water on how to conduct water quality testing using the kit, data access and management of the Streamwatch site.

Ongoing water testing is carried out by the Bardwell Valley Bushcare volunteers at four sites each month, with 2 to 3 volunteers participating per site. Locations include:

- Wolli Creek: Turrella Reserve Weir (at Henderson St footbridge) and Bexley North
- Bardwell Valley: Ellerslie Rd Weir (2nd weir below Ellerslie Rd footbridge, bottom of Ellerslie Rd steps) and Coolibah Reserve, above stepping stones, downstream of island.

**Partners**

- Bardwell Valley Bushcare Volunteers
- National Trust of Australia

**Funding**

- Rockdale Council: \$49,000 cash
- Caring for our Country, Community Coastcare Small Project grant: \$45,454 (2008)

## Bush Regeneration, Campsie Bushland

2004 - continuing

### Project Description

This project involves bush regeneration of a small patch of remnant Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest bushland, an Endangered Ecological Community under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, along the Cooks River in Campsie. This vegetation is highly significant and of regional conservation value. It is the only remnant of this type still existing on the Cooks River and, indeed, in the inner west of Sydney. Work is based on actions identified in the Plan of Management prepared by Council for this site in 2005, and complements past work by a team from the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

### Status

Continuing work in this remnant bushland has primarily concentrated on weed control to encourage extension of native species. Contractors from the National Trust of Australia (NSW) conducted 453 hours of bush regeneration work and associated reported in the reserve from July 2000 to June 2010. This is double the hours from last year made possible through funds from DECCW Waste and Sustainability Improvement Payment (WaSIP). A further \$9,000 is planned for interpretation and an education program in the Bushland in 2010-11.

### Partners

- City of Canterbury
- National Trust of Australia (NSW)
- DOP

### Funding (2009/10)

- City of Canterbury: \$10,000
- DECCW, Waste and Sustainability Improvement Payments: \$10,000

## Bush Regeneration, Wollie Creek Regional Park, Johnston Street, Earlwood

2006 - continuing

### Project Description

The Wollie Creek Preservation Society is rehabilitating a 2ha area of bushland in the western section of the developing Wollie Creek Regional Park. The area was identified as the third priority area in the Wollie Creek Regional Park Bushland Regeneration Operations Plan.

### Status

The final report for the first three years of this project was sent to the Environmental Trust in December 2008. The WCPS was awarded a second three-year grant, covering 2009-11, under the NSW Government's Environmental Trust, to continue bush regeneration work below Johnston Street. (Ed. Note: Additional grants under the Commonwealth Government's Caring for our Country Program have been obtained for 2010 and 2011, to extend the work into the adjacent northwest corner of Illoura Reserve.)

Since the initial community planting days in 2006 and 2007, volunteers and contractors have continued primary weed removal and path work. Considerable work has been done throughout the grant area and amazing regeneration is occurring, with several previously unreported species of plants noted. In the second grant period a team of professional bush regenerators has worked a total of 580 hours on the second stage of this project, with volunteers from the WCPS contributing a further 640 hours.

### Partners

- Wollie Creek Preservation Society
- City of Canterbury

### Funding

- Environmental Trust: \$39,318 (2006-2008); \$41,413 (2009-2011)
- WCPS: in-kind
- City of Canterbury: in-kind

## Cooks River Eco Fest

2005 – continuing

This year's annual Cooks River Eco Festival will be hosted by the City of Canterbury, in October 2010, in the leafy and tranquil Ewen Park, a favourite community gathering place along the River and an important site for bank remediation and community vegetation works over recent years. Look out for the report in next year's annual report.

## Cooks River Valley Garden

July 2001 - continuing

### Project Description

Located within Tempe Recreational Reserve, this living museum showcases over 80 plant species native to the Cooks River Valley. It was originally planted by the community to help restore the Alexandra Canal foreshore and to establish a section of green corridor as part of a Natural Heritage Trust and Sydney GreenWeb funded project.

All species for the gardens have been collected and propagated within the Cooks River Valley (by Marrickville Community Nursery, Strathfield Council's Strathfield Native Nursery or Randwick Council's nursery), which means the CRVG is an additional seed bank for propagating indigenous species for future revegetation projects. Plant selection has been based on the book, *Missing Jigsaw Pieces* (Sydney Royal Botanic Garden with assistance from the CRFWG, 1999).

Planting and maintenance work are performed by volunteers from the local community, with support from Council.

### Status

The Friends of Cooks River Valley Garden, a volunteer group initiated and supported by Council, has been carrying maintenance works, including weeding, mulching, pruning and in-fill planting, since May 2005.

In June 2010, a consultant was engaged to develop a Cooks River Valley Garden Management Plan and set out an action plan that includes priorities, support for the volunteers, recurrent maintenance activities, a 10 year capital works program, interpretation and education programs and stakeholder responsibility

### Partners

- Marrickville Council
- Friends of the Cooks River Valley Garden
- Marrickville Community Nursery (plants)

### Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$29,600 + in-kind
- Community volunteers (2009/10): \$1,305 (in-kind)

## Cooks River Vegetation Regeneration

2006 - continuing

### Project Description

Propagation and vegetation enhancement at Richardson's Lookout and Tempe Reserve.

### Status

A vegetation management program that commenced in Warren Park in April 2009, has continued throughout 2009-2010.

Implementation of the Tempe Reserve Planting Master Plan was deferred until 2010-2011, due to occupation of parts of the site for the desalination pipeline works. (Ed. Note: The planting project was completed in August 2010, with the installation of 13,000 coastal heath plants adjoining the netball courts and advanced shade tree planting at the western picnic area.)

### Partners

- Marrickville Council

### Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$65,000 (cash & in-kind)
- DOP, CRFIP: \$65,000

## Dean Reserve Pit Stop - Stage 4 Upgrade

2007 – 2010 COMPLETED

### Project Description

This extra stage of the extremely successful upgrade of Dean Reserve involved the installation of a public toilet and a teen hangout area, including stone seating and a small court area for handball and basketball.

### Status

The toilet block was installed and is open to the public. The teen hangout area was completed, including stone seating, additional play equipment was installed, and drainage works were undertaken for the flying fox. Council was unable to proceed with plans for a small handball / basketball court area due to budget limitations.

### Partners

- Strathfield Council

### Funding

- Strathfield Council: \$230,000



## Ewen Park Revegetation

2009 - continuing

### Project Description

The Ewen Park Revegetation Project arose after the Steel Sheet Piling replacement program works were completed. An area of the Ewen Park foreshore that was disturbed during construction was revegetated by volunteers with native plants. The community was consulted and approached to participate in the revegetation of the foreshore to provide greater biodiversity and amenity along this section of the river which had previously been grass.

### Status

The Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority awarded GreenWeb funding for the project in February 2009, and the funded plantings were completed in September 2009. Five community planting sessions were held with 5,174 native plants planted by 155 volunteers in an approximately 1800 m<sup>2</sup> area between the river and the cycle path in Ewen Park. The site is being maintained by keen volunteers doing ongoing weed control and infill planting. In FY2009/10, three weeding sessions were held with 76 volunteer hours contributed.

### Partners

- City of Canterbury (Project management)
- The Mudcrabs
- Friends of Ewen Park
- SMCMA
- DECCW
- Marrickville Community Nursery

### Funding (2009/10)

- City of Canterbury: \$400 in-kind (tools)
- The Mudcrabs & Friends of Ewen Park: In-kind

## Increasing Biodiversity in Streetscapes

2006 – continuing

### Project Description

This project aims to improve ecological and environmental quality in the urban landscape through the use of local native species in street and park plantings.

While there are a number of environmentally beneficial non-native and non-local native species that can be used in horticulture, the intent of this project is to concentrate on identifying and trialing local native species, to improve local biodiversity.

### Status

After the initial successful implementation of the program in 2008/09, concerns were raised about the potential for conflict between the goals of establishing bio-diverse nature strips, and conserving heritage streetscapes in various parts of Strathfield. Concerns were also raised that the raised edges (copper logs) used to establish the initial trial plantings were a potential source of legal technicalities. While both these concerns can be addressed, the momentum with which the project began dropped away.

Nevertheless in 2009/10, the existing plantings continued to be monitored and various additional species were trialed for their potential contribution in a streetscape. For example, a local form of *Scaevola albida* (Fan Flower - see photo) shows exceptional promise. Edges placed at ground level are also being trialed in new street-tree plantings and these in turn may provide a suitable niche for the establishment of native species without compromising streetscape heritage values or raising legal concerns.

*Community members enjoying the chance to get together beside the river in the cool of the evening to weed the Ewen Park revegetation site, February 2010. Source: Friends of Ewen Park*



In 2009/10, seeds were also collected of a local native grass species (*Microlaena stipoides*, aka Weeping Grass), which is already successfully established as a native lawn grass in many gardens and nature strips of the Strathfield Municipality. The bulking up of seed gathered from a selection of this species will allow the trial establishment of a lawn area adjoining the Council chambers.

The conversion of a large road island that was formerly kept mown in Drew Street, Greenacre, to a raingarden through the OurRiver project (see above), provided an unexpected opportunity to plant a variety of native plant species in conjunction with on-ground works to improve water quality in the Cooks River. These plantings greatly enhance the local environment and provide an excellent example of what a whole of nature strip approach can achieve.

#### Partners

- Strathfield Council
- Sydney Metropolitan CMA
- University of Technology, Sydney
- CRFWG

#### Funding

- SMCMA, Catchment Initiatives Icon Projects Program: \$38,000 (2005)
- University of Technology, Sydney: in-kind
- Strathfield Council: in-kind



Strathfield Council plans to propagate this local form of Fan Flower (*Scaevola albida*), shown here planted below a *Callistemon* cultivar, for planting in local nature strips.

## Kendrick Park Foreshores Restoration

2002 - continuing

#### Project Description

This project involves detailed design and on-ground works for the rehabilitation of eroding banks and restoration of saltmarsh and other local native riparian vegetation along the foreshores at Kendrick Park. Improvements include a canoe launch and viewing area, rock armouring, saltmarsh planting, drainage works to protect heritage values of the site and an Aboriginal interpretive area.

#### Status

Due to an extended development consent process during 2009-2010, construction was deferred to 2010-2011. (Ed. Note: The foreshore improvements were completed in December 2010. Additional planting and installation of an Aboriginal interpretation element is scheduled for completion by June 2011.)

#### Partners

- Marrickville Council

#### Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$330,000 (cash and in-kind)
- DECC, Estuary Management Program: \$100,000
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 1): \$30,000
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 4): \$165,000

## Kyeemagh Boat Ramp Reserve Upgrade

2006 – 2010 COMPLETED

#### Project Description

Council has undertaken a major refurbishment of Kyeemagh Boat Ramp Reserve (Mutch Ave, Kyeemagh) to incorporate more landscaping and leisure facilities along the Cooks River at this location. This included conversion of the eastern section of the existing asphalted boat trailer parking area immediately adjacent to Cooks River to a new foreshore park linked to existing foreshore open space. Compensatory parking further away from the river edge was provided. The embellishment of the extended park's facilities includes:

- Relocation of the playground close to existing amenities block;
- Provision of two new picnic shelters;
- Extension of dedicated regional shared cycleway through the extended reserve;
- Closure of the existing access road at the end of Mutch Avenue, and redirection of vehicular traffic via an improved and re-aligned access way off Tancred Ave to service the Boat Ramp Reserve, RSL and hockey fields;

- Extensive new endemic tree planting in the new park and within the new trailer parking area.

#### Status

Improvements were largely completed in 2009/10, with new endemic tree planting scheduled for the Spring of 2010.

#### Partners

- Rockdale Council

#### Funding

- Rockdale Council: \$180,000
- DOP, CRFIP (2006/07): \$68,250
- NSW Maritime: \$55,000

### Ludwigia and Alligator Weed Control, Wollli Creek

2004 – 2010

#### Project Description

As part of a five-year regional project focusing on implementation of Sydney-wide Ludwigia and Alligator Weed Management Plans in the Sydney Central region, City of Canterbury and Rockdale Councils are working to remove Alligator Weed and Ludwigia from Wollli Creek.

#### Status

In 2009/10, three treatments of Alligator Weed and Ludwigia were undertaken in Wollli Creek between Harthill-Law Ave and the weir at Turrella Reserve. In addition, 32 hours were undertaken to remove Ludwigia and two hours to remove Alligator Weed at Bray Ave wetland.

#### Partners

- City of Canterbury and Rockdale Councils
- DPI

#### Funding (2009/10)

- City of Canterbury: \$4,818



A friendly cast of Mudcrabs taking a break from their bush reconstruction work at Rosedale Reserve, August 2009, to say hello.

### The Mudcrabs - Cooks River Eco-Volunteers

2005 - continuing

#### Project Description

The Mudcrabs – Cooks River Eco Volunteers is a group of around 400 passionate individuals who are taking responsibility for the welfare of their local river – the Cooks River. Impressive gatherings of Mudcrabs meet every few weeks to remove rubbish from the river and weed and revegetate bush pockets using indigenous plants along the banks. Both the City of Canterbury and Marrickville Councils provide tools and equipment and assist with securing small grants to support their work. The Mudcrabs also actively lobby local politicians and councils for funding and action to improve the health of the river.

#### Status

During 2009/10, Mudcrabs planted more than 1500 indigenous plants and filled hundreds of bags with weeds at their regular revegetation and weeding sites - Rosedale Reserve, Croydon Park (since October 2005); Foord Ave, Hurlstone Park (since June 2009); Ewen Park in Hurlstone Park; Warren Reserve and Steel Park. They also removed hundreds of bags of litter from the foreshores near Marrickville Golf Course, Canterbury Racecourse, Ewen Park and other sites.

Mudcrab lobbying efforts, in concert with the Cooks River Valley Association, have also been critical in securing government funding for water quality and biodiversity improvement works, including federal funding for the Cooks River Urban Water Initiative (see Regional Projects, above), which has resulted in the creation of new wetlands and salt marshes and the installation of additional gross pollution traps across the catchment.

#### Partners

- The Mudcrabs
- Cooks River Valley Association
- City of Canterbury and Marrickville Councils

#### Funding

- City of Canterbury and Marrickville Councils
- The Mudcrabs: in-kind
- Cooks River Valley Association: (insurance)



## Nanny Goat Hill Bush Regeneration

1990s - continuing

### Project Description

The City of Canterbury has contracted the National Trust (NSW) since the 1990s to undertake bush regeneration at Nanny Goat Hill, a prominent sandstone outcrop overlooking Wolli Creek that contains a good example of Sydney Sandstone Heath vegetation.

### Status

A bush regeneration team from the National Trust (NSW) carried out 259 hours of weeding and maintenance work on and around Nanny Goat Hill from July 2009 to June 2010, for the City of Canterbury.

### Partners

- City of Canterbury
- National Trust (NSW)

### Funding

- City of Canterbury: \$10,000 (2009-10)

## Sydney Water Stormwater Improvement & Reuse

Ongoing

Sydney Water manages the stormwater trunk drainage system, consisting of 12 stormwater systems with a total length of 124 km, within the Cooks River Catchment. (Thirteen local councils have responsibility for local drainage.)

Sydney Water's 14 Stormwater Quality Improvement Devices (SQIDs) collect litter and sediment from a 2,245 hectare catchment area within the Cooks River catchment.

In 2009/10, 716.5m<sup>3</sup> of rubbish (79% organic and 21% other) and 1140 tonnes of sediment were collected. Since 1998/99, these SQIDs have prevented some 11,884.5m<sup>3</sup> of litter and 11,843 tonnes of sediment from entering and degrading the Cooks River.

## Steel Park Waterplay Park, Saltmarsh and Playground Improvements

2005 - continuing

### Project Description

This project involves the establishment of a waterplay park and tidal saltmarsh at Steel Park in conjunction with upgrading the existing playground and the adjacent regional cycleway. The Waterplay Park has been designed to encapsulate the total water cycle. Water from the roof of the Debbie and Abbey Borgia Centre will be fed into play features, such as interactive fountains, sprinklers and misty spray elements, before being treated onsite and recycled. Runoff from Steel Park, the car park and surrounding streets will be treated through grassed swales and raingardens before entering the Cooks River.

The saltmarsh re-introduces unique estuarine habitat for animals and does its part to help enhance water quality in the Cooks River by filtering nutrients and run-off. It was funded by the Cooks River Urban Water Initiative (see Regional Projects above).

### Status

Planning and consultation for the playground and Waterplay Park commenced in 2006. Consultation, designs and approvals for the Waterplay Park extended into 2009-2010. Construction commenced in May 2010. (Editor's note: All works were completed in November 2010).

### Partners

- Marrickville Council

### Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$70,000 (stormwater works); \$800,000 (Waterplay Park, landscaping, car park, etc); \$182,000 (Playground)
- DOP, CRFIP: \$62,425 (Playground only)
- CRUWI (saltmarsh only): (see CRUWI update above)

## Steel Sheet Piling Removal and Remediation – Phase 2

2009 - TBC (pending availability of funding)

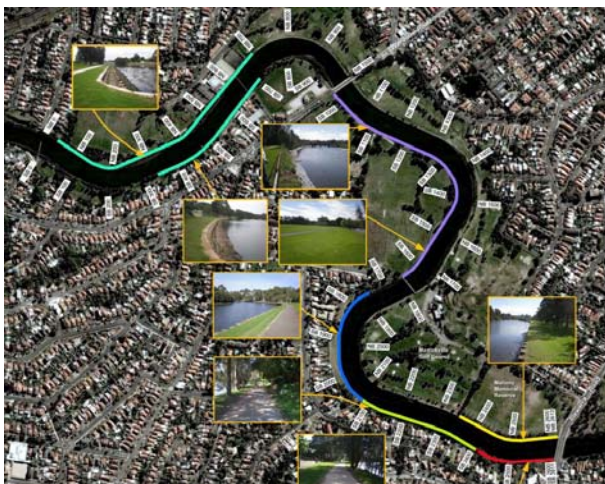
### Project Description

This project involves further removal of failing and deteriorating sections of steel sheet piling embankments along the Cooks River in the Canterbury and Marrickville LGAs, and their replacement with more ecologically viable, safe and aesthetic bank treatments. The vertical steel sheet piling was originally installed by the State Government during the 1950s through to the 1970s, as 'bank protection works'. It has resulted in a loss of the riparian zone and associated ecological values and is now considered an inappropriate riverbank treatment.

### Status

Following completion of Phase 1 of this project in FY2008/09, with the successful remediation of 780m of riverbank along and opposite Ewen Park (Hurlstone Park and Earlwood), DECCW used funds leftover from the original NSW Government allocation of \$2.92 million (2003), to undertake preconstruction activities for further remediation works needed downstream of the Lang Road footbridge, as far as the Illawarra Road Bridge, where the steel piling terminates. These activities included drilling to ascertain soil strength and chemistry, surveying, a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and preparation of concept designs for further works.

A site visit, held in August 2009, with key stakeholders, including representatives from DECCW, Marrickville and City of Canterbury Councils, SMCMA, Sydney Water and the CRFWG, provided useful feedback regarding preferred bank configurations, plants, materials, implementation issues, etc, that will inform the final choice and design of bank treatments for each of the six sections of river bank identified.



The Sheet Piling Remediation Master Plan identifies distinct sections suitable for different treatments. Completed sections, along and opposite Ewen Park, are highlighted in aquamarine. Further works will require funding from the State Government.

As most of the riverbanks in the areas yet to be remediated are bounded by public reserves and a golf course, treatment options will be less constrained by space limitations - such as the proximity of public and private infrastructure - than was the case in Phase 1. This will allow greater flexibility in the design and geometry of bank treatments so that future works can be done more cheaply, with less rock and a more natural profiles, while still incorporating the necessary 'engineering' to ensure stability in tidal and flood environments.

Implementation of remaining remediation works will require a significant special State (or Federal) allocation of funding, estimated at \$4 – 5 million. This could be done in two stages with the first 800m costing about \$2.5 million and the next 1.5km costing the same or less.

### Partners

- DECCW
- City of Canterbury and Marrickville Councils
- SMCMA
- CRFWG

### Funding

- Special government allocation required



Saltmarsh is flourishing where nothing lived before, following semi-natural remediation of sheet piled banks opposite Ewen Park.

## Tempe Reserve Picnic Grounds Upgrade and Planting

2005 - continuing

### Project Description

This project involves a further stage of habitat improvement and embellishment of the regional picnic grounds, originally planned for 2006/07.

### Status

The picnic area improvement works were delayed during 2009/10 due to occupation of the site for the desalination pipeline construction. Works finally commenced in June 2010 (Ed. Note: Plantings were completed in October 2010).

### Partners

- Marrickville Council

### Funding

- Marrickville Council: \$130,000
- DOP, CRFIP: \$70,000

## Wolli Creek Bush Regeneration, Bray Avenue, Earwood (Stage 4)

2006 – (2010)

### Project Description

The Wolli Creek Preservation Society (WCPS) has been doing bush regeneration at this site near the junction of Harthill-Law and Bray Avenues, Earwood, since February 2003. The site is located within the proposed Wolli Creek Regional Park and was given high priority in the Wolli Creek Regional Park Plan of Management, as it contains the last remaining off-stream wetland in the Wolli Valley.

### Status

Weed removal has continued including the removal of large willows and privets. Weeding has also continued along the edge adjacent to the Harthill-Law Bridge. Through the Cooks River Urban Water Initiative, a gross pollutant trap has been installed above the previously reconstructed stormwater outlet, to further reduce sediment and general street rubbish entering the system. Barrier plantings using local provenance stock, undertaken in July 2005, have grown well and planting was extended to the nearby roadside slope in 2009.

A two-year Metropolitan Greenspace Program grant awarded in 2008 for Stage 4 works, continues to fund weed control, new plantings and a walking track that reroutes the Two Valley Trail to pass through part of the site. Work on this stage commenced in December 2008 and is due for completion in December 2010. Weeding and planting of the area are continuing. Volunteer contributions on this project for FY2009/10 included 316 hours of direct on-ground work. Additional funds were provided by the SMCMA - in 2009, to support additional control of *Ludwigia* in the wetland and, in 2010, to extend work westward on the wetland area.

### Partners

- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- City of Canterbury
- DECC – NPWS

### Funding (Stage 4)

- WCPS: \$2,300 + in-kind
- DoP, MGP (Stage 4): \$ 27,186 over two years
- City of Canterbury: \$2,000 + in-kind
- SMCMA: \$4,000 (2009); \$16,000 (2010)
- DECCW, NPWS: in-kind

## Wolli Creek Fishway, Turrella Reserve, Earwood

2006 – 2010 Complete

### Project Description

This joint project between Rockdale Council and the City of Canterbury involved the construction of a fishway through the weir near Henderson St, Turrella, to assist the passage of native fish and enable species needing to move seasonally between salt and freshwater to complete their life cycle.

### Status

The fishway, completed in March 2009, is operating as designed. Interpretation signage and a pebble mosaic artwork depicting fish were installed in March 2010, to aid community understanding of the project.

I&I NSW (Fisheries), the SMCMA and Canterbury Council have set up a very simple fyke net sampling regime to monitor changes in fish species on either side of the weir. Sampling was carried out once before the construction and will continue on an annual basis for three years, with assistance from the Wolli Creek Preservation Society.

Wonderful footage of mullet using the Wolli Creek fishway, taken by Gavin Gatenby of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society, can be viewed on YouTube, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lq-wzocd0B0>.

### Partners

- City of Canterbury (administration)
- Rockdale Council (design and construction)
- Sydney Metropolitan CMA
- Department of Planning
- DPI - Fisheries
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- Sitespecific

### Funding

- City of Canterbury and Rockdale Councils: \$20,000 (\$10,000 each)
- DOP, CRFIP (Round 3): \$20,000
- Sydney Metropolitan CMA: \$50,000
- Industry & Investment NSW, Fisheries & NSW Coastal CMA's Bring Back the Fish Program: \$30,000



## Project index and issues addressed

Location Rg = Regional R = Rockdale C = Canterbury M = Marrickville B = Burwood S = Strathfield	Dates of Project	Project Name	Issues addressed																			
			Natural conservation & restoration (Biodiversity)	Water quality / pollution	Riverbank rehab & restoration	Education, Interpretation & Promotion	Community initiative / involvement	Landscape character & cultural heritage	Strategic and other planning	Access, recreation & use	Integrated water management	Research & Monitoring										
Rg	2004 - continuing	Cooks River Enviro Workers (CREW)																				
Rg	2007 - 2009	Cooks River Estuarine Vegetation Management Plan																				
Rg	2001 - continuing	Cooks River Path Signage Project																				
Rg	2010 - continuing	Cooks River Website Development																				
Rg	2007 - (2011)	OurRiver: Cooks River Sustainability Initiative (CRSI)																				
Rg	2003 - continuing	RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program																				
Rg	2005 - continuing	RiverScience Cooks River Ecological Monitoring Program																				
Rg	2008 - (2011)	RiverScience Cooks River Sediment Monitoring Program																				
Rg	2008 - (2011)	Cooks River Urban Water Initiative (CRUWI)																				
Rg	2009 - continuing	Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program																				
Rg	2007 - continuing	Cooks River Bank Naturalisation & Flood Study (Sydney Water)																				
Rg	Ongoing	Sydney Water Stormwater Improvement & Resuscitation																				
C	2002 - 2010	Bank Restoration, Gough Whitlam Park																				
C	2004 - continuing	Bush Regeneration, Campsie Bushland																				



# Cooks River Pedestrian and Cycle Path Improvement Projects

## Works completed, underway or planned during 2009/10

Most works shown below implement recommendations from the CRFWG's Cooks River Pedestrian and Cycle Path Pathway Development Strategy prepared for the CRFWG and Strathfield, Burwood, Canterbury, Marrickville, Rockdale and City of Sydney Councils in 2006.  
Status: C = completed; U = underway; P = planned

Council / Location	Type of works	Status	Comments	Funding
Rockdale Cook Park, Kyeemagh	New path construction. Separation of cyclists and pedestrians for public safety.	C	During 2009/10 a section of the Cooks River Cycleway through Cook Park was resumed by Sydney Water to facilitate construction of the desalinated water distribution pipeline. A new 525m long x 2.5m wide concrete path adjacent to General Holmes Dr was constructed. Council will retain this new pathway for cyclists only and dedicate the existing path for pedestrian use only, to avoid clashes between the two types of path users, in the interest of public safety.	Sydney Water – as part of Kurnell Desalination Plant pipeline construction works.
Canterbury / Access to foreshore feeder path from eastern side of Homer Street.	Replacement of existing steps with ramp or ramp/step arrangement.	U	The new ramp will improve bicycle access between the foreshore path and Homer Street. Design work has commenced. Construction to be done in conjunction with bank stabilisation works.	City of Canterbury
Marrickville Warren Park and Steel Park	Pathway upgrade works	C	Completed 2009/10. Reconstruction and widening of 400m of existing path from Warren Park through Steel Park to the Illawarra Road Bridge to enhance path safety, geometry and capacity. Landscaping with native vegetation.	Australian Government, National Bike Paths Fund: \$200,000 Marrickville Council: \$330,000
Marrickville Kendrick Park, Tempe	Replace existing path link from rail underpass to service road. Upgrade cycleway along service road and landmark. Build new link through Kendrick Park to Princes Highway bridge over Cooks River. Develop feasibility study for new walk/cycle link under Princes Highway Bridge.	P	Planned for 2010/11. Park master plan shows future location of paths adopted by Council in 2007, with detailed design completed 2010.	Marrickville Council \$150K, Metropolitan Greenspace Program \$150K.
Marrickville / Whole length of path through LGA	Installation of path centrelines and walk/cycle logos	U	To be installed as each section is upgraded.	Included in funding for path upgrade sections
Burwood Cooks River Path	Solar lighting along Cooks River Path	C	Installed fourteen (14) additional solar lights, completing the provision of continuous lighting along the entire length of the Cooks River Path within Burwood LGA. Completed December 2009.	Burwood Council: \$41,142 DOP, Metropolitan Greenspace Program (2008/09): \$41,142



# Members, Partners and their Representatives

## Core Members

### Ashfield Council

Melanie Winthrope, Environment Officer  
Janene Harris, Environmental Officer\*

### Bankstown City Council

Cherie Blackburn, Environmental Planning Officer –  
Catchments (Chairperson)

### City of Canterbury

Nell Graham, Team Leader Environmental Issues

### City of Sydney

Bhakti Lata Devi, Senior Water Coordinator

### Hurstville Council

Ian Curtis, Manager Environmental Sustainability

### Marrickville Council

Jan Orton, Manager Environmental Services  
Victoria Currie, Biodiversity Coordinator

### Rockdale City Council

Kristy Gooding, Environmental Strategist  
Alexandra Vandine, Coordinator Environmental Strategy\*  
Deb Cooke, Environmental Projects Officer\*

### Strathfield Municipal Council

Jon Stiebel, Sustainability Programs Co-ordinator  
Geoff Swinney, Sustainability Officer  
Jean Muspratt, Environmental Projects Officer\*

*\*Person was no longer involved as of 30 June 2010.*



## Participating Organisations

### Kogarah Council

David Towns, Catchment Management Officer

### NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change

Arthur Michos  
Senior Natural Resource Officer, Coasts & Estuaries

### NSW Department of Planning

Belinda Rollason, Greenspace Programs Coordinator

### Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority

Phillip Birtles, Project Officer

### Sydney Water Corporation

Daniel Cunningham, Natural Assets Manager Stormwater

### RailCorp

Peter Semple, Senior Natural Resources Officer

## Corresponding Organisations

### Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation

Leanne King, Chairperson

### Georges River Combined Councils Committee

Ali Hanlon, Executive Officer

### Industry and Investment NSW

Carla Ganassin,  
Conservation Manager, Aquatic Habitat Protection Unit

### NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water

Kieran Horkan, Principal Officer Sydney Catchments  
Ray Fowke, Conservation Planning Officer, NPWS

### NSW Maritime

Graeme Dunlavy,  
Operations Manager, Botany Bay Port Hacking

### Public Health Unit, Sydney South West Area Health Service, NSW Department of Health

Graham Burgess, Deputy Director

### Total Environment Centre

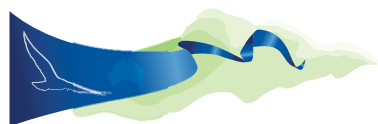
Leigh Martin, Urban Campaigner

## Abbreviations used in this report

BBCCI	Botany Bay Coastal Catchments Initiative
BBWQIP	Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
CREW	Cooks River Enviro Workers
CRFIP	Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Program
CRFWG	Cooks River Foreshores Working Group
CRVA	Cooks River Valley Association
DCP	Development Control Plan
DECCW	NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
DOP	NSW Department of Planning
I&I NSW	Industry and Investment NSW
GRCCC	Georges River Combined Councils Committee
LEP	Local Environment Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
MGP	Metropolitan Greenspace Program
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RTA	NSW Roads and Traffic Authority
SMCMA	Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney
WCPS	Wolli Creek Preservation Society







2010 AWARD FINALIST  
NATIONAL RIVERPRIZE



COOKS RIVER  
FORESHORES  
Working Group

Cooks River Foreshores Working Group  
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