



Environmental Education and Sustainable Living Action Plan

November 2021



northern
beaches
council

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Executive summary

Northern Beaches Council has set clear aspirations and commitments in relation to how we protect and enhance our natural environment in the Protect, Create, Live - Northern Beaches Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2040 (the Strategy).

This action plan identifies how Council supports our community to make more environmentally aware choices as it lives in a sustainable way, complementing our natural environment.

This plan details actions to be implemented by Council over the next four years to drive environmental education and sustainable living within our community. The plan is revised at least every four years to retain its relevance and alignment with Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan.



Why an Environmental Education and Sustainable Living Action Plan?

In Council's Environment and Climate Change Strategy we commit to:

- protect and enhance our natural environment
- live sustainably every day to reduce our waste generation and resource use
 - reduce carbon emissions in our community by more than half by 2040
 - reach net zero emissions by 2050
 - divert 85% of waste from landfill by 2040
 - reduce the rate of waste generation per person by 2040
 - achieve all new buildings being net zero emissions by 2030
 - ensure 50% of suitable premises have solar panels installed by 2030.

To meet these targets, we need action from across the community and various levels of government.

This action plan responds to those commitments in the community outcomes for Environmental Protection and Environmental Sustainability, in Shape 2028: Northern Beaches Community Strategic Plan, actions in Towards 2040: Northern Beaches Local Strategic Planning Statement, and a series of clear and ambitious aspirations and commitments from the Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

We need to accelerate action to:

- Educate the community about our extraordinary natural environment, how climate change and the way we live impacts on it, and why it is important that we live more sustainably and actively protect and enhance our environment
- Engage and collaborate with our local environment groups, volunteers, stakeholders, the community and other change makers to leverage the great work they are doing to amplify the collective impact. This will include embracing innovation and motivating and inspiring the community to achieve behaviour change
- Undertake projects to enable our community to reduce waste and emissions.

The actions for the next four years are shown in the Environmental Education and Sustainable Living - Actions to 2024 section.

Some of these actions are already in progress, and others will begin during the term of this plan. Council is committed to collaboration, engagement and education to ensure the natural environment is protected, valued and enjoyed by our community, and the community is motivated, inspired and supported to live more sustainably.

Our actions so far



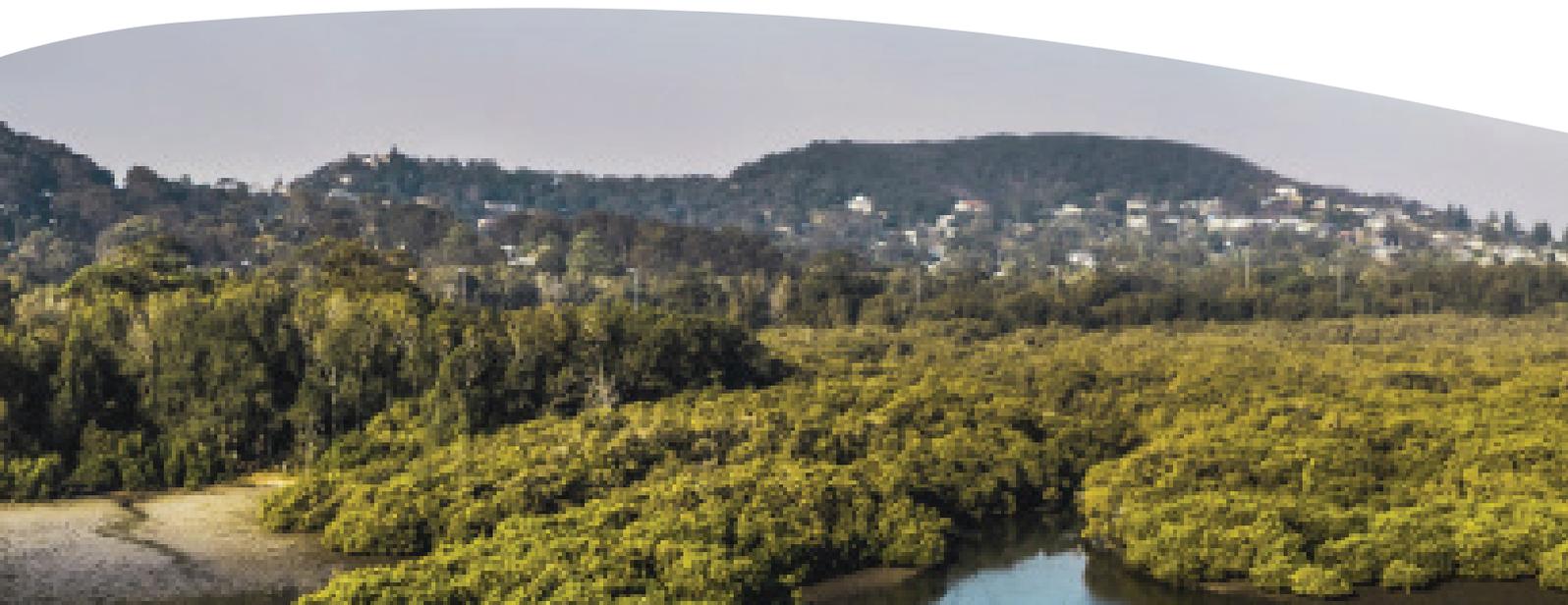
Environment Centres

- Each year the Council's Environment Centres engage with over 11,000 students from 52 local schools
- annually the Northern Beaches Environment Centres run more than
 - 340 community events
 - 45 school holiday programs
 - 290 school programs



Community Sustainability

- 31% of the total solar installations on the Northern Beaches were installed in the last two years, with over 3,700 new solar installations completed, bringing the total number of installations to over 11,900.
- 286 solar quotes were provided to residents through Council's partnership with the Australian Energy Foundation.
- Over 360 residents are currently participating in Council's home carbon tracking tool trial, monitoring and reducing their energy, water and waste.
- Over 35 businesses are currently engaged with Council's Water Savings Partnership program with Sydney Water. As a result, 93 kL/day of water is currently saved by implementing water efficiency initiatives.





Environmental Volunteering

- Over 28,000 residents viewed the educational backyard habitat video series, promoting biodiversity at home.
- During National School Tree day each year approximately 650 native plants are given to local schools to increase their bushland biodiversity on site.
- Council's Bushcare Volunteers have spent more than 5,000 hours regenerating the Northern Beaches bushland and propagating native plants at Council's community nurseries at Manly Dam and Curl Curl.
- In the last year Council has distributed over 2,800 native plants to residents.
- Annually, over 60 of Council's Friends of Cabbage Tree Bay Volunteers speak with more than 12,000 visitors to the Aquatic Reserve about the value of the biodiversity both above and below the water.



Circular Economy and waste

- 83 workshops were held in 2019/20 and weekly news stories are issued to help residents reduce their waste and adopt better waste practices.
- The Swap for Good business program helps local businesses phase out single use plastics, with 150 businesses and schools registered and a comprehensive education program under way to help reduce single use plastics in their businesses.
- In 2019, Council distributed close to 4,000 compost bins and worm farms to residents to help home compost their food organics.
- Council arranges and promotes regular car boot and second-hand sales events for the exchange of used items to promote the circular economy.
- 150 public events were reviewed in 2019/20 for compliance with Council's Waste Minimisation at Functions and Events Policy.



Environmental Education and Sustainable Living - Actions to 2024

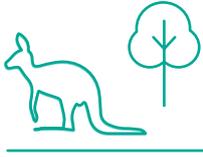


1. Bushland

Council will continue to preserve and improve our bushland. We will do this by:

- 1.1 Delivering educational programs that promote the protection of our bushland, including the importance of wetlands and riparian areas.
- 1.2 Continuing to promote and support National Tree Day and School Tree Day.
- 1.3 Educating private landowners about the value of their bushland, in context with the broader ecological value of the Northern Beaches bushland.





2. Biodiversity

We will continue to protect our local biodiversity. We will do this by:

- 2.1** Delivering community events, and digital and online information, to foster awareness, understanding and appreciation of local biodiversity and threatened ecological communities, threatened species and their habitat. This will include supporting annual events including but not limited to World Environment Day, Australasian Bat Month, Biodiversity Month and Threatened Species Day.
- 2.2** Delivering and expanding the Bushcare Program to support local volunteers in protecting and restoring bushland reserves and wildlife corridors
- 2.3** Educating residents on the value of urban biodiversity through the Backyard Habitat Native Plant Giveaway Program and new initiatives such as Water for Wildlife
- 2.4** Continuing to deliver native bee education and hive splitting programs to increase the bee population on the Northern Beaches
- 2.5** Continuing to deliver school education programs to support learning, understanding and appreciation of local biodiversity, the important role it plays, and how to protect and care for it
- 2.6** Continuing to facilitate Friends of Cabbage Tree Bay, to educate residents and visitors of the area's important biodiversity value, as well as seeking to increase volunteer groups modelled on Friends of Cabbage Tree Bay at other sites with high biodiversity value, both terrestrial and marine
- 2.7** Developing and publishing educational resources on Council's website and social media channels to empower the community to protect and enhance our local bushland and biodiversity



3. Living and working sustainably

To ensure we use resources more efficiently we will:

- 3.1** Support the community, including businesses and schools, to reduce their energy and water use, for example, by partnering with Sydney Water
- 3.2** Continue to deliver environmental education and behaviour change programs to adapt to and mitigate climate change
- 3.3** Demonstrate the environmental and financial benefit of purchasing efficient appliances and building upgrades that incorporate energy efficiency measures
- 3.4** Encourage and support net zero carbon building in our community
- 3.5** Implement a comprehensive education, engagement and marketing campaign to accelerate the uptake of solar panel installation in the community and continue to support solar uptake in schools
- 3.6** Encourage the community to purchase electricity from renewable sources
- 3.7** Promote and support shared transport initiatives including trials of innovative approaches to accelerate the uptake of electric transport
- 3.8** Support the provision of local co-working spaces
- 3.9** Provide an easy access platform for residents to report leaks in council assets, and encourage and educate residents to report leaks to external stakeholders or appropriate parties (e.g., Sydney Water, strata, business)
- 3.10** Continue to deliver Council's bush regeneration program for its contribution to carbon sequestration.



4. Environmental volunteering

We will continue to inspire, support, and facilitate environmental volunteering through:

- 4.1 Extending and evolving the environmental volunteering program, including corporate volunteering, through innovative and flexible programs to enhance the volunteer experience and broaden the community's interest and involvement in the local environment.
- 4.2 Continuing to expand and innovate the Community Nursery program to ensure that native plants of the highest quality are produced by our volunteers
- 4.3 Extending the Friends of Cabbage Tree Bay model to deliver education programs at other aquatic reserves in the Northern Beaches
- 4.4 Extending the environment centres programs in response to community priorities to encourage active community involvement in sustainability education





5. Environment centres

Council will continue to support, enable and facilitate environmental education and sustainable living practices through our environment centres by:

- 5.1** Maximise the potential of the centres, to increase the number of people connecting with environmental issues and create a deeper community understanding of, and engagement with, the environment
- 5.2** Investigating innovative ways to maximise community uptake of sustainable living practices
- 5.3** Collaborating with and supporting local environmental groups and volunteers to increase their engagement with the community on environmental issues, including supporting the application and management of grant funding projects
- 5.4** Develop an environmental volunteers program strategy that includes engagement with corporate and community groups/
- 5.5** Develop proposals for additional environmental centres and/or field study centres.



6. Transitioning to a circular economy

We will assist the community in transitioning to a circular economy and reducing waste by:

- 6.1** Providing accessible education on how to ensure the right waste goes in the right bin, to maximise the opportunity for reuse or recycling and minimise waste going to landfill
- 6.2** Provide the community with an easy to use dashboard with up to date information on the rate of waste generation by type across the Northern Beaches, and tools to help minimise and recycle their waste and access local reuse facilities
- 6.3** Encouraging the community and local businesses, through education, promotion and resources, to:
 - reduce waste and emissions by purchasing reusable and sustainable products or services, considering repurpose-by-design, product stewardship and product-as-a-service models in a shared economy,
 - rethink their usage of single use items to avoid waste generation from the outset as we transition towards a circular economy.
- 6.4** Promoting a Northern Beaches circular economy, including trial programs, so that we can locally process, repair and reuse waste generated in the Northern Beaches area
- 6.5** Promoting procurement by Council and local businesses of reusable materials and materials containing recycled content
- 6.6** Developing a clear strategy to promote efficient waste management and a circular economy, in consultation with the community.



7. Waterways and catchments

To continue to improve the quality of our waterways we will:

- 7.1** Deliver ongoing stormwater education programs to our local community, including schools, corporate, and community to increase the understanding of how stormwater pollution moves through the catchment, the effects of this pollution on our local ecosystems and how best to prevent it.
- 7.2** Support community groups that continue to improve the condition of the Northern Beaches riparian zones, through Council's bushcare and community nursery programs, including the application and management of grant funding projects
- 7.3** Partner with external agencies and research bodies to develop and deliver pollution reduction programs in our LGA.
- 7.4** Promote water sensitive urban design to encourage more efficient use of water
- 7.5** Increase community awareness of our beaches and lagoon water quality through Council's digital platforms
- 7.6** Develop education and engagement programs that build capacity in the community to reduce pollution at the source
- 7.7** Integrate waste education into the community, with interactive learning within business precincts, community spaces, parks, fields, waterways and water quality control devices.



8. Coast

We will continue to protect our unique coastline, managing current and future risks by:

- 8.1** Educating schools, corporate, and community on coastal erosion through the provision of education programs, engaging the community on the importance of coastal protection and understanding how coastal processes affect the environment.
- 8.2** Improving our community's understanding of the importance of native vegetation in our dunes and headlands and the role dunes play in protecting the coast
- 8.3** Continuing to support and assist with innovative activities to engage Northern Beaches residents in the collection of useful data, including the Coast Snap citizen science project.





Measuring, monitoring, and reporting

As we proceed with these actions we will measure, evaluate, monitor and report on what we are doing, to make sure we are always tracking towards the aspirations and commitments in the Protect. Create. Live - Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

We will:

- register the number of attendees at both physical and online events, and monitor the number of clicks through to our online educational resources to track how well the community, including schools, are receiving the events
- evaluate the feedback of these programs and resources through attendee and user surveys including Council's Community Environmental Perceptions Survey
- record and report on the number of solar conversations, as well as the uptake of solar panels in our LGA
- record the number of businesses who have committed to Council's Water Savings Partnership program with Sydney Water and measure the amount of water saved by implementing water efficiency initiatives
- record the number of volunteers, and volunteer hours
- monitor and measure the number of native plants propagated and planted by our environmental volunteers
- monitor waste generation rates and publish these to the community on an accessible dashboard to enable continuous improvement.





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