

# Natural Environment Strategic Reference Group

Directions Paper

June 2017

NORTHERN BEACHES  
COUNCIL

## **Executive Summary**

Northern Beaches Council was proclaimed in May 2016. As part of the formation of the new organisation, eleven Strategic Reference Groups were created to guide the organisation, and also provide advice to the incoming Council who will be elected in September 2017.

The Natural Environment Strategic Reference Group have compiled a set of issues they see with current approaches and suggested actions that they believe will be important in protecting and managing the natural environment of the Northern Beaches. The issues and actions have been grouped according to 5 key themes: Catchment, Coast and Waterways; Bushland, Threatened Species and Pests; Climate Change, Floods, Bushfire and Coastal Erosion; and Sustainable Communities.

This extensive paper will be presented to the incoming Council as a handover document, with the intention that it helps inform and guide decision making in the first term of the Northern Beaches Council.

## **Purpose of this paper**

Northern Beaches Council is a new entity created by the merging of three former local government areas; Manly, Warringah and Pittwater. Each former Council was home to unique environmental features but a commonly connected landscape.

The former councils each viewed the natural environment as a significant priority for the community, were champions for their environment, and had developed a range of strategies, plans and programs directed at protecting and managing this valuable part of our region.

The Natural Environment Strategic Reference Group (NESRG) met 5 times during the period of administration of the Council. During these meetings, the members discussed their priorities, and reviewed how they thought the environment was, or should be, being managed. This paper is the culmination of this effort and identifies key issues and directions that will help guide the incoming Council.

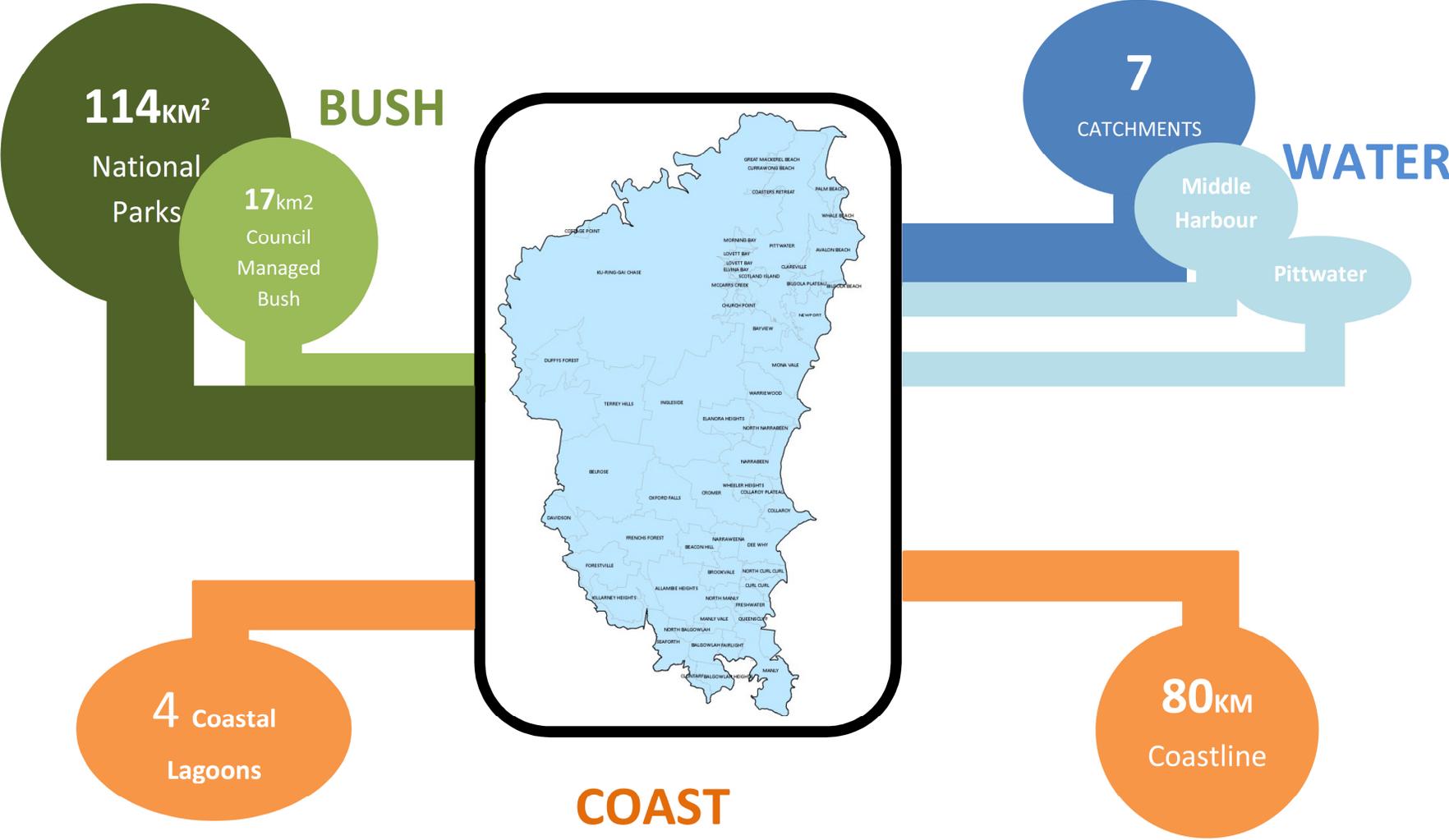
## **Background**

### **The Northern Beaches Natural Environment**

The Northern Beaches Local Government Area covers an area of 254km<sup>2</sup>, 114 km<sup>2</sup> of national parks, 17 km<sup>2</sup> of bushland under the active management and protection of Council, 80km of coastline, Middle Harbour and Pittwater estuaries, 7 catchments and 4 coastal lagoons.

The bushland encompasses a rich diversity of native plant species and vegetation communities and hundreds of species of native animals, including many endangered or threatened. The 80km of coastline contains a range of iconic features, including beaches listed as national surfing reserves, headlands and

Figure 1 - Overview of the Northern Beaches natural environment



rock shelves formed millions of years ago and dunes that provide important habitat for native plants and animals. The harbours, estuaries, lagoons and waterways play a fundamental role in the environment and support a variety of aquatic life, provide habitat and breeding grounds for many aquatic plants and animals and are an essential part of larger ecosystems.

The natural environment, in addition to creating the way of life we enjoy, provides ecosystem services essential to our health and wellbeing. The current population of 263,000 is forecast to increase to 297,000 by 2036. Our natural environment is under pressure from multiple sources including increased urban sprawl, recreation, tourism, pests, pollution and illegal activities that must be actively managed

Recent community consultation and surveys demonstrate the importance that the community place on the protection of the environment. The beach and bush environment consistently ranks highest during surveys. Consultation undertaken recently to develop the community strategic plan found that the protection of the environment is of the highest importance and our goals for environmental sustainability should inspire the community.

### **Natural Environment Strategic Reference Group - Northern Beaches Council**

Following the formation of the new Northern Beaches Council in May 2016, eleven Strategic Reference Groups (SRGs) were formed across key areas of council's operation. The role of the SRGs is to provide a valuable contribution to the directions of the new Council, including input into the development of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and future plans and strategies. SRG members were recruited via an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, represent a cross-section of the community, and bring expertise to their area of appointment. Each group also includes at least two former Councillors as Chair and Deputy Chair.

The Natural Environment SRG consists of 18 members, listed in Appendix 1. The terms of reference of the SRG are to:

- *Provide input to the Vision, Priorities and Objectives for the Northern Beaches Draft Community Strategic Plan*
- *Advise Council on the protection and conservation of natural heritage, bushlands, waterways and biodiversity:*
  - *Apply environmental sustainability development principles to all Council activities*
  - *Advise on management of the natural and urban environment interface*
  - *Advise on estuaries, waterways and coasts*
  - *Advise on maintaining bushland and biodiversity*
- *Advise Council on the management of the impact of climate change, mitigation and education.*
- *Advocate on behalf of community on environment issues*
  - *Promote environmental education for the community*
  - *Promote best practice in environmental management.*

This paper has been prepared to capture the efforts and aspirations of this SRG over a 10 month period from 2016-17.

## Community Strategic Plan – Northern Beaches Council

Extensive community engagement in 2016-17, involving over one thousand community members, including the SRGs, was instrumental in developing the first Community Strategic Plan (CSP) for the Northern Beaches. While the CSP is not yet finalised, key community feedback has been used to help prepare this SRG Directions Paper.

Below are some of the draft goals and underlying strategies for the draft CSP. These have developed from the issues and considerations raised by community members during the first stage of CSP engagement, and are a basis for second stage engagement. They outline possible outcomes for protecting and managing the natural environment which are relevant to this SRG Directions Paper:

**Table 1: DRAFT CSP Goals and Strategies**

<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>Protection of the Environment</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Our bushland, coasts and waterways are protected to ensure safe and sustainable use for present and future generations</b>
	Strategy	1a	Protect and restore local biodiversity and bushland
		1b	Protect and improve ecological conditions in catchments, creeks and lagoons
		1c	Protect and manage the condition and safe access to the coast, lagoon, Middle Harbour and Pittwater
		1d	Provide sustainable access to the natural environment, while recognising and protecting its cultural and heritage value
	<b>Goal</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Our environment and community are resilient to natural hazards and climate change</b>
	Strategy	2a	Minimise the risk to life and property from storm events, flood, erosion, landslides, bushfire and impacts of climate change
		2b	Increase the resilience of the environment to the effects of natural hazards and climate change
		2c	Maintain productive partnerships with government agencies and the community to effectively manage and respond to natural hazards
	<b>Goal</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Our community is well-supported in protecting the environment</b>
Strategy	3a	Encourage the community to protect the environment	
	3b	Invite community participation in restoring the natural environment through volunteering programs and school education	

**ENVIRONMENT**

<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Our Council is recognised as a community leader in environmental sustainability</b>
	Strategy	4a	Develop a culture of commitment to environmental sustainability and lead by example
		4b	Enhance financial and strategic capacity to deliver on environmental outcomes
		4c	Explore and invest in technologies and processes such as renewable energy and waste management that deliver long-term environmental benefits
	<b>Goal</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Our built environment is developed in line with best practice sustainability principles</b>
	Strategy	5a	Ensure integrated land use planning balances the environmental, social and economic needs of present and future generations
		5b	Create green and resilient urban environments by improving tree cover, native vegetation, landscaping, and water management systems
		5c	Promote the benefits and savings of ecologically sustainable development
		5d	Continually improve environmental standards and compliance in new and existing developments
	<b>Goal</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Our community will continue to work towards sustainable use of resources</b>
	Strategy	6a	Promote and support opportunities for more sustainable living
		6b	Provide incentives and programs to encourage our community to enhance, preserve and protect our natural ecosystems
		6c	Reduce waste and improve reuse and recycling

<b>SOCIAL</b>			
<b>Places for People</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Our urban planning reflects the unique character of our villages and natural environment and is responsive to the evolving needs of our community</b>
	Strategy	7a	Effectively plan for future growth by balancing regional priorities with local values
		7b	Provide a mix of high-quality diverse and inclusive housing options supported by sustainable infrastructure
<b>Community and Belonging</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Our community is friendly and supportive</b>
	Strategy	12a	Support community groups and facilitate volunteer opportunities

<b>ECONOMY</b>			
<b>Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Our integrated transport networks meet the needs of our community</b>
	Strategy	16c	Facilitate and promote safe transport options that reduce car-based commuter travel

<b>GOVERNANCE</b>			
<b>Partnerships and Participation</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Our Council builds and maintains strong partnerships and advocates effectively on behalf of the community</b>
	Strategy	22a	Develop partnerships to deliver facilities and targeted services and programs to meet community needs
		22b	Facilitate collaboration between community groups, businesses, government and non-government organisations on projects and programs
		22c	Advocate regionally and at NSW and Federal Government levels on behalf of the community

# STRUCTURE OF THE SRG Directions Paper

This Directions Paper is structured around 5 key themes of environmental management and environmental sustainability on the Northern Beaches. It then goes into detail to review what we are doing well, what we could improve, and what actions the new Council should take in these key themes.

## Themes

The five key themes identified by the group are:



**Catchment, Coast and Waterways**



**Bushland, Threatened Species and Pests**



**Climate Change**



**Floods, Bushfire and Coastal Erosion**



**Sustainable Communities**

# Catchment, Coast and Waterways



The management of these natural areas includes a focus on ecological condition, habitat, information gathering, lobbying, addressing pollution and recreational water quality.

## **Goal 1: Maintain and improve recreational water quality to A grade standard**

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The group noted that the intention is to maintain recreational activities, but not to the detriment of the water quality and ecology.

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Support for “Friends of” Groups is good and it would be great to provide better support for these groups into the future.
- Waterways are really good for people’s mental health and this should be considered in terms of their appearance and access to them
- The tracks near the lagoons and waterways are great
- Cleaning the ocean pools really well

#### **Not well**

- Monitoring of recreational water quality needs to be better reported so that the community can see what’s happening
- We don’t strategically plan to protect the environment including trying to maintain recreational water quality
- Identifying point sources of pollution (e.g. sewer overflows, stormwater pollution) and managing them.
- Facilities to catch pollutants are not great so they end up at the end of the catchment (NB: Acknowledge that this is costly)
- Enforcement action against polluters



## ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Strong support for school education programs on waterway management, and recommend engaging with teachers in the region
- 2) Measure and monitor our recreational water quality areas
- 3) Get people interested by reporting the outcomes of recreational water quality
- 4) Ensure strategic waterway reviews are informed by knowledge about recreational water quality
- 5) Have life rings and fishing line bins next to each other in certain popular spots
- 6) Regular maintenance of stormwater drains and stormwater pollution traps
- 7) Ensure strategic waterway reviews are informed by knowledge about recreational water quality

## **Goal 2: Maintain and improve aquatic/riparian ecology across whole of catchment with no loss of northern beaches habitat**

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The group reflected strong views in the community about the protection of the natural environment. In particular, they had a strong view that all of the northern beaches habitat was important including seagrass, mangroves, in-stream habitat, riparian areas, vegetation types, threatened and endangered species, and therefore the focus should be on ensuring that there is no loss of any type.

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Baseline information on aquatic and riparian ecology in a number of places

#### **Not well**

- Monitoring of aquatic ecology needs to be increased and reported so that the community can see what's happening
- We don't strategically plan to protect the environment and therefore individual decisions/developments are having cumulative impacts
- Identifying point sources of pollution (e.g. building sites, industry, stormwater pollution) and managing them.
- Facilities to catch pollutants are not great so they end up at the end of the catchment (NB: Acknowledge that this is costly)



- Enforcement action against polluters
- Fishing lines, hooks and other fishing refuse is a real problem and not being managed
- We are not getting the message across to the right people – the ones who pollute or cause damage.
- Understanding and addressing impacts in the marine environment (e.g. loss of biodiversity at Long Reef)
- Balancing fishing and ecological impact
- Understanding and managing point source pollution from Kimbriki

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Measure and monitor our ecology & water quality across our catchment, coast and waterways (including macroinvertebrates)
- 2) Capture consolidated baseline aquatic/riparian dataset for Northern Beaches Council, and monitor against this
- 3) Find ways to gather data from people/companies/institutions that are doing research in our area, and share it with the community
- 4) Prioritise infill development over 'green field' development. It is important to preserve what's left.
- 5) Consider fishing line (tangle) bins in popular spots, they are a good facility to help people dispose of their junk.
- 6) Council on behalf of community and its environment has to negotiate with other agencies (i.e. fishing licences need to be better managed)
- 7) Reject movement of fishing licences from Sydney Harbour into Pittwater
- 8) Increase no take zones and marine protected areas to improve ecological habitat and diversity (including fish nurseries)
- 9) Consider closing some rock platforms to fishing, perhaps with a view to share them 50% environment, 50% fishing.
- 10) Consider restricting fishing in Narrabeen Lagoon, Cabbage Tree Bay as a start, but also critical habitat areas (esp for birds)
- 11) Look at whole-of-catchment cumulative impacts, and monitor using indicators that are relevant for the area being measured
- 12) Get people interested in aquatic/riparian health
- 13) Work with State Government to ban shark nets. Sharks are vital to ocean health.
- 14) Ensure strategic waterway reviews are linked to achieving aquatic/riparian ecological goals
- 15) Support sustainable kelp / mussel / oyster farming using water columns



## **Goal 3: Regular gathering of comparable information, sharing and making information available to the community**

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A number of actions from water related targets relate to monitoring. There was a strong view from the group that information that Council or other groups gather on water quality should be collated, shared and made publicly available so that everyone can benefit from the knowledge and build on it.

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Monitoring has been undertaken in a number of places by the former Councils

#### **Not well**

- Not making the information readily available
- We are not educating the community enough about how vulnerable this area is
- Strategic and clear plans to educate the community using this information i.e. “these species only live here, nowhere else”

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Measure and monitor our aquatic/riparian ecology across our catchment, coast and waterways (including macroinvertebrates)
- 2) Look at creating and rolling out standard signage across the LGA to educate people, but also make it specific to the individual location and what is to be achieved in specific areas e.g. ‘this area is used by migrating birds’
- 3) Catchment based targets – we need information and indicators for each of our catchments, waterways and systems.
- 4) Acknowledge our pristine environments and ensure protection is the focus.
- 5) Find out who is monitoring and where so that we are being efficient with resources and sharing knowledge



## **Goal 4: Improved treatment of Sydney's sewage**

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North Head has been a focus for the former Manly Council and its community (along with environmental groups) because of the way sewage is treated and disposed of from this location. The issue of odour management is also of concern for local residents. In addition, Warriewood Sewage Treatment Plant has been a focus of concern for the former Pittwater Council and its community.

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Former Manly Council and Manly community advocated strongly for better management of North Head

#### **Not well**

- As North Head is a State owned and operated facility, there has not been great success in achieving lasting change
- Management of sewage in more remote locations (e.g. Scotland Island)
- Warriewood Sewage Treatment Plant could be improved and is under significant pressure due to population growth

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Lobby and advocate to State Govt for improved sewage treatment on behalf of the environment
- 2) Increase capacity of Warriewood Sewage Treatment Plan and upgrade it, build a deep ocean outfall off the coast at Warriewood
- 3) Increase capacity of off-shore pipes
- 4) Ensure appropriate management of North Head Sewage Treatment Plant



## **Goal 5: Remove significant diffuse sources of water pollution**

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### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Former Councils have some information on where diffuse pollution is a bigger problem (e.g. Manly Lagoon)

#### **Not well**

- Monitoring diffuse pollution across the region (e.g. Scotland Island)
- Developing successful measures for reducing/removing diffuse pollution from the catchment

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Research areas of diffuse pollution, monitor and report on them
- 2) Develop measures that will reduce diffuse pollution to “normal” pre-development levels
- 3) Improve on-site waste management (e.g. micro STPs)



## Goal 6: Rehabilitation of creek lines

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### *What we are doing well or not well*

#### **Well**

- Rehabilitating “critical” areas of creek bank collapse
- Commenced research into programs that report on creek condition

#### **Not well**

- Proactively identifying creeks that are at risk from bank collapse
- Collecting and sharing creek health information (including pollution that is affecting creek health)
- Having creek rehabilitation programs over the region
- Management of impacts of development on creeklines is not consistent
- Erosion of Careel Bay Marina

### *Suggested actions*

- 1) Gather riparian/shoreline and creek health information, and share it with the community
- 2) Develop a program of creek rehabilitation in response to condition information
- 3) Best practice controls on development to protect creeks



# Bushland, Threatened Species and Pests

Connectivity, conservation, corridors and ongoing management of these important natural areas.

## **Goal 1: Maintain and enhance native biodiversity on public and private lands**

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### **What we are doing well or not well**

#### **Well**

- Bush regeneration has been done well by the former Councils and needs to continue
- Deal well with community groups who are working in this space
- Where we maintain bushland we do it well (but don't maintain all areas)
- Community nursery – including using the plants across Council projects

#### **Not well**

- Community doesn't have a good understanding of the roles of plants & animals and Council needs to do more to educate
- Development not controlled well enough (strategic planning) to meet this goal
- Lack of control over individual developments (e.g. assessment of individual sites, types of plants/trees being planted)
- Internal communication between internal groups within Council needs to be improved to produce a better environmental outcome
- Lack of information and notification around tree removal on public lands, and alternative solutions (e.g. immediate replanting)

### **Suggested actions**

- 1) Prioritise the protection and enhancement of marine and terrestrial biodiversity in all Council operations
- 2) Reduce/remove populations of invasive pests that threaten our plants and animals (e.g. foxes, invasive birds, rabbits etc)
- 3) Provide a consolidated planting list for the Northern Beaches (that reflects species endemic, or appropriate for certain areas)
- 4) Community involvement in planting (e.g. if undertaking primary clearing, support the community to follow through quickly with planting)



- 5) Council needs to provide more education about the role of plants and animals to increase acceptance of native wildlife.
- 6) Run workshops on native plants and animals to support the community in protecting their local area
- 7) Expansion of community nursery across the Northern Beaches
- 8) Recommend that an environmental management/protection clause be inserted into all Council leases
- 9) Detailed site assessments required during DAs to clearly identify tree species, and condition applicants to plant replacement veg.
- 10) Complete review of Development Control Plans to ensure all relevant clauses deliver on this goal
- 11) Recommend the use of tree bonds up to ten years post development to ensure ongoing protection (e.g. City of Sydney)
- 12) Encourage undergrounding of wires on road reserves to maximise opportunities for road reserve revegetation/corridors

## **Goal 2: Conserve or increase bushland areas and native vegetation on public and private lands**

### **What we are doing well or not well**

#### **Well**

- Recent land purchase at Katandra
- Translocation at Terrey Hills – MV Road

#### **Not well**

- Rangers should be rangers, parking officers should be parking officers
- Maintaining Council reserves
- Compliance
- Maintaining water quality control devices to prevent weed sources
- Inconsistent maintenance practices



## Suggested actions

- 1) Bushland areas should be managed by staff with bush regeneration skills
- 2) Preservation is better than restoration
- 3) Weed control strategy across the LGA
- 4) Maintenance of bushland areas
- 5) Measure and map the existing canopy and green space
- 6) Accumulate land including small reserves
- 7) Strategic land acquisition
- 8) Provide incentives for protection of bushland areas/native vegetation on private land
- 9) Increase/promote stewardship of bushland areas/native vegetation on private land
- 10) Identifying key stakeholders to protect bushland areas
- 11) Education
- 12) Partnerships with private landowners and community groups
- 13) Contact with new residents to the northern beaches to highlight the importance of bushland/native vegetation – welcome package to real estate agents
- 14) Incentives for reporting eg. Bad activity
- 15) Incentives for replanting (does Council donate plants?)

## **Goal 3: Maintenance of bush regeneration programs to keep the bushland healthy**

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### **What we are doing well or not well**

#### **Well**

- Lots of volunteers
- Supervision and support of bushcare groups

#### **Not well**

- No follow through
- Not sustainably funded/ not enough support for volunteers
- Roadside reserves not regenerated
- Consistency of plantings in bush regeneration areas
- Not undertaking additional watering during periods of dry weather in new plantings
- Routine inspections following contract works

### **Suggested actions**

- 1) Weed control strategy
- 2) Maintenance of bushland areas
- 3) Resilience in the volunteer program
- 4) Further engagement with Landcare programs – can they be extended into NB
- 5) Follow up maintenance program
- 6) Partnerships with local landowners affected by bush regeneration works
- 7) Support for Ambassador program/ volunteer program
- 8) Treat bushland areas as assets eg: include ongoing maintenance requirements in new projects

## Goal 4: Identify, maintain and enhance wildlife corridors

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### What we are doing well or not well

#### Well

- Mapping of wildlife corridors is good

#### Not well

- Corridors are not well protected by existing development controls, legislation or the Court
- State infrastructure is having a big impact on corridors (e.g. Frenchs Forest)
- Enforcing/Encouraging corridors on private land
- Not including corridor provisions/opportunities in Council's open spaces/playgrounds/reserves

### Suggested actions

- 1) Animal crossings
- 2) Maintenance of bushland areas
- 3) Encourage community members to preserve the corridors but also to maintain and preserve the canopy
- 4) Measure and map the existing canopy and green space
- 5) Wildlife corridors that target particular species. Consider safety, fencing etc
- 6) Protect biodiversity of flora and fauna
- 7) Lobbying/advocate Council and the community on corridors for major state assets eg: Warringah Road & Mona Vale Road using a consistent package of information/guidelines
- 8) Education on the why wildlife corridors are important/significant
- 9) Planning controls modified to specifically protect wildlife corridors
- 10) Management of predators in wildlife corridors



## **Goal 5: Lobby/encourage State government and internal groups within NBC for good practice around native vegetation management**

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### **What we are doing well or not well**

#### **Well**

- Making representations to government when there are changes to policy/legislation
- Understanding impacts of policy/legislation change

#### **Not well**

- Don't have a strong voice in opposing unfavourable changes in policy/legislation
- Inconsistent application of environmental measures between Council departments (e.g. one protects, one removes)
- Not selling the benefits of green spaces to the community and government
- Not lobbying the State to understand the significance of native vegetation to the community of the Northern Beaches (e.g. 10/50 impact)
- Strategically protecting our native vegetation from State policy changes (e.g. Native Veg reform, Oxford Falls Valley LEP)

### **Suggested actions**

- 1) Review plans of management to enforce native vegetation protections on Council controlled/managed land
- 2) Continue to monitor and lobby the government on 10/50 to provide an effective balance between landscape and risk
- 3) Other internal departments and SRGs should be engaged to reflect their role in protecting native vegetation
- 4) Education of the community and other internal stakeholders



## **Goal 6: Increase/restore populations of threatened species/EEC's**

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### **What we are doing well or not well**

#### **Well**

- Mapping and knowledge of where threatened species and Endangered Ecological Communities occur
- Advocating for protection of TS and EEC through development assessment and planning controls
- Partnerships with State Government departments that manage TS/EECs

#### **Not well**

- Not effective at using planning controls to protect TS and EEC from Court decisions and legislative change
- Not arresting the threats posed to TS and EEC (e.g. poor development, pest species impacts, stormwater devices)
- Streamlined processes to make sure Council's operations are not a threat
- Not a strong focus on recovery, more on threat minimisation
- Compliance laws can be difficult to use to enforce protections

### **Suggested actions**

- 1) Comprehensive review of development controls to ensure they are providing the highest level of protection from development
- 2) Develop a suite of incentives to encourage private residents and developers to better protect, as well as restore TS and EECs
- 3) Needs to be a corporate focus on increasing populations of TS and EECs not just meeting obligations
- 4) Ongoing compliance and partnership with any State or Commonwealth threat abatement/recovery plans
- 5) Review consent conditions for development to enable better compliance action



## **Goal 7: Remove/reduce populations of pest animals and plants**

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### **What we are doing well or not well**

#### **Well**

- Culling programs in place for fox and rabbit populations
- Indian Myna working groups (as well as Noisy Myna)
- Partnerships with pest species groups (e.g. UFAAG, Sydney Weeds Committee etc)
- Compliance with State obligations around pest management

#### **Not well**

- Monitoring the expansion/contraction of pest populations
- Strategic planning for long-term pest eradication
- Education for community, florists and nurseries about what “good” plants are for gardens, rather than allowing “fashionable” but destructive planting that passes an enormous cost to the community

### **Suggested actions**

- 1) Eradicate pest species
- 2) Better controls on domestic animals that predate on native fauna
- 3) Ensure new biosecurity legislation is being used to the greatest advantage
- 4) Take enforcement action against owners of unrestrained domestic animals/pets including cats/dogs
- 5) Declare war on Asparagus Fern with Council advising landowners with follow up direction and orders as required.



## Climate Change

Prioritise adaptation by reviewing our critical infrastructure, support the community in using more renewable energy sources, and be a leader in our own operations.

### **Goal 1: By 2027 Council will reduce its emissions by matching State Government targets for climate change towards meeting a zero emissions target by 2050**

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The group expressed a strong desire to support the commitments of the State Government in meeting a zero emissions target.

#### ***What we are doing well or not well***

##### **Well**

- Solar panels on community owned buildings, like surf clubs
- Work with other organisations on climate change issues
- Former Councils had a level of commitment to reducing its emissions

##### **Not well**

- Funding emissions reductions
- Promoting its emissions reductions progress

#### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Live up to our respective sustainability pledges
- 2) Undertake a Council energy audit and look for quick wins
- 3) Partnerships with residents and universities and other groups for sustainable power (e.g. City of Sydney, regional Councils)
- 4) Develop interim targets
- 5) Demonstrate savings from energy efficiency to the community
- 6) Ensuring environmental management (and carbon emissions considered in leases of Council properties)



## **Goal 2: Take a critical infrastructure approach to prioritising adaptation to climate change**

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This goal is about the need to minimise the impact of climate change where it cannot be mitigated by Council (e.g. rainfall, sea level rise etc).

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Some understanding of what assets are at risk from climate change
- Partnerships in research
- Council's focus on threat minimisation takes a precautionary approach to its strategies to cope with climate change risks

#### **Not well**

- Building climate change adaptation into asset management
- List of assets at risk (particularly reviews of low lying infrastructure)
- Designing for climate change in new and upgraded assets

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Incorporate climate change and adaptation into the reviews of development control plans
- 2) Review low lying infrastructure and whether it can cope with climate change scenarios
- 3) Incorporate climate change into the infrastructure renewing framework into the future
- 4) Increase regular inspections and clearing of debris from pollution traps and stormwater drains to reduce impacts of flooding & infestations



## **Goal 3: Support the community to use more renewable energy sources**

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Our community are a key part of the effort to reduce carbon emissions. The group recognised the importance of supporting our community in making renewable energy choices in their own lives.

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Work with other organisations
- People are switching off the grid – solar panels

#### **Not well**

- Providing resources that help the community switch to renewables
- Setting development controls for energy efficiency

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) incorporate renewable energy controls and sustainable designs into new development control plans
- 2) Partnerships with residents and universities and other groups for sustainable power (e.g. City of Sydney, regional Councils)
- 3) Work with community groups and ask them to meet our targets as well
- 4) Demonstrate savings from energy efficiency to the community
- 5) Council to lobby for better BASIX controls
- 6) Streets to be orientated for better solar access
- 7) Big development should have to incorporate large efficiency projects, ie Ingleside apartment blocks and shopping precinct
- 8) Support sustainable technologies (e.g. electric car charging stations, Tesla battery stations etc)
- 9) Work with all NBC businesses, community groups, organisations, utilities, services, education providers to assist in meeting NBC targets

# Floods, Bushfire and Coastal Erosion



Ensure the hazards posed by our environment are managed to protect life and property, but in balance with our natural environment

## Goal 1: Flood mitigation

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### *What we are doing well or not well*

#### Well

- Flood warning systems for coastal lagoons and Manly Dam
- Statutory flood policy, studies, planning and mapping of flood affected areas (e.g. Flood Studies)
- Links with emergency services

#### Not well

- Development controls are not consistent among the former Councils

### *Suggested actions*

- 1) Investigate solution to flooding of Wakehurst Parkway
- 2) Maintain strong links with emergency services and build/share resources and knowledge
- 3) Continue to discover and map flood affected areas, as well as review existing information as technology/knowledge improves
- 4) Develop consistent controls for managing flooding in new development
- 5) Educate and prepare the community including improving design and compliance (potentially through using FloodSafe Kits, and/or providing advice to flood affected residents as part of their DA documentation)



## Goal 2: Bushfire mitigation and management

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### *What we are doing well or not well*

#### **Well**

- Maintain good links with the Rural Fire Service
- Bushfire mapping
- Using bush regenerators to clear fire access zones

#### **Not well**

- Preparedness for longer, tougher droughts, leading to bushfires
- Limiting areas where animals can flee is inconsistent with our goal for no loss of species and diversity

### *Suggested actions*

- 1) Better consideration of wildlife corridors in terms of bushfire planning
- 2) Maintain our responsibilities for bushfire risk (hazard reduction to protect people and property)
- 3) Maintain and enhance strong links with emergency services and build/share resources and knowledge
- 4) Improve community understanding and preparedness for bushfire

## Goal 3: Coastal Erosion

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### *What we are doing well or not well*

#### **Well**

- Protecting beach amenity
- Identification of coastal erosion effects on the open coast
- Updating planning controls and policies to respond to coastal erosion issues
- Compliance with State Government directions on managing coastal erosion

#### **Not well**

- Obtaining State/Federal Govt support for long-term sand nourishment
- Long-term management of erosion on harbour/estuary beaches

### *Suggested actions*

- 1) Continue to lobby State and Federal Governments on sand nourishment
- 2) Ensure ongoing protection and management of the beach as the highest priority (both beach and dune environments)
- 3) Maintain strong links with emergency services and build/share resources and knowledge
- 4) Be a leader in coastal and estuary management
- 5) Increase focus and resolve erosion issues on harbour and estuary beaches
- 6) Maintain or enhance dune/beach protection and conservation
- 7) Review and improve stormwater management across our beaches

# Sustainable Communities



Ensure the development we control is sustainable and green, reduce plastic consumption, be a leader in environmental sustainability, and support our community to be as sustainable as possible.

## **Goal 1: Development should be built in a sustainable, environmentally responsible way**

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### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Progressing towards green star ratings for Ingleside

#### **Not well**

- Do not provide comprehensive development controls that achieve this goal
- Difficult to go beyond existing BASIX targets
- Need to educate community about the link between good development and a sustainable environment
- Incentivise developers to produce better quality developments that achieve sustainable outcomes

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Encourage the implementation of water sensitive urban design in all new development, and retrofits to existing
- 2) Need to implement native vegetation offsets for development irrespective of State legislation
- 3) Enforce regulations on protection of marine and bush environment associated with development
- 4) Encourage the use of street trees as connectivity and habitat resources
- 5) Encourage SMART development/buildings by providing incentives for developers, property owners, business to plan, build & act sustainably e.g. faster approval for solar powered buildings
- 6) Developers pay 5 to 10 year bonds at new release areas like Warriewood and Ingleside for environmental measures like bioretention basins (if there is a failure, Council can exercise the bond and take action to correct)
- 7) Design principles should be innovative and leading edge
- 8) Council to be a leader in sustainable development and have planning controls that reflect this



## **Goal 2: Green areas and the natural landscape should dominate the Northern Beaches**

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### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- All former Councils were trying to protect their natural environment from inappropriate development

#### **Not well**

- Recognising and protecting “environmental heritage” (e.g. iconic vistas, iconic landscapes, iconic trees)
- Restoration of entire landscapes (we are accepting the change that’s already happened rather than fixing it)
- Council is not maintaining its own tree cover and canopy (sometimes due to liability fears, sometimes miscommunication)
- Overcoming the impact of 10/50 on our landscape
- Impervious surface areas are affecting runoff which is affecting surrounding vegetation
- Planning controls don’t help achieve this target

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Protect and enhance environmental heritage in our policies and planning controls
- 2) Re-greening of landscapes eg: Curl Curl/Freshwater Headland is denuded of original vegetation and the ridge line character lost
- 3) Council needs to be able to better defend its policies regarding development (e.g. stronger/smarter controls with better outcomes)
- 4) Policy on how much land can be developed on land parcel (e.g. minimise Floor Space Ratio, manage granny flat site impacts)
- 5) Ensure our large scale visual values are protected from new development (e.g. protect the ridge lines and escarpments)
- 6) Protecting geodiversity public and private property (e.g. the tombolo at Barrenjoey, rock platforms at Narrabeen, Long Reef etc, the Hole in the Wall at Avalon, laterite sites at Ingleside and Terrey Hills)



## **Goal 3: Educate our community about environmental sustainability**

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Better education provides an understanding of environmental issues, threats, risks, preparedness, and best ways to manage them

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- All former Councils have run a variety of good educational programs and offered different things
- Our environmental centres are fantastic but have the potential to go even further
- Primary and high school children ‘get it’ and so encourage ongoing participation

#### **Not well**

- Environment centres need to be considered as serving a whole region now – may need more resources/facilities/people
- Adults are the problem and need more education/understanding

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Focus education of the community on the marine environment and its biodiversity – often forgotten yet one of the main reasons people live here
- 2) Educate the community on the value of bushland, because this in turn helps support policies and programs to maintain the bushland
- 3) More interpretive signs to help people understand (e.g. riparian zones, catchment symbols on drains/gutters)
- 4) Start education with kids/young people. Run environmental programs to attract children of all ages including pre-school, invite high school students (Duke of Ed awards?) to run these programs (young children respond well to older peers)
- 5) Review our centres to see what can be achieved across the region, what should their focus be, what services should they provide?  
Review the events/programs we offer to see what can/should be done on a local and what should be done regionally
- 6) Increase resources to environment centres
- 7) Run more programs to allow people to present their work in fields of science, engineering, technology etc.  
Invite environmentally related businesses to run presentations
- 8) Council to work with all education providers, libraries, schools, including pre-schools
- 9) Recruit volunteers from retirement villages, and retiree organisations to work in and run environmental programs



## **Goal 4: Provide support and resources for our community to be sustainable**

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### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- There is a lot of web-based resources out there
- Good range of workshops and special events on key sustainability topics
- Partnerships with business are good

#### **Not well**

- No physical place to go to get sustainability advice – Council not seen as a resource
- Council website doesn't provide enough support
- Council should be a leader like City of Sydney, Inner West and North Sydney who have great centres on sustainability

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Help the community take action on sustainability issues including water management, property landscaping, bioretention basins through good development controls
- 2) Embed Avoidance, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle practices in Community, Business, Government in order to reduce waste & impacts – Council to lead this in its own areas of operations and influence
- 3) Promote electric cars, clean & quiet, battery stations, shared use, cap & trade schemes
- 4) Support local food production and food security by increasing community gardens everywhere including vegetation strips, green walls, roof, and supporting greenhouses in consolidated areas like schools and retirement villages.
- 5) Encourage food suppliers to source local produce
- 6) Lobby for better transport links eg. heavy/ light rail Pymble- Terrey Hills- Frenchs Forest- Chatswood and Narabeen to City
- 7) Support Northern Beaches as a Centre of Excellence for Eco-Technology
- 8) Support innovation in the fishing and marine industries, both in + offshore from the Northern Beaches (NB: This was not supported by all members of the Group – some do not see commercial fishing as a sustainable activity but one needing regulation to sustain fish populations)
- 9) Explore opportunity to use school grounds e.g. community gardens, recreation, share resources including buildings as a community resource

10) Support Sustainable Transport SRG in their desire for active transport etc.



## **Goal 5: Maintain or enhance environmental amenity and access to the natural environment**

### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- Trails are fantastic
- Encourage people to be outdoors
- Good facilities in many locations where people can enjoy the environment (especially passive enjoyment)

#### **Not well**

- Don't educate enough about what good access and bad access looks like (e.g. walking on fire trails vs cutting new mountain bike tracks)
- Waterways are crowded
- Haven't balanced active enjoyment with environmental protection (lots of activities aren't well regulated and cause damage)
- Littering is still a big issue
- Fishing line is not well disposed of and often ends up in our waterways

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) Compliance around littering
- 2) Look at measures to restrict boat numbers and use dry boat stacking
- 3) Develop partnerships with outdoor groups (e.g. mountain biking, motorbikes, fishing) to work on sustainable behaviours
- 4) Identify and communicate limits on access for some locations (e.g. shallow waterways, sensitive bushland, unstable environments)
- 5) Develop clever education programs to prevent further damage
- 6) Strategies for managing access in the long-term (e.g. Pittwater, Middle Harbour, Narrabeen Lagoon and Bushland Reserves)
- 7) Increase trails for active recreation



## Goal 6: Council is a leader in environmental sustainability

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### *What we are doing well or not well*

#### **Well**

- Each former Council had a documented policy/strategy on environmental sustainability
- History of supporting community and business in being more sustainable
- Administrator has pushed environmental sustainability issues, which has given Council an early start on its identity

#### **Not well**

- Not yet recognised as being a leader in its own operations
- Don't promote our successes as well as we should
- Need to market ourselves better
- Not yet co-ordinated in our approach to the community (hard to be a leader when you're offering lots of different services with different identities)

### *Suggested actions*

- 1) Tying our environmental sustainability actions to the new Northern Beaches brand – all our efforts are recognised as Council efforts
- 2) Work closely with our key community groups so that we are co-ordinated with them and offering good service
- 3) Work closely with the incoming Council to develop an identity for the elected body on Environmental Sustainability



## Goal 7: Plastic free society

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### *What we are doing well or not well*

#### **Well**

- Administrator has made this a priority
- Industry is starting to build momentum in this area

#### **Not well**

- Council, business and the community are not currently compelled or encouraged to reduce plastics
- Council needs to do more in its own operations in reducing its plastic use
- Plastics causing issues in our marine, riparian and terrestrial habitats
- Plastics not being captured properly in our stormwater system/traps

### *Suggested actions*

- 1) The Waste SRG has taken charge of this issue, and the Natural Environment SRG recommends that all their efforts on making Northern Beaches plastic free should be supported
- 2) Develop a plastic free strategy
- 3) Work with the community and business to reduce/remove plastics in their areas of influence



## **Goal 8: Best practice and consistent management of water across the region**

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### ***What we are doing well or not well***

#### **Well**

- All former Councils were focussed on the sustainable management of water (either one or more of reuse, recycle, demand management etc)
- There has been good uptake of water management measures by the community (e.g. water tanks)
- Monitoring water usage

#### **Not well**

- No overarching water management strategy for the organisation that sets expectations and mechanisms for managing water
- Our links with Sydney Water need to be stronger and more strategic (i.e. not just dealing with the community consultation arm)
- Data for community usage is not as easy to obtain or influence

### ***Suggested actions***

- 1) WSUD - Water Sensitive Urban Design everywhere, including ridges e.g. Ingleside development
- 2) Review development controls – water management should cover everything from consumption to runoff, conveyance, treatment and discharge
- 3) Increase cooling water features including green roofing/walls to combat urban heat island effect and climate change impacts

## Appendix 1

### Natural Environment SRG members

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Alex McTaggart (Chair)	Implementation Advisory Group
Wayne Gobert	Local Representative Committee - Social
Narelle Berry	Resident – Manly Ward
Phillip Colman	Resident – Narrabeen Ward
Roberta Conroy	Bayview Church Point Residents Association
Jo Cooper	North Steyne Surf Lifesaving Club
Rebecca Eddington	Resident – Curl Curl Ward
Jacqueline French	Manly Community Forum
Paul Hackney	Resident – Frenchs Forest Ward
Tom Hazell	Resident – Curl Curl Ward
Edwina Laginestra	WIRES Northern Beaches
Whitney-May Lever	Resident – Frenchs Forest Ward
Marita Macrae	Pittwater Natural Heritage Association
Jacqueline Marlow	Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment
Yvonne Pflieger	Resident – Curl Curl Ward
Kathryn Ridge	Resident – Manly Ward
Merinda Rose	Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association
David Thomas	ECO Divers