



President's report 2024

We're here tonight because we love the natural environment around us. Many of us have spent precious hours in John Fisher Park, Ngara, on the bridges over the lagoon, in the reeds collecting litter, regenerating bushland, planting native species, swimming and surfing at the lagoon's outlet, bushwalking, dog walking, bird counting, showing the children in our lives the wonders of our place, and noticing the world around us.

We value the community that gathers around a shared love of a place that needs our care as it slowly recovers from a landfill site back to its natural state, one day to be pristine again.

Our governments refer to this as Green Infrastructure that now has immense value for health, wellbeing and - let's face it - real estate prices.

Adapt NSW - an agency established to respond to climate change - has a strategy to increase green cover and open spaces. It's charged with "Delivering a network of open spaces will help keep the city cool, encourage healthy living, enhance biodiversity and ensure ecological resilience."

Green cover and open spaces act as natural buffers between the built environment and natural hazards such as floods. Green cover can be allowed to flood and absorb water (unlike concrete or asphalt). This improves the

management of flood and stormwater, especially during heavy rainfall events, which helps to avoid damage to built environments.

NSW Planning has a strategy around valuing Green Infrastructure.

“Green and public spaces help improve physical and mental health, increase urban amenity and property values, and provide habitats for our unique plants and animals.”

These are beliefs many of us have held even before we knew climate change was upon us.

Now more than ever, it’s vital our green spaces are defended.

What’s a nice place like Curl Curl Lagoon got to worry about?

Sporting group infrastructure

We know Manly Warringah Netball Association has been pushing for the remaining grass courts to be paved, with concrete laid between existing hard surface courts. There’s ambition for large shade structure, increased lighting and redevelopment of the Curl Curl Youth Centre to incorporate more indoor courts.

At Weldon Oval we see increased demand for hard surfacing, facilities, club houses and lighting. Baseball groups seek even more fencing, metal mesh, signage, batting cages and grass removal. We are concerned about these structures cutting off movement, their permanency in the park and the potential for the area to end up like the single-use, fenced off Aquatic Park.

We meet regularly with council staff to discuss issues as they arise, but it's clear they're facing pressure from groups who see the plan of management as an impediment.

We know hard surfacing has a direct and negative effect on the health of the creek and lagoon, preventing moisture absorption and slow release into the waterway and carrying pollutants and excess nutrients. Not to mention the reduction in cooling effect and natural environment for human health.

Basic requirements like riparian zones are often ignored and built over when they're not defended and new solutions investigated.

Curl Curl Lagoon Friends continues to advocate to those who have power to do better to think of better solutions that do not contribute to degradation of our waterways.

Floating Wetland project

Following a successful pilot phase, the new floating wetland was installed in Curl Curl Lagoon's 'duck pond' in April this year. Curl Curl Lagoon Friends volunteers and locals assisted Council staff, to plant out the newer, larger wetland with 200 plants. Atlan Stormwater staff then assembled and installed the using an ingenious anchor system to keep it tethered in place.

The modular assembly means mature plants can be changed out for younger plants ready to grow, keeping the cycle of nutrient uptake more dynamic.

The wetland continues to work beneath the surface to take up excess nutrients in the water and above the surface to capture carbon and provide bird life sanctuary.

We've welcomed Year 7 students from Manly Campus to visit the prototype unit and the installed wetland as part of their studies of the natural environment unit in

science. It was a valuable opportunity for the students to see how theory is put into practice and ask questions about science in action.

A special thanks to Joné Wright and Jason Ruszczyk from Coast & Catchments for progressing this.

Greening our City

Northern Beaches Council is benefiting from the Greening Our City (Local Government NSW) grant funding to restore the area between the two access ways at the Flora and Ritchie Roberts Reserve.

Curl Curl Lagoon Friends supported the initiative and was involved in the first round of planting 100 advanced trees in April that included these dwarf gums, banksias, tea tree, paperbarks and swamp mahogany (among others).

It's great to see the weeds disappear and native species establish in the area, welcoming lizards and birds back into this patch behind the beach.

Special thanks to Adam Burrowes for organising and maintaining the area, and to the native nursery propagators for providing many of the saplings planted.

Proposed renaming - Old Reub Hudson Oval to Panucci Field

CCLF Executive committee heard from local resident Frank Minnici on a proposal to rename Old Reub Hudson Oval.

Francesco Panucci and his family, who previously owned the land, established a market garden and sponsored Italian immigrants.

Italian and Chinese market gardens and sponsorship arrangements were common in the Curl Curl, Brookvale and Dee Why areas and contributed towards the rich multi-cultural and social history of the Northern Beaches.

The Panucci's land was resumed by Council in 1970 to implement its planning scheme, and later became part of the Reub Hudson Sporting Complex. One olive tree from the Panuccis' orchard remains outside the Creative Space, and in 2003 a plaque was placed under this tree to highlight its historical significance. The Creative Space garden is also known as Panucci Gardens.

We value the rich history of the area and support links to heritage areas as ways to understand and make sense of local places. Honouring the legacy of an influential local resident who helped so many to start life anew on the Northern Beaches is a fitting reason to re-name the old Reub Hudson Oval as Panucci Fields.

Clean Up Australia

An elite squad of locals pitched up this year for the annual Clean Up Australia day event at Curl Curl Lagoon in March. While numbers were small this year, it's great to see that there's also less and less litter to pull out of the creek and lagoon.

A special thanks to Pic Andrews, Tanya Bell and Mark Stack for organising the day.

Ngara

A special thank you to guardians of Ngara, a special native garden planted with the intention of encouraging reflection and thought. The area brings much needed shade and habitat, with glimpses of gorgeous native flowers throughout the year. There's really nothing else like it in the area and it's beautiful to see it thrive.

We thank Pam and Vik and the faithful weeders and tenderers to the garden.

Bird Count Survey

Keen-eyed observers gather on the fourth Friday morning of the month to spot and count birdlife supported by the lagoon. It's clear the birds enjoy the snags to rest and fish from.

Thank you to Alicia Parmiter for faithfully organising this monthly event and to Russell Beadmore for the birdcount reports we've started publishing on social media and our website.

Honouring Ray Cox

We were pleased to take part in the unveiling ceremony of Ray Cox's viewing platform, informative plaque and seat within Ngara in May this year. It was so inspiring to see how many people have been influenced by Ray - generations of family members and friends - who assembled on the day.

Vale Michael de Rome

This year we said a final farewell to Michael de Rome who served as chair of the Curl Curl Lagoon Committee from 1992 to 1995. Michael and his wife, Ros, remained active members of our Association through to the present.

Michael's term as chairman coincided with the intense activity surrounding the Greendale Ck and Curl Curl Lagoon Rehabilitation project (1991 - 2007) which involved Council, elected representatives, environmental consultants, schools, local residents, and community groups.

We continue to think of Ros and their three sons Stephen, Ben and Ethan.

Looking Ahead

Priorities for the year ahead include:

Membership revitalisation - connect with new households who've moved into the area, consult with existing members on what they value and what opportunities for involvement they'd value. Improve communications via newsletter, email, social media, signage and partnerships with other organisations. Develop a program of activity for 2025.

Greendale Creek Interpretive Signage project for locals and visitors to learn more about the natural habitat and history at the park and lagoon. This series of interpretive signs will update the previous Badu Maru walk which highlighted flora, fauna and place as you walked around Greendale Creek. The Exec committee would love to hear from anyone with knowledge, history or interest in taking part in this project.

Councillor Engagement - continue to liaise with our three ward councillors, involving them in communications, meetings and initiatives. We value the local representation we're provided in our local council and look forward to productive relationships.

Fish and Bird habitat grant support for Northern Beaches Council's Coast & Catchment unit's application for a larger number of snags, trees and structures that enable our wildlife to seek shelter, roosts and resting places.

Care for John Fisher Park through responses to surveys, Your Say engagement, DA application submissions, regular meetings with Council staff.

Executive Committee Members

I'd like to acknowledge and thank members of the executive committee who volunteer in service of protecting and enhancing this place that we love so much. This past year's committee included: Mark Stack, Deborah Moffatt, Pic Andrews, Tanya Bell, Natalie Warren, Alexandria Mawhinney and Paula Cowan. A special mention to Susan Stack on the membership subcommittee.

We would love to hear from any members or soon-to-become members who would like to volunteer on special projects. If you have a few hours free and are looking to contribute and connect, we have roles in grant writing, social media creation, bush regeneration, event organising, liaising with Council and local members, clean-up day support and bird counting. We're a friendly bunch and would welcome some new or reappearing faces.