

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2017

Your association, The Mosman Parks & Bushland is pleased that the municipality of Mosman continues to exist for now. We continue to believe that becoming a small part of a larger, more bureaucratic council, with only two or three councillors to represent us, will make the protection of Mosman's natural features, including its parks and bushland, more difficult. A distant bureaucracy is unlikely to have the same appreciation of our environmental assets as our local council does.

We congratulate Cr Carolyn Corrigan on standing for the seat of North Shore in the recent by-election and we await the result of her formal complaint to the Electoral Commission.

We are also still waiting for the results of Mosman Council's two court cases. One is in the Land & Environment Court and focuses on the inadequacies of the NSW Delegate's revised report on the merger proposal. This case has been adjourned until early in May. The other, in the NSW Court of Appeal is an appeal against the judgement of September. These proceedings have concluded but it may be some time before we know the judgement.

The Mostly Bad News

First the bad news, but please read on to the end for the good local news.

During the past year protections for bushland, including our urban bushland, our public land and biodiversity have suffered serious setbacks as a result of changes to NSW state legislation. Detailed below are the legislative changes that we have responded to with submissions. Although they may appear to be beyond the boundaries of Mosman, they do affect our local environment.

The Biodiversity legislation: The Native Vegetation Act 2003 and the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 have been repealed and replaced with much weaker legislation. The threat to urban bushland lies particularly in allowing developers to clear bushland without providing adequate replacement offsets. All a developer needs to do is to contribute to a fund.

Crown Land Management Act 2016: Crown land is public land and should be held for the benefit of the community. In urban areas it frequently has environmental and social values. The new structure for the management of Crown Lands is to be simplified, allowing its use to be changed without adequate checks and balances. It is feared that the new act will result in Crown Land being disposed of for short term gain. It should, of course, receive long term protection.

Planning Legislation Updates 2017: These are not law yet, but while there are some welcome changes including increased community consultation, the environment continues to lose out. Judicial review is weakened. The need for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions isn't included.

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The Greater Sydney Commission and its Draft District Plans

This is not necessarily bad news. We acknowledge the need for a plan for a Sydney that would grow like Topsy without an overarching vision.

We have identified problems, including:

1. the lack of a plan for the whole Harbour. Without proper planning for the Harbour and its foreshores, including those of Mosman, its iconic status and beauty is in danger.
2. Relationship with Local Environment Plans (LEPs): It is unclear as yet what scope local councils will have to make their own plans to benefit their own communities.
3. Delivering a “Green Grid”: We are concerned that the priority is the *use* of our green spaces for walkways, cycleways and tourism rather than their protection for their intrinsic biodiversity value. Biodiversity is fragile. It must be protected before it is exploited.

Closer to home:

Taronga Zoo: The Zoo is raising funds for conservation and education purposes by developing a “high end” night time tourist facility which involves loss of public access to a portion of the zoo. The compensation to the general public is a walkway and a day time viewing platform. We consider this to be inadequate. We think the same educational night time viewings should be available to the general public on a regular basis without the accommodation and dining experience.

Middle Head: National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Harbour Trust held a joint planning day to outline collaboration on management and interpretation of their respective areas. Mosman Parks & Bushland based its comments on its deeply held view that public access, recreation and enjoyment of both areas should relate to the primary values of the area – the natural, Aboriginal and cultural heritage. Subsequently, the NPWS published its draft Middle Head and Georges Head Masterplan and the Harbour Trust its Middle Head – draft Management Plan (draft amendment 2).

We opposed increasing the built environment; we supported the provision of walking tracks; we congratulated both organisations on creating a seamless visitor experience over the two land tenures.

NPWS

We are seriously concerned however, that revenue raising has become an objective of the NPWS. We are not opposed to increased visitation of this wonderful site and recognize that increased numbers will need facilities, but the provision of multiple viewing platforms, amphitheatres, event spaces and permanent structures to support camping should not be the priority.

We note that the Sydney Harbour National Park Plan of Management 2012 does not permit new buildings at Middle Head.

Harbour Trust

Regarding increased visitation, we commented again that appreciation of the intrinsic values of the site should remain the priority. We supported the proposal to remove two of the barracks buildings and the retention of the third for adaptive reuse as a sports pavilion. The buildings form part of the Commonwealth Heritage listing for the site along with 10 Terminal and ASOPA.

Mosman Council's Community Consultation on the use of S94A Contributions

Section 94A Contributions are payments made by persons undertaking development work to help fund the provision of public facilities.

We proposed that more of these funds should be spent on bush regeneration; that the proposal for a Sports Pavilion at Middle Head should reuse the barracks building as indicated to the Harbour Trust and that the use of

Synthetic Turf at Middle Head Oval continues to be strongly opposed.

At this point we would like to acknowledge the Headland Preservation Group's research into synthetic turf and its use in the U.S., here and elsewhere.

Finally, the good news:

Harnett Park: In July 2016, Mosman Council voted against allowing kayak sheds to be built at Harnett Park. Visual amenity and heritage has been preserved, and a tiny piece of harbourside open space has been retained for the enjoyment of the general public, present and future.

I have just received news that a nomination for Harnett's Park and associated former Harnett's Stone Quarry is being prepared for Engineering Heritage Australia recognition. The nomination has the support of Mosman Council. Congratulations to those who have pursued this objective.

Joel's Reserve: This was where trees were poisoned and cut down on separate occasions, causing the erection of a large sign by an exasperated Council regarding tree vandalism at the reserve. Local residents felt that they had been targeted unfairly. After efforts by the Mayor and councillors to resolve the situation, and Council meetings at which local residents angrily presented their case, and supporters of bushland and trees, including members of MPBA, presented theirs, a Consultative Committee was set up consisting of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Council staff, representatives from the Joel's Reserve area and representatives from Mosman Parks & Bushland. The MPBA members of this committee Marg Woodforth, Pip Friedrich and I, have attended the Consultative Committee meetings, met with Council staff on site and separately with the unhappy local residents. A recent report from Council staff indicates good progress at the reserve. There has been a burn allowing subsequent regeneration, as well as plantings of species intended to please the residents.

Membership news and events:

The bird walk: Greatly enjoyed this year was our "bird walk" with Renee Ferster Levy and Barry Lancaster shortly after the 2016 AGM. Our early morning walk along the Bradley's Head track was cool but reassuring in the number of different species spotted.

A plaque and seat in honour of our past president, Sue Halmagyi: At the unveiling we praised her work in support of the parks and bushland of Mosman; her children made us laugh with their description of home life while the campaigns raged; and finally we drank champagne in celebration of her achievements.

Peter Jones AM: We regret the passing of our member and supporter, Peter Jones. Peter had a lifetime of achievement in the development of computer science and information technology, but we remember him especially as a foundation member of

the Headland Preservation Group that campaigned successfully for the establishment of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Our Bushcare Groups: Our two official groups are our Bradley Bushland group and our Wyargine group. New volunteers are always welcome.

The Bradley Bushland group is loyal and committed, but has diminished in size, aches and pains being largely to blame. Progress is still being made, but Council has recently added a professional to our numbers to assist with work on Saturday.

The Wyargine group: We are delighted with progress at Wyargine. Last year we reached our goal, the beach, and we celebrated with champagne before launching onto the next section – plenty of weeds for us there.

The Morella Road group: There are other bushcare groups volunteering in Mosman, but one group that needs to be mentioned works in a section of Sydney Harbour National Park close to where the Bradley sisters did their pioneering work in bush regeneration. This group consists of several Mosman Parks & Bushland members as well as several young people who are newer arrivals to Australia. They are tremendously enthusiastic and interested and have made us wonder why so few young people who have lived here all their lives become involved. Is it because they take our bushland for granted?

This over-long report is surely an indication that our parks and bushland can never be taken for granted.

Finally! Thanks!

The Mosman Parks & Bushland committee is appreciative of the information we receive from organisations such as the Nature Conservation Council (NCC), the Total Environment Centre (TEC) and the Environmental Defenders' Office (EDO). Members of Mosman Parks & Bushland attend bi-monthly meetings of the Urban Bushland Group of the NCC.

My thanks, however, go to a strong, knowledgeable and efficient committee. With so much legislative change going on at present, I am dependant on help from members of the committee who have experience in town and environmental planning and management. I thank them unreservedly.

Anne Cook: In particular I wish to thank Anne Cook. Anne is taking a break from her committee membership this year, but will continue to bush regenerate with the groups when she is in Sydney. Anne has a knowledge of the history of bush regeneration and of the Association and since the death of Audrey Lenning she has been sorting and archiving records left by Audrey. We wish Anne a happy year, but we remind her firmly that this is only a sabbatical. We will definitely **not** allow her to retire.

Our members: Thank you for your membership and donations; thank you for your letter writing and thank you for turning up when the need arises at Council meetings to demonstrate support for our parks and bushland.

Kate Eccles
President