



**PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT
23rd MAY, 2019**

Well I said that our AGM would be an antidote to the elections, but a brief comment is essential.

Warringah spoke, Mosman spoke and the biggest issue was climate change. As an electorate we demonstrated our concerns for the environment. Nationally this was not the case.

At a state level climate and biodiversity are both affected by the 2018 Biodiversity legislation that has resulted in a devastating amount of land clearing.

Together they make our local effort to protect our urban bushland and public land all the more vital. Thinking globally; acting locally - yes, it *is* still relevant. It *must* be. Fortunately, our local Council recognizes the value of a sustainable and attractive environment and is usually in agreement with our objectives.

This week is National Volunteers' Week, so thank you to our volunteers. The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association has two roles – advocacy for the preservation of our parks, our bushland and our natural environment, and our hands-on efforts to restore and regenerate our bushland areas. The inspiration for both of these roles is a deep appreciation of the environment and of our good fortune to live in this very lucky suburb, Mosman. Therein lies the motivation of our volunteers – our bush regenerators, our archivists (more later) and of course, our committee – all of whom demonstrate a determination to hand on our wonderful places intact and improved for the next generation. And if anyone would like to join our volunteers, don't be shy. Let us know.

Scope of activities. So what has been the scope of our advocacy since we saw you here a year ago?

We are always, it seems, writing submissions and letters. Some of the list might seem academic and rather remote from Mosman, but government laws and planning at all levels have a local affect, so it's important that we make our views known. For example, as previously mentioned, the state government's Biodiversity legislation (its tree clearing laws) is having a devastating effect on NSW's tree cover and hence its flora and fauna. Ultimately this is bound to affect our own remnant urban bushland. Next year the Cwlth EPBC Act 1999 (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation) is up for review. Our Headland comes under Commonwealth jurisdiction.

This year our submissions have included:

Mosplan: the principles were good for bushland and the environment. We wanted more detail on the strategies to be employed. Very recently we sent our comments on the Revised Delivery Program 2018 – 2021. We expressed a hope that bushland would benefit from the increased budget for environmental spending, and we suggested that Council could play a role in coordinating the efforts of NPWS, the Harbour Trust and Taronga to enhance bushland in the whole Mosman foreshore area.

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The Marine Park Proposal for the Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion: What a missed opportunity that became. The Shooters & Fishers got to the Premier and the proposal for Sanctuary Zones in which there would be no fishing did not eventuate. We wrote again in support of SIMS' disappointed proposal that at least size limits and compliance could reduce the impact of fishing in those formerly proposed sanctuary zones.

NSW Dept of Planning's Community Participation Plan: Our Secretary, Rosie Adams made this submission for us. This is her area of expertise and she made succinct points about genuine and timely community engagement.

Objection to the proposal for an enlarged Childcare Centre at Balmoral: Of course, we sympathise with the need for childcare, but this development proposal had a much larger footprint than the former Pippies Childcare. It would have extended much further into Balmoral Park and it failed to respect the existing children's bicycle track. Fortunately, this was a bullet dodged. Council has resolved to cease the project as a result of bushfire risk. The former childcare centre will now be demolished, the area turfed and creek decontamination and restoration commenced. How good is that!

And most recently, **the Harbour Trust's draft Recreation Strategy:** The Harbour Trust is coming under increased pressure for access to its land and facilities from organized sports. What is at risk here is the vision of the community groups who campaigned to preserve this land - the Headland Preservation Group, our own association and others around the harbour - a foreshore park for all Australians.

The Act of Parliament establishing the Trust and the Trust's Comprehensive Plan were quite clear in their priority to create a foreshore park that will enrich the cultural life of the city and the nation.

Council has resolved to support increased access to Trust land and its facilities.

Of concern is that lights at Georges Heights Oval could be considered. The danger is that increased use would put pressure on the playing surface, which could, in turn, give rise to a request for plastic turf. The Trust did not rule out the use of plastic surfaces on the ovals.

Mosman Parks & Bushland gave provisional approval to Council's community consultation for lighting of the Netball Courts at the Drill Hall precinct where the surfaces are already synthetic. We took into account the gender imbalance of sporting facilities, and we were fearful that further loss of open space would occur within Mosman if increased playing time were not possible.

An aim of the Association

This brings us back to the aims of this association from its inception. Quoting from a much earlier Mosman Parks & Bushland brochure, "Mosman residents have constantly to balance the claims to active and passive recreation" and "our larger parks are under constant threat from sectional interests willing to sacrifice a major park to satisfy short sighted aspirations." Such threats will only increase with population growth and higher density living. We will

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experience pressure for intensified use of our parks. However, the social benefits that bushland and quiet open space bring to health and wellbeing are equally, perhaps more important. Recent studies are showing connections between mental health and green space, particularly in children.

Our big win for this year was an extension for the Scenic Protection Area

Last year I reported that we like to back up Council when a demonstration of community support can be helpful. The Scenic Protection Area was an instance of our support bearing fruit. Expressed simply, development below the 60 m contour in a low housing density area had remained subject to the rules of the Mosman LEP instead of the new state planning legislation which allows specified development without the need for Council approval. It was due to expire in November 2018. Since 1947 the need to plan to protect the scenic value of Sydney Harbour had been recognised. Mosman's position right opposite the entrance to the Harbour makes it key in that planning. If the foreshore of Mosman becomes a treeless slope of concrete housing, the natural and scenic quality of the Harbour is devalued. It was ironic that the local Mosman Council and community had to persuade a state government of the benefits of scenic protection that would ultimately benefit the state and nation. But that was how it was, so we took our concerns to our state member, Felicity Wilson. She in turn, took our concerns to the Department of Planning and the Minister. Finally, in December, and in the nick of time Mosman was granted, not a two, but a three year extension for its Scenic Protection Area. It is a great pity that the extension is not a permanent one, but Council now has time to work something out that will both protect the foreshores *and* satisfy the Planning Department. Will that be possible? My thanks to Yolande Stone and Bob Clark who worked with me on this as we got our heads around the planning, looked at possible alternatives and made our representation.

So much for Advocacy. Now for our other role – our hands-on efforts to restore and regenerate our bushland

Members of Mosman Parks & Bushland work in various reserves, (*and tonight I would particularly like to welcome tonight some/a volunteer from a NPWS site where some of our members work*), but the sites where the Association coordinates volunteers are the Bradley Bushland and Wyargine Reserve. Both are looking better and better. Wyargine is looking positively lush. Supervisors of that reserve hold it up as an example of how bush regeneration without the use of poison can produce spectacular results.

Our new venture: our fledgling Nesting Box Project

Having met us and got to know us a little over the Scenic Protection Area issue, Felicity Wilson asked us if we would like a grant for our activities. We scratched our committee heads and came up with an idea – nesting boxes. And that led us to Lesley Stevens and Judy James and the Pygmy Possum Project which we shall be hearing about soon. We received our grant and on Lesley's advice we ordered our delightful nesting boxes from Alf Britton and took a trip to the Strickland State Forest on the Central Coast to talk to him and collect our boxes – 4 Ringtail Possum boxes, 6 Microbat boxes, 8 Pygmy Possum boxes, 8 feathertail glider boxes, 6 Sugar Glider boxes. Our project is a little different from the Pittwater Pygmy Possum project in that our boxes are placed on Mosman Council land, not privately owned bush gardens, so we have needed approval and the wonderful help from Mosman Council's

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Open Space and Biodiversity team. Hugh Wyllie will tell you about what he has been doing for us when he talks to us later. Another differentiating feature is our Microbat boxes. These are placed high in trees and needed some serious tree workers to put them up. These are placed mainly around Sirius Cove. The other boxes are in our MPBA sites – Wyargine and the Bradley Bushland. Now we know that there are Microbats around Sirius Cove and we know that there are Ringtail Possum sightings in Mosman, but we don't yet know whether we have any pygmy possums, feathertail gliders or sugar gliders. We hope to find out. When all the boxes are in position, we shall arrange a walk for members to see what our boxes are attracting.

Our next new venture is embryonic.

What *may* take place is a Printmakers' Workshop and first thoughts are to have a day of bush regeneration and selecting materials, and a second day with the materials – observing, drawing and printing. One of the print makers, Anna Russell is here tonight. Anna makes beautiful prints, usually abstract, usually based on objects or scenes from nature. Anthea Boesenberg and Rhonda Nelson are the two others. Do talk to Anna afterwards and if the venture progresses, who knows? We may have some prints on display at our next AGM.

Another of our projects, very important but problematic – Archiving our records

Two years ago Mosman Council gave us a grant for archiving the first 20 years of our records. Our history is now 55 years old and apart from encompassing the pioneering work of Joan and Eileen Bradley, Audrey Lenning and others in establishing a Bush Regeneration method, there is a history of advocacy for public land in Mosman. A team of volunteers from the committee and members sifted, sorted, categorised and got things onto a spreadsheet, but the effort stalled when first one professional archivist and then another abandoned us for other work. It was our local community librarian Donna Braye who came up with advice about digitising our work. Mosman Council has been extremely tolerant and has given us two extensions to complete. Marg Woodforth, our membership secretary, has been wonderful. She has taken the reins for this project and is doing her best to see it executed by our final extension date – 30th June this year. I hasten to add that this is not the end of archiving. There are still another 25 years to go! And having got it into order and digitised it, we still have to find storage for it!

Finally, congratulations, a farewell, acknowledgements and thanks.

Congratulations to our member, Gordon Alexander who was awarded Mosman's Citizen of the Year this year for his efforts in gaining recognition of the heritage significance of the former sandstone quarry at Harnett Park, Mosman Bay.

Farewell to Kate Smolski from the Nature Conservation Council after 5 years in the role of CEO. Kate has been enthusiastic and tireless in very difficult times of destructive legislation on biodiversity and the 10/50 land clearing law that caused the loss of so many urban trees – over 100, we think, in Mosman.

Acknowledgement of the efforts of our Mayor and Councillors. Carolyn Corrigan has an open ear and an open door. She is always prepared to listen to our concerns. I have been impressed, and am grateful for the work of our Councillors, much of which is behind the

scenes information gathering which makes their decisions better informed, better balanced and in the interest of Mosman as a whole. We thank them for their work.

We also appreciate the time and consideration given to us and the community by the General Manager and Council officers. They go over and beyond.....

Thanks to the Committee

An organisation such as ours can't exist without a team effort. I am glad and grateful that all committee members have agreed to remain on the committee for another year, despite the increasing demands of their busy lives. Thank you, Committee!

And finally, you the members

Particular thanks to members who send us interesting emails, views and alerts. We find them helpful.

To all of you here tonight, thank you for coming. And to all our members, thank you for caring about your local environment and thank you for your support of Mosman Parks & Bushland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Eccles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kate Eccles, President 2019