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# Mosman Parks & Bushland Association

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## PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 26, 2022

### **A life membership**

I begin my report with a very special acknowledgement. Libby Manuel was our Treasurer for many years, and a valued member of the committee who assisted the Association with good ideas, good sense, and capable management. Ill health necessitated her stepping down from the committee and the role of Treasurer last year. We would now like to induct Libby into our Hall of Fame by granting her Life Membership of the Association. Only the redoubtable Audrey Lenning who worked with the Bradley sisters and was one of the editors of Bringing Back the Bush, and Connie Sievers, a watchful and eagle-eyed campaigner, particularly on controversial developments – have achieved this status before.

Libby could not be present tonight, but we shall visit her and present her with her certificate and flowers.

### **Valete**

We are saddened by the loss of a number of our members this year, but impressed as we think of the contributions each one of them has made to our Mosman community:

- Rob Bagnall OAM
- Steve Goudie, a campaigner
- Phillipa Morris, an historian
- John Ruhfus
- Brian Wilder

Rob Bagnall counted the defeat of the Aged Care proposal for Middle Head among his greatest achievements. I particularly enjoyed working with Rob during the campaign against Council amalgamations. Rob was a gentle and thoughtful but dogged campaigner. He is a sorely missed member of the community.

Brian Wilder was President of the Headland Preservation Group when ill health forced him to resign, but he was also on the MPBA committee for several years. His knowledge of Australian colonial history was prodigious, and he was a forceful advocate for the Headland and all parks. We miss Brian.

### **Congratulations to members –**

- Rosie Adams, our Hon. Secretary, on her reappointment to Council's Climate Action Community Consultative Committee

- Susie Agoston and Alan Toner on being appointed to Council's Visual Amenity Community Consultative Committee

**How appropriate the timing of this meeting is, coinciding as it has with the announcement of this wonderful grant from the Mosman Environmental Foundation.**

**The other coincidence is with the publication of the State of the Environment Report.** The news was dreadful, but did we hear anything we didn't expect?

We need:

- good laws at all levels - national, state, and local, and we need them enforced
- We need good management
- We need good planning
- We need the role of science and research acknowledged
- And we need funding

And we have to remember that the environment is not something out there. It's right here. This is where an Association like ours has a role to play – on the ground, and by advocating for the environment we love we can make a difference.

**So, what have we been doing this year to achieve our two primary and complimentary objectives: bush regeneration and advocacy for the environment, especially parks & bushland?**

Members will remember that the Mosman Parks & Bushland Association began back in 1964 with a protest against the bulldozing of bushland to form a road. At the same time, the Bradley sisters were striving to find a way to manage weeds. Their efforts led to their breakthrough realisation that if you remove the weeds, you allow the native plants to regenerate of their own accord. Advocacy for the preservation of parks and bushland and bush regeneration have always gone hand in hand in the Association's activities, because beautiful bushland has a greater chance of being preserved.

**I shall begin with our BUSH REGENERATION activities**

Where? I hear you ask. Anyone who has walked in a bushland park recently will have noticed a profusion of weeds, particularly tradescantia

1. Last year's lockdowns meant that for many months, volunteer bush regenerators were forbidden to work and
2. Rain! Many plants thrive on water, but weeds seem to thrive aggressively!
3. And now that we *are* back working, during this La Nina, bush regeneration sessions have had a way of ending up in the coffee shop with the regenerators watching the rain pour down!

However, to make up for the problems with physical bush regeneration, we have been given wonderful opportunities to promote the history of the Bradley sisters and their discoveries.

Andrew Scott, North Sydney's bushcare officer and here tonight, is a fan of the Bradley's minimal disturbance method of bush regeneration. Andrew is also involved in the

organisation of this year's National Landcare Conference. He invited us to give a talk at North Sydney's World Environment Day event and he encouraged us to apply for a spot in the Urban Landcare section of the Landcare Conference. Andrew has also organised a Field Trip as part of the conference and the first stop is our Chowder Head bush regeneration site - **the very site we have received the grant for!** Eileen Bradley paid persistent attention to the 40 acres of Chowder Head and is credited with leaving it "virtually weed free" at the time of her death. Anne Cook, our in-house historian, and I will be leading the walk.

Thank you very much, Andrew. It is a great pleasure for us to have our Bradley sisters receiving their due recognition and such interest.

Yolande Stone and Sue Wagner have been keeping an eye on the garden at the Biala Hostel for Aboriginal and Torres Strait girls at Allambie Heights.

Bird walks with Barry Lancaster, our Mosman bird enthusiast, were very small scale this year thanks to Covid. Barry showed us what he terms "the bush turkey effect". He observes non-destructive scratching by the turkeys which open up vegetation, seemingly without any effect on small birds using vegetation as protective cover. There is a link to Barry's wonderful photographs of birds on our web site.

### **Our larger parks**

Mosman is blessed with parks and bushland. I have mentioned our Chowder Head bush regeneration site. That, of course, is part of Sydney Harbour National Park. The National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) is also the manager of the far end of Middle Head and a strip of land around to Chowder Bay (Clifton Gardens). Walking paths with interpretation of the historic military sites along the way are being undertaken.

### **Harbour Trust**

Also in Mosman is the Middle Head and Georges Heights area managed by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. We are delighted to have Janet Carding, its new Chief Executive here tonight. I have had the good fortune to be on the Community Advisory Committee of the Harbour Trust. Since the Trust's status as a Commonwealth agency became permanent in 2021, much groundwork has been done on matters such as governance and public participation. Planning for Cockatoo Island (Wareamah) and North Head Sanctuary is also progressing.

More visible locally, you may have noticed that the 10 Terminal Buildings on Middle Head have been having repairs made prior to further planning on the uses of the buildings. The repairs are observing the heritage of the buildings and look beautiful.

### **Bike tracks**

A Covid related contentious issue during the year was the bike tracks. Locked up kids were building their own tracks and jumps along National Parks and Harbour Trust areas at Middle Head/Georges Heights, by the zoo, and at Reid Park. We acknowledge that the kids were having a fantastic time and that their parents were getting relief from their cooped-up offspring. However, it is our remit to protect our parks and bushland, both the bushland and public access for other users of the park. Our letters and discussions with NPWS, the Harbour Trust and with Mosman's councillors expressed our very basic view that even degraded bushland should not be destroyed.

- that NPWS land contains an exceptional system of birds, trees and native flora and fauna including threatened and vulnerable species
- that Harbour Trust land was for the benefit of all Australians
- that a bike area at Reid Park should not impact nearby bushland and that other users of the park should be respected.

### **Mosman's parks and bushland – managed by Mosman Council**

Council is happy that the flora and fauna survey completed this year, of its bushland sites including unmade roads, shows an ongoing improvement in native species recorded. Four threatened fauna species were recorded – the Powerful Owl, the grey headed flying fox and 2 bat species. If there is sufficient interest, we could arrange a talk by Council staff. Please let me know.

We made a submission on the draft Plan of Management for Mosman Bay and Little Sirius Cove Foreshore Reserves which also included Curraghbeena and Reid Parks. There is a proposal for a Children's Bike Track in Reid Park, but as far as we are aware no consultation and decision has been taken.

And on the subject of Council arranged bushland activities, National Tree Day is coming up on 31<sup>st</sup> July from 8.30 – 12.30 at Little Ashton Reserve (off Whiting Beach Road)

### **The big victory for Mosman this year**

Has been the retention of our Scenic Protection Area. The NSW government has finally permitted Mosman Council to retain planning controls over developments on Mosman's foreshore slopes. A new zone, C4 Environmental Living has been created for properties formerly zoned R2 Low density within the Scenic Protection Area. Council is now working on retaining controls on other land falling within the Scenic Protection Area.

Sydney Harbour, I'm sure you will agree, is a national icon. Mosman's location on Sydney Harbour at the opening of the Heads is unique and visually, highly significant. Protecting views *from* Sydney Harbour as well as views *to* the Harbour is something that MPBA has been working to achieve for years, at one stage enlisting the support of our State government MP, Felicity Wilson. We congratulate Council on its success.

Unfortunately, we have to realise it will not all be plain sailing. Currently in the Land & Environment Court is a development proposal right on Balmoral Beach. MPBA objected to this development, and we are waiting for the result.

### **Taronga Zoo**

We were in the news last year, expressing our view that the Taronga site is becoming over developed and not protecting leafy views from the Harbour.

The zoo is a non-profit organisation. Its conservation and education efforts are truly magnificent. Plans for a 5,000-hectare Box-Gum Rewilding Reserve for Koalas and Regent Honeyeaters are greatly welcome. Unfortunately, achieving the funding to support those efforts seems to involve raising more and more funds from the Taronga site itself - entrance fees of course, but also an eco-hotel, events, and now a bigger sky-safari.

### **Climate Change**

The ever-present elephant in the room!

Mosman Council's draft Climate Action Plan – Resilience and Adaptation Strategy is open for comment until 26<sup>th</sup> August. Please make your views known to Council. This is not something to leave to others.

### **Zali Steggall**

Climate Change is an issue for all levels of government which brings me to the election of our hard-working Member for Warringah, Zali Steggall. We appreciate so much – her work on Climate Change, an Integrity Commission, the EPBC Act, the defeat of PEP 11 plans to drill for oil off our coast, her support for the Harbour Trust and more.

At a very local level, we have appreciated her support for bush regeneration – the Rawson Park Slopes two years ago and last year, encouraged by her office we applied for and received a Volunteers Grant from the federal government for the purchase of bush regeneration kits and tools.

### **Our own Mosman Council**

We congratulate our Mayor and Councillors on their election to office last year.

We appreciate our relationship with Council which is open but respectful.

### **And finally, some thanks**

- Our excellent website was developed a year ago now thanks to a grant from Council and generous donations from members. Designed and set up by Marta Sengers, Marta has given much ongoing help and we are sincerely grateful.
- To my fantastic committee, thanks for their expertise, advice, and hands-on help. Rosie Adams, Yolande Stone, and Brian Watters have excellent planning knowledge and experience. So does Bob Clark and he has a knowledge of heritage issues as well. (He is also our in-house wine maker, by the way. I hope you are enjoying his wines tonight). Sue Wagner has publishing experience and Marg Woodforth, our membership secretary, has a wealth of experience with plants and ecology.
- To you, our members. An Association is not an association without members. Thank you for your support and do feel free to email or phone us with suggestions and problems. A special thank you to our volunteer bush regenerators. And thank you to everyone here tonight for coming out on this cold and unhealthy night.

Kate Eccles OAM

President

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