



Mosman Parks & Bushland Association

General Manager council@mosman.nsw.gov.au

27.8.2022

ATTENTION:

STEVE SMITH, Manager Environment and Open Space,
PALOMA MATIS, Environmental Sustainability Officer

Draft CLIMATE ACTION PLAN – RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION STRATEGY

The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association is pleased to submit a few thoughts about resilience and adaptation and ways in which the environment, including parks and bushland may be able to play a part in strategies.

We congratulate Council and staff on their attempts to grapple with these urgent and difficult matters. The explanations and predictions given in the introduction to each Action Area are particularly useful. They need to be communicated to the community.

(A request on presentation rather than on subject matter: Would it be possible for the acronyms of the plans, organisations etc that are mentioned, to be written out in full more frequently. People well versed in the field of Climate Change will remember what they are. Others will find themselves having to go back frequently to remind themselves of the meaning of the acronym.)

CLIMATE CHANGE IS UPON US NOW AND ITS EFFECTS ARE CUMULATIVE.

The strategy is correct in saying that some changes will be slow but gradual, (chronic and inexorable), others will be sudden and severe (acute). But the changes are happening right now, and they are alarming. All levels of government, including Council need to **act now and act fast**. That is, the strategy needs to be put into effect as soon and as speedily as possible. Council must also inform and prepare the community and be open to ongoing feedback.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Council is right to recognise the importance of local action in preparing our local area and our local community. We read, see, and hear much about the big picture impacts of climate change, but until they happen in our own back yard, the local effects are not so obvious.

(Comment only - We don't really understand what is intended by "an asset-based community development approach to sustainable community driven development.")

We repeat (*in italics*) some of our suggestions about informing the community from our response to the Climate Strategy and Action Plan in early 2021, as they apply equally to this Adaptation and Resilience Strategy.

Council and community collaboration

- *It is very pleasing that Council will resource this objective of engaging and educating the community.*
- *Reaching community members will be difficult. All avenues will have to be used and more explored.*
- *Information on the Council www is excellent and an excellent way of communicating, but people are busy – how many read it?*

- Council's own newsletters, brochures, and flyers - particularly useful when they coincide with new and upcoming initiatives that Council wishes to promote.
- Social media is a must. Will Council be able to use the various email and social media groups such as The Mosman Environment Group, Mosman Collective etc.
- Webinars and events including parent/student events at schools.
- Further suggestions –
 - brochures and advice in rates notices, particularly anything about subsidies, savings, and ways to reduce energy use.
 - Council could also approach community groups. Mosman Parks & Bushland, for instance, would be willing to help with publicity for events and initiatives, if they are appropriate to our aims, through our email communications and website etc.

ADAPTATION ACTION AREAS - THE FOUR KEY AREAS OF PREDICTED IMPACTS.

The strategy's lists under the different anticipated impacts and the Community and Council Actions in each category is clearly set out and useful. We note that residents are given more suggestions for action than they were in the Mitigation Strategy. Ways to communicate the ideas to residents and encouraging them to take action must be sought.

AN OVERARCHING CONCERN AFFECTING ALL ACTION AREAS - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Developments must adhere to sustainability regulations and the regulations must be enforced.

Repeating a comment in our Mitigation Strategy submission: *A report to Waverley, Woollahra and Randwick Councils "Future Proofing Residential Development to Climate Change" makes some extremely scary predictions about liveability in dwellings in a climate affected future.*

Regulations of building design and construction will need to be changed urgently and the community will need to be informed.

TEMPERATURE

Our comments are restricted to our association's particular concerns for biodiversity and trees and their ability to reduce temperatures. We repeat some of the comments we made in the Mitigation Strategy. Large trees and natural grass reduce temperature. This is particularly beneficial during a heatwave when the use of air conditioners and the electricity to run them can be reduced. The trees will benefit not just a single household, but the heat island effect of the neighbourhood.

Council Actions:

- Reducing hard areas on property, increasing tree cover, and reducing weeds, continuing implementation of biodiversity habitat links, protection of trees on public and private lands – all very much approved.
- **Plastic grass:** This is a heat producing pollutant and shouldn't be used on public property.
- *From our Mitigation submission - two suggestions for new street and park tree planting focusing on Heat Island areas:*
 - 1. *Open air car parks would benefit from properly maintained shade trees.*
 - 2. *There has been a tendency to avoid planting sizeable trees in heritage precincts. We suggest that heritage and trees are not incompatible.*
- *Apartment blocks and trees. Trees and greenery are so necessary for the mental wellbeing of apartment dwellers. A problem is often the lack of space and lack of depth of soil to support large trees. This should be addressed at a planning level.*

Community Actions:

Reducing hard areas on property, increasing tree cover, and reducing weeds - all very much approved.

- **Plastic grass:** Council should forbid, if possible, the use of plastic grass by private households. It is hot and its disposal creates a waste problem.

Two Notes from Future Actions in the Mitigation Strategy

Low priority: Moss trees

Our comment then was that "Moss trees may be invasive. Australia has a dreadful record of importing species that then become weeds. This should be investigated very carefully indeed!" Since making that comment I have been led to believe that they are now considered to be a weed.

Sea grass protection: We note from an email from Council's sustainability officer that Mosman Council is launching a seagrass restoration project at Balmoral in collaboration with the Sydney Institute of Marine Science and UNSW and that residents are being encouraged to help. MPBA will be sending a message to members.

SEA LEVEL RISE

Council and Community actions all agreed.

RAINFALL

Council and Community actions strongly approved.

BUSHFIRE

A talk about the management and effects of ecological burns by the Willoughby Council bushfire unit at the recent Landcare Conference was interesting. Bushcare groups may be interested in hearing about ecological burns in Mosman and perhaps being involved.

RESILIENCE ACTION AREAS

This is more difficult to quantify and plan for than adaptation even though they are two sides of the one coin. It seems that the Resilience is being considered more from the angle of dealing with specific events and situations and the effect they will have on particular groups. That is an essential part of thinking about Resilience, of course.

However, there are more general levels of anxiety about climate change that need to be addressed. Recent surveys of school children are revealing high levels of depression and anxiety which result in an inability to concentrate. Covid has played its part in children's mental health of course, but we only need to observe the huge numbers of children involved in the climate demonstrations to realise the level of anxiety about the world they expect to inherit.

Answers and solutions are not easy. However, residents of Mosman are fortunate in having green space and bushland available. Much was written during the Covid lockdowns about the benefit people obtained from walking in green space and fresh air. It is now generally accepted that being in nature improves well-being generally. Extra benefit will accrue from actually **working** in nature – with plants and with soil.....and sea grass too.

Council could think about how to engage more individuals, schools, and groups of all ages in outdoor activities.

Thank you


Kate Eccles, President