

President's Report

Cooks River Valley Association Achievements 2011/12

People & passion

In January, we mourned the loss and celebrated the life of long-time CRVA member and the inspiration behind the Mudcrabs, Chris Bartlett. Over the months that followed, many tributes were paid to the invaluable contributions Chris made to the restoration and revegetation of the Cooks River. Many members attended his funeral as well as a warm-hearted memorial gathering held for Chris at Rosedale Reserve in February 2012. Liz Millen delivered a beautiful tribute to Chris at the SMCMA Community Forum in March, and the inspiring story of how he started the Mudcrabs was told on ABC Radio National and online.

Organisation

- Maintained status as a registered & active Landcare group.

Ongoing programs

Water quality monitoring

- The great work of Gayle Adams and her water quality team continued, including ongoing water quality monitoring and reporting; promotion and management of the CooksEye pollution reporting program; responding to a continuous flow of enquiries from journalists, students and community members about water quality; and lobbying politicians
- Invited to and attended on-site briefing regarding work to be undertaken by Veolia for Sydney Water to remove mangroves, sediment and other debris to help maintain the flow within the Cooks River in the area of Tasker Park
- Funded printing of 50 additional CooksEye program posters which were put up along the River.

Campaigns

Sewage campaign & petition

Taking advantage of media interest generated by the release in November 2011 of a study by a UNSW researcher that found traces of chemicals in the river, including human pharmaceuticals, at concentrations indicative of raw sewage contamination, our water quality team launched a vigorous media and lobbying campaign calling for urgent works to identify and fix the leaking sewers contributing to this problem.

Subsequent sewage campaign achievements included:

- Extensive local media coverage and a constant stream of enquiries from the public via the CRVA website regarding water quality and sewage pollution in the Cooks.
- Collection of 2,200 signatures on a petition asking to the NSW Legislative Assembly (LA) to call on the Government to immediately limit sewage flows into the Cooks River to reduce levels of E.coli and other indicators of human pathogens below what is safe for swimming and boating activities. The petition was presented to Linda Burney, MP, in August 2012, who

will present it to the NSW Legislative Assembly when it resumes.

- Strong endorsement of the sewage petition by the Marrickville Council Environment Committee.
- Resolutions by Marrickville Council's Cooks River Committee and Canterbury Council's Environment Committee requesting the respective councils to progress this issue through the Cooks River Alliance.
- State Member for Canterbury, Hon. Linda Burney, MP, submitted a question to the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Heritage asking what programs the Government has in place to reduce the quantity of raw sewage entering the river.
- State Member for Marrickville, Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, MP, wrote to the Minister for Finance and Services in November, informing him of CRVA Streamwatch activities and urging him to consider the upgrade of sewerage infrastructure to stop pollution entering waterways, including the Cooks River. In response, the Minister for Finance and Services wrote to the CRVA regarding the sewage issue and Sydney Water's role in addressing it.

Cash for containers campaign

In partnership with the Boomerang Alliance, the CRVA organised a hugely successful cash-for-containers campaign event at Steel Park on 28th April. The event featured a cash-refund stall for beverage containers and a meeting between a returning and irate Captain Cook (actor) with the (real) Australian Minister for the Environment on the banks of the Cooks River in Steel Park, in which Cook demanded action from the Government to establish a container deposit scheme to help end the scourge of litter on the river and reduce waste, and the Minister publicly stated his support for CDS. Some 500 people attended, bringing in up to 5,000 bottles and cans for refund or just for impact.

The event attracted extensive local media coverage and featured in a national prime time ABC TV news story about CDS, which was broadcast over some 50 outlets.

More than 30 volunteers, four NGOs and both Marrickville and Canterbury Councils provided in-kind support. Nine local businesses and two individuals sponsored cash refunds and raffle prizes. The Mayor of Canterbury and Canterbury Council responded by officially supporting CDS. Linda Burney, MP, and several Marrickville and Canterbury councillors, including the Mayor of Marrickville attended. The Mayor of Canterbury gave an official apology.

Other activities undertaken by members in support of the Cash-for-containers campaign of the Boomerang Alliance, included:

- A bottle collection at Hurlstone Park end of Lang Rd footbridge beside the Cooks River showing number of bottles collected and cash value @ 10 cents per bottle
- At the invitation of Canterbury Council, the Mudcrabs and CRVA ran a stall at the Campsie Food Fair promoting CDS and giving out \$100 donated by Council as 'refunds' on beverage containers returned to the stall.

Other on-ground activities

Organised Clean Up Australia Day event at Ewen Park.

Advocacy and representation

- Ongoing submissions and representations made to Canterbury City Council in relation to the building of a community facility and the use, management and development of Ewen Park.
- Representation on the Marrickville Council's Cooks River Committee and Canterbury City Council's Environment & Sustainability Committee.
- Secured commitment by Marrickville Council to budget \$30,000 for tree planting on Marrickville Golf Course.
- Ongoing liaison with the new Cooks River Alliance of councils, which replaced the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group, calling for community representation on the Board and meaningful consultation with the community.
- Wrote Canterbury GM requesting that swimming pools at Canterbury and Roselands be kept open in the short term and upgraded in the long term, pointing out the need for these pools at least until the public can swim in Cooks River!
- Invited by Rockdale Council to participate in a community consultation workshop for environmental groups regarding preparation of a new Biodiversity Strategy for the Rockdale Local Government Area (LGA).
- Participation in SMCMA Community Forum
- Invited to and attended Cup & Saucer Creek Wetland Handover ceremony Oct 2011.

Stalls at events and festivals

- Cooks River Eco Festival (Nov): hosted by Strathfield Council at Freshwater Park, Strathfield.
- Summer Hill (23 Oct)
- Marrickville (23 Oct)
- Walking on Water program events (ongoing), including: Marrickville West PS Children's Festival (31 March)
- Addison Rd Market
- Campsie Food Fair
- Fanny Durack commemorative picnic
- CRVA/Mudcrabs stall at the Canterbury Biodiversity Celebration and Photo Exhibition event run by the Ethnic Communities Council's Sustainable Living Project, at Lakemba Senior Citizens Centre (18 April)

Special Projects

TVT Reconciliation Walk 2011

- Organised, promoted and ran the inaugural Two Valley Trail Reconciliation Walk, 18

September 2011, in partnership with Canterbury Aboriginal Advisory Group (CAAG) and with support from Canterbury Council.

- The day was a great success. About 100 people walked along Wolli Creek, another 100 along the Cooks, and about 150 to 200 additional people joined in at Gough Whitlam Park, including many children.
- Developed and printed (at CRVA expense) 2000 copies of the *Caring for Country in the Cooks River Valley* leaflet for the event. The leaflet was very well received. 1000 copies were given to Canterbury Council, which has agreed to pay for the next print run when supplies run out.

TVT Reconciliation Walk 2012

- Inspired by the success of the 2011 Reconciliation Walk, CAAG, with support from Canterbury City Council, sought CRVA assistance to run a second Reconciliation Walk on 16 September 2012.
- The CRVA agreed to take on a supporting role, on condition that funding be made available to employ a project officer to take on the huge amount of work involved in promoting the event and taking bookings. CAAG committed \$2,000 towards employing a project officer, who has been working with the CRVA Executive, CAAG and Council staff to plan and deliver the event.

Partnerships

- **Ongoing work with the Mudcrabs – Cooks River Eco-volunteers to improve the health of the Cooks River. This involved the removal of more than 450 bags of litter from the foreshores and the planting and maintenance of over 2000 plants at 6 bush reconstruction sites along the river (Rosedale Reserve, Foord Ave, Ewen Park, Richardson Reserve, Gough Whitlam Reserve Saltmarsh, Cup & Saucer Creek wetlands.**
- Established a positive and valued partnership with the Canterbury Aboriginal Advisory Group through joint organisation of two TVT Reconciliation Walks.
- Continued partnership with Canterbury Council, Marrickville Council and Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club to support environmental work along the Cooks River.
- Botany Bay Coastal Alliance is mapping sewage overflow points and assisting CRVA to gain government support for good outcomes for Cooks River, including CDS and sewage prevention.
- In ongoing discussion with Marrickville Golf Club about their idea for annual art show, 'The Beauty of Cooks River and Surrounds'
- Loaned photos to the Ethnic Communities Council Sustainable Living Project for the Canterbury Biodiversity Celebration Event and Photo Exhibition
- Invited by Landcare to host a field trip for 2012 National Landcare Conference in Sydney, September 2012.

Communications and PR

- Sent letters notifying councils, papers, councillors, organisations (CMA, Sydney Water), WCPS, Greenway and IWEA of the new (2011/12) executive and the aims/goals of CRVA.
- Maintained CRVA webpage and email system.
- Secured funding to upgrade the CRVA website.
- Produced new pamphlet to promote the CRVA and The Mudcrabs.
- Produced a new, smaller, banner for use at event and festival stalls, etc

Funding

- Submitted successful application for \$3,000 in CDSE funding for CRVA website upgrade, to Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL.
- Received 2 x \$400 vouchers from Landcare to be spent at Arborgreen for tools and equipment for Mudcrabs weeding and revegetation activities
- Received \$194.95 donation from the Marrickville Council Indoor Staff Mickey Mouse Social Club
- Submitted application in partnership with Canterbury Council for \$206,000 over six years to fund work on Foord Ave site and clay-plain remnant bush at Second Ave Campsie. Unsuccessful.
- Donated \$200 to the Boomerang Alliance to support its Cash for Containers campaign
- Initiated an investigation into the feasibility of encouraging and managing bequests to the CRVA.

Judy Pincus

President

August 2012