

ITEM NO: 17

SUBJECT: SYDNEY WATER'S CESSATION OF SUBSIDISED SEWER PUMP-OUT -
UPDATE

FILE NO: F08555 - 14/201742

Delivery Program Link

Principal Activity: Looking After Environment

Service: Natural Environment

Recommendations:

1. *That the Council notes the information within this report;*
 2. *That the Council discourages the installation of on-site sewerage management systems on properties located within areas presently the subject of investigations by Sydney Water into potential minor sewerage extensions, pending the outcome of those investigations; and*
 3. *That the Council receives and considers a further report once the outcomes of Sydney Water's investigation into options for mains connection are known, which is anticipated by February 2015.*
-

Report by Director, City & Community Outcomes:**Reason for report**

To provide the Council with an update since the last Council resolution in July, noting that the Sydney Water subsidy has now been removed, effective from 1 July 2014.

Background

Sydney Water Corporation (Sydney Water) confirmed its intent to remove a sewer pump-out subsidy to 72 household customers in the Blue Mountains as of 1 July 2014. This matter has been the subject of previous Council reports, stakeholder meetings and two public information sessions. At its ordinary meeting of 24 June, the Council resolved:

1. *"That the Council notes the information contained within this report, particularly the response from Sydney Catchment Authority to the Draft Sewage Management Options Study;*
2. *That the Council endorses the attached Sewage Management Options Study and notes that it has been distributed to impacted residents and the Local Member for Blue Mountains, Mrs Roza Sage as a final draft; and*
3. *That the Council notes that to date its advocacy on behalf of affected residents to the relevant Ministers through the local State Members for a meeting has not, at the time of writing this report, been productive."*

[Minute No. 259]

Further, at the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 22 July 2014 it was resolved:

- “1. That the Council continues to express its utmost disappointment at the position taken by the State Government and Sydney Water Corporation following the cessation of Sydney Water’s Pump-out Sewerage Subsidy to its customers in the Blue Mountains on 1 July 2014;*
- 2. That the Council notes the actions it has taken to assist those affected Sydney Water Corporation customers in the Blue Mountains; and*
- 3. That the Council continues its advocacy on behalf of affected local residents to the Minister for Finance and Services, the Minister for Land and Water, Sydney Water Corporation and the Local State Member for the Blue Mountains City area by the Council on this matter.”*

[Minute No. 349]

This report updates the Council on the most recent actions undertaken.

Report

At the 22 July 2014 meeting, the Council noted recent actions undertaken by Council staff, including the sending of correspondence to all affected Households and the production of a Fact Sheet. In the intervening period the focus has shifted toward processing applications for On Site Sewer Management (OSSM) and close liaison with Sydney Water on the outcomes of its investigations.

Council’s Pump Out Service

While the Council has ceased being a sewage pump out contractor to Sydney Water, it has now received in the order of 30 applications for sewer pump out at commercial rates. Many residents are using the service while they are waiting for Sydney Water’s investigations and are exploring the cost of other possible long term treatment options.

Sydney Water Connection Investigations

The Council and Sydney Water staff continue to explore options for sewer connections to a number of households and this work is likely to take a further two to three more months to complete. If viable, and pending adequate take-up, eligible residents would be connected at a full market rate for a price to be confirmed by Sydney Water. The outcomes of this process, once known, will be reported to the Council.

Sydney Water identified six clusters that meet the criteria to undertake a design (i.e. where over 50% of impacted households responded positively to the option for feasibility investigations to progress). GHD (ENSure) have been contracted by Sydney Water to complete the property inspections and designs. These six clusters in the scope of the designs include:

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Stuart / Farnells Rd Katoomba – Potential customers | 14 |
| 2. Various Rds Wentworth Falls – Potential customers - | 51 |
| 3. Kent St Bullaburra – Potential customers | 5 |
| 4. Old Bathurst Rd Woodford – Potential customers | 7 |
| 5. Kangaroo / Queens Rd Lawson – Potential customers | 3 |
| 6. Rickard Rd Warrimoo – Potential customers | 3 |

The timeframes are for GHD to provide the designs and full costings to Sydney Water by late December 2014. The outcomes of this exercise, once known and made available to the Council, will be reported to the next available Council meeting.

On-site Sewerage Management Systems

At the time of writing Council had received seventeen (17) applications to install on-site septic systems from owners previously on the subsidised pump out scheme. Currently one (1) has been approved and two (2) are imminent.

However five (5) of the applications are on land in Wentworth Falls and Bullaburra that is presently the subject of Sydney Water investigations into possible minor sewer extensions. It is understood that these owners had also previously responded positively to the Sydney Water expression of interest process into the feasibility study.

A further two (2) applications have been received from owners of other properties in Wentworth Falls within the area being investigated by Sydney Water. One (1) application proposes to replace a commercial pump out removal system and one (1) relates to a DA for a new dwelling on vacant land.

It has been previously identified in reports to Council that the feasibility of any extensions to the reticulated sewerage system are largely dependent on their costs, and will be influenced by factors such as the number of properties able to be connected, the distance to existing infrastructure, topography/geology etc.

The ability of Sydney Water to employ a funding model that enabled the cost of extending the infrastructure to be equitably shared between benefiting lot owners was identified in a previous Council Report relating to the phase out of the subsidised pump out system as being critical to making the extension to the system feasible (Item 24 of Council Meeting 17 September 2013). The Report further identified that it would be inappropriate to develop other less desirable alternatives, such as on-site disposal of effluent, until the feasibility of a particular extension is determined.

Furthermore, Council advised relevant affected owners in letters dated 28 February 2014 that it did not recommend further investigations regarding possible alternate options for the disposal of wastewater until such time as Sydney Water Corporation had completed its analysis into possible extension of the reticulated sewerage system.

The Council is now placed in a difficult situation in attempting to assist property owners minimise the extensive on-going costs associated with commercial pump outs, while not prejudicing the potential for extension of the reticulated sewerage system in these areas by approving on-site disposal systems.

It was partly for these reasons that the Council consistently advocated for Sydney Water to defer phase out of the subsidised pump out service until such time as alternate options for the disposal of effluent had been fully investigated.

As part of their continuing investigations, Sydney Waters' consultants are presently reviewing the cost implications should these properties not be included as part of a future minor sewer extension. Council has requested that it be advised of the potential impacts on the feasibility of minor sewer extensions proceeding in these areas, and the costs implications for remaining property owners, should that occur.

Until such time as the results of that review are provided, it is recommended that the Council discourage the installation of on-site disposal of effluent on those sites within those areas or clusters presently under investigation by Sydney Water. Once that work is completed, more informed decisions can be made regarding whether the installation of on-site effluent disposal systems on these properties is likely to reduce the impetus for extension to the reticulated sewerage system.

Sewage Strategy

Work has commenced to review the Council's adopted Sewage Strategy 2008, notably focusing upon considerations around appropriate systems for introduction and clarification of minimum lot sizes and receiving environments. The outcomes of this review are anticipated in Quarter 3, with an updated draft strategy due for consideration by the Council (prior to an exhibition process) in Quarter 4.

Sustainability Assessment

Effects	Positive	Negative
Environmental	A sustainable outcome to the phasing out of Sydney Water's subsidised effluent pump-out service will reduce impacts on the environment.	Failure to achieve a sustainable outcomes for all parties, could see possible adverse environmental impacts, especially given the ongoing cost of commercial pump out.
Social	Delaying the installation of on-site disposal of wastewater on properties in areas presently under investigation by Sydney Water will enable more informed decisions to be made regarding whether the installation of on-site effluent disposal systems on these properties is likely to reduce the impetus for extension to the reticulated sewerage system.	Nil.
Economic	Implementation of alternate options to full commercial pump out for the disposal of effluent from the affected properties will in the long term reduce on-going costs for property owners. Delaying on-site disposal of wastewater on properties in areas under investigation by Sydney Water for possible extension to the sewer system has the potential to result in the costs associated with extending the sewer to be more equitably shared between benefiting lot owners.	In the short term, the implementation of any alternate option to subsidised effluent disposal will impose significant additional costs on property owners in terms of upgrading of on-site treatment/disposal systems and house drainage lines, and potentially contribution to extension of the reticulated sewerage system. Delaying or deferring on-site disposal of wastewater will prolong commercial pump out costs for those owners.
Governance	The Council is exercising its role as steward and representative for the affected residents.	Nil.

Financial implications for the Council

The costs associated with the Council's input to this process have increased from those previously reported to the 27 May 2014 Council meeting. In addition to the direct consultancy costs of \$15,000 for the preparation of the Sewer Management Options study and approximately \$3,000 for waiver of application and inspection fees, an additional \$18,000 in consultancy costs has been incurred for the review of wastewater management reports. Provision has been made for these additional costs from a budget carried over from the

2013-14 financial year. The final cost for the use of Council's officers in supporting residents and negotiating with Sydney Water will ultimately run into tens of thousands of dollars.

It should also be noted that investigation of any future reports of surcharging tanks or illegal discharges will have further resource and cost implications or require re-prioritising of work.

Conclusion

This report provides an update of the action the Council has undertaken following the Council's resolutions of February through to July 2014, noting the completion of the Sewage Management Options Study and its distribution in early June 2014 to affected residents.

The report recommends discouraging the installation of on-site effluent disposal systems on properties within the areas being investigated by Sydney Water for potential extension to the sewerage system to allow for more informed decisions to be made regarding whether the installation of on-site effluent disposal systems on these properties is likely to reduce the impetus for extension to the reticulated sewerage system.

Finally, a further report will be presented to the Council early in 2015, once the outcome of Sydney Water's review is known.

* * * * *

ITEM NO: 18

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROGRAM PLAN 2014

FILE NO: F08559 - 14/201332

Delivery Program Link

Principal Activity: Looking After Environment

Service: Natural Environment

Recommendations:

1. *That the Council adopts the Blue Mountains City Council Community Conservation Program Plan 2014;*
 2. *That the Council acknowledges and thanks its community conservation volunteers for their significant contribution to the management of the City's environment; and*
 3. *That the Council notes that in the event that the Special Rate Variation 2 (including the Environment Levy) does not proceed, the community conservation program will be reviewed after June 2015.*
-

Report by Director, City & Community Outcomes:**Reason for report**

This report presents to the Council the Final Community Conservation Program (CCP) Plan (Attachment 1 for endorsement including recommended changes in response to submissions received from the public exhibition process.

Background

A review of Council's Community Conservation Program (CCP), including external and internal stakeholder consultation, was completed in May 2014. The review of the program resulted in a draft plan to guide delivery of the program going forward.

The Draft CCP Plan was presented to the Ordinary Meeting of the Council of 24 June 2014. At this meeting the Council resolved:

- “1. *That the Council resolves to publicly exhibit the Draft Community Conservation Program Plan (see Attachment 1) for a minimum of 56 days; and*
2. *That the Council receives a further report at the conclusion of the exhibition period detailing submissions and any recommended changes arising, with a view to adopting the Community Conservation Program.”*

[Minute No.258]

The Community Conservation Program (CCP) facilitates community volunteers in the Bushcare, Landcare, Community Water Monitoring (Streamwatch), Trackcare and Bush Backyards programs. All of these sub-programs involve the community delivering on-ground environmental outcomes and supporting the management of community assets, in partnership with Council.

This program collectively attracts more than 500 volunteers, who contribute an average 12,000 hours, with an equivalent in-kind value to \$360,000 each year.

This program assists Council with weed control and bushland restoration, maintenance and renewal walking tracks, lookouts and other visitor facilities, and monitoring the health of our streams and waterways across the City.

In addition to the on-ground benefits realised from the CCP, the volunteer conservation program is a significant generator of social capital and community goodwill, and engenders a strong sense of connection with the City's natural environment.

To facilitate the CCP, Council invests some \$80,000 per annum in operational funding and the equivalent of 5.5 full time positions in staff resources for on ground support and co-ordination. This program is in addition to the existing Council core maintenance works, which would likely not be done without the volunteers.

Externally funded grants to private landowners through Bush Backyards and Landcare contribute an additional \$30,000 to \$50,000 annually to landscape scale weed management and bushland restoration. Business sponsorship to the Trackcare program currently provides \$8,000 to \$15,000 per year for materials and contractor support to minimise and manage environmental impacts in high use climbing areas.

Reasons for review and revised CCP

The current Bushcare service model has been in place, essentially unchanged, since 1992. Other programs introduced since 2001 have evolved independently to service changing organisational focus and community interest. It is timely to review and formalise the way in which Council manages the range of community conservation partnerships which contribute to the collective program area of Community Conservation.

Currently the only procedural document relating to Council's various conservation volunteer sub-programs is the Bushcare Procedures Manual (2008). This document outlines Council's commitment to the support of Bushcare volunteer groups and Council and volunteer responsibilities under the Bushcare program. It does not refer to Council's other conservation volunteer and community participation sub-programs.

The CCP Plan has been developed to address the following matters:

- Integrate relevant community volunteer/ participation programs into a comprehensive Community Conservation Program which meets Council conservation objectives and community aspirations;
- Review and formalise service models for various community participation and support programs to allow for continued provision of adequate support to achieve high level conservation and community participation outcomes while allowing future growth within available resources;
- Formalise Council and community roles, commitment and responsibility in a Community Conservation Program Plan; and
- Ensure current programs are compliant with Work Health and Safety legislation and are appropriately considered by Council in terms of legal risk and insurances.

The CCP Plan was written having regards to:

- The relevant legislation;
- Similar programs and policies from other Councils;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Expert internal input from City Services and People & Systems; and
- Advice from the Internal Governance and Risk Steering Group.

Internal and external stakeholder consultation

Prior to developing the draft CCP Plan, Council undertook consultation with CCP participants and relevant staff between March and June 2013. This consultation included three focus groups and two Have Your Say surveys, asking for feedback on Council's current CCP sub-programs and considering a range of models for managing volunteer programs into the future.

The draft CCP Plan was written based on the outcomes of this consultation and Council's conservation objectives and governance responsibilities.

The draft CCP Plan was exhibited for 60 days, advertised in the local newspaper and notified to the groups that were identified in the Council resolution. The plan was also exhibited on Council's website and online community engagement forum, *Blue Mountains Have Your Say* and copies were made available at Council offices and branch libraries.

During the public exhibition 22 submissions were received. Submitters included the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network, one catchment group, three Bushcare groups and 17 individuals. Submissions addressed the following matters:

Issue	Response
Support / commend CCP review process & Plan	Acknowledged
1. BACKGROUND	
4.1.2 – Objective 4. “Involve the community in partnerships with Council to maintain, protect and restore natural assets” should be amended to better reflect a two way partnership	Amend wording to read “Council and the community work in partnership to maintain, protect and restore natural assets”
Insert additional objective to read “Provide community support distributed equitably across the whole LGA”	No change to document. Drivers for support of CCP include community interest, strategic conservation priorities and land use patterns. This range of drivers determining resource allocation will not necessarily result in exactly equitable distribution across the LGA, although over time support tends to be relatively equally distributed across the City. Current Bushcare/ Landcare group distribution is 34% lower mountains, 15% mid mountains and 51% upper mountains There are 3 existing catchment groups two of which are in the upper mountains and one in the lower mountains. Trailcare operates in lower mountains sites where existing bike tracks are located and Cragcare operates in upper mountains sites where most climbing sites are located. 40% of Bush Backyards participants are located in the upper mountains, 25% in the mid mountains and 35% in the lower mountains.

4.3.2 Legislation POEO Act 1997: Insert specific reference to impacts of inadequate soil erosion & sediment controls on work sites	Reference inserted: "CCP participants should be particularly aware of the need for adequate erosion and sediment controls on works sites to avoid pollution incidents."
WHS Act 2011 Strongly support Council position to ensure safe work environment	Acknowledged
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 Strongly support Council approach to ensure volunteer privacy; agree to collection of volunteer data as stated	Acknowledged. Council will manage personal information in accordance with its Privacy Management Plan.
Consider further strengthening procedures to ensure adequate protection for volunteers; Signed clearance should be required for use of personal images, not notification by volunteers if they do not want images used	Note privacy concern and consider additional measures to be included in Procedures Manuals for each program. Edit document to reflect Council Consent to Photograph Policy which requires informed consent for use of personal images. Add Consent to Photograph form to Volunteer Agreements.
5. GOVERNANCE	
5.4.1 Code of Conduct Support volunteer rights and responsibilities as stated	Acknowledged
Object to statement 'volunteers should show loyalty to Council'. Should be changed to something like 'show commitment to caring for bushland'	Delete from document. This section is summarising volunteers' responsibility to adhere to the BMCC Code of Conduct and EEO policy. 'Show loyalty' is a simplification of the Code of Conduct section which reads 'You must not conduct yourself in carrying out your functions in a manner that is likely to bring the Council or holders of civic office into disrepute.' As the document already states 'all volunteers must act in a manner consistent with the BMCC Code of Conduct', 'show loyalty' may be deleted without deleting volunteers' responsibility to act in such a manner. As this section relates to adherence to Council policies which apply to all staff and volunteers it is not appropriate to add 'commitment to caring for bushland'. A similar phrase could be added to relevant sections of Procedures Manuals as appropriate.
Question 'volunteers should maintain confidentiality of information'; volunteers should not have access to confidential information and this requirement may weaken the role of volunteer programs in facilitating information flow between Council and the community.	No change to document. Although in general volunteers will not have access to confidential information this is an important principle relating to privacy and commercial in confidence which may on occasion be relevant to volunteers.

<p>5.5.2 Insurance Object to no personal accident insurance cover for volunteers over 90 years ; Object to no death cover for employees over 75 years; Implies discrimination</p>	<p>No change to document. These age limits are imposed by the insurers and are not under Council's control. These limits are common to volunteer policies of all other Councils with similar programs surveyed.</p>
<p>5.5.3 Working with Children Implementation of risk management should not be so restrictive as to be a disincentive for children and their parents to participate in CCP activities</p>	<p>No change to document. The document reflects the careful consideration given to formulating conditions under which children could participate in CCP activities in the interests of intergenerational learning and inclusion which would also adequately meet Council's responsibility to achieve a safe working environment and protect children from harm.</p>
<p>Add adult/ child ratios to stipulate the maximum number of children to each supervising adult on CCP sites</p>	<p>Specific ratios should be included in Procedures Manuals for each program based on assessment of risks associated with particular activities and the age of children involved.</p>
<p>The Plan should include definitions of child-related activities which would trigger Working with Children checks; Volunteers should not be responsible for contacting HR to sort this out.</p>	<p>No change to document. The Human Resources (HR) branch of Council is responsible for implementing Council's Child Related Work Policy and Working with Children checks, The definition of child related activities (as set by the Office of the Children's Guardian) is complex and Council has delegated the HR branch with interpreting and applying the regulation on a case by case basis to ensure compliance with current regulation. Council's policy states that 'Child-related work means positions which an employee / self-employed person / volunteer in the course of their duties, is involved in working with, or will have contact with children, or access to confidential records regarding children. This includes supervised work.' The important feature of the definition is that the staff or volunteer position is directly related to working with children, not just that children will be in the same vicinity. The policy is referred to in the plan but it is not appropriate to include the currently used definition as this may be updated by HR on the advice of the Office of the Children's Guardian at any time. As stated in this plan, the relevant Council manager or supervisor, not individual volunteers, will be responsible for liaising with HR to organise appropriate documentation to be completed by any staff</p>

	or volunteers deemed to be engaged in child-related activities.
'self-employed persons' should be deleted from the list of applicants undertaking child-related work required to complete Working with Children checks as not relevant to CCP	No change to document. The Councils policy definition is ' Self-employed persons run their own business and in turn provide services to Council.' This may apply to consultants or contractors employed by Council to assist with CCP activities and may therefore be relevant.
5.6 Relationship to other parts of Council Requirements for consultation with CCP groups before Council works affecting their sites are undertaken should be strengthened and clearly documented in internal procedures covering all Council activities.	Add action to document. Investigate incorporation of consultation with relevant CCP teams and Council officers into the Part 5 assessment process which is undertaken in the planning stages of any development activity undertaken by Council which is exempt from formal development consent conditions.
Requirements for Council consultation with CCP groups during assessment of development applications (DAs) which may affect their work sites should be strengthened	No change to document. A notification of Bushcare groups regarding relevant DAs is already in place. The efficacy of this process may require review.
6. RESOURCING STRATEGY	
6.2 Service levels Statistics should be related to a relevant period and should state which period they refer to.	Amend document to clarify. Quote statistics for past five years.
6.3 Environment Levy implications Support the Levy and its support of CCP.	Acknowledged
Concerned that CCP should continue with or without the Levy	As stated in the document Council may not have the resources to continue with all aspects of the current CCP if the Levy is not renewed in June 2015.
Concerned that renewed Levy must continue to provide supplementary CCP support in addition to core funds historically provided to program such as Bushcare, i.e. Council core funding must not be reduced and replaced with Levy funds in order to direct core funding away from Bushcare	Appendix 1 clearly indicates that 91.5% of Bushcare funding is provided by core Council funds and that this is projected to continue with or without a renewed Levy.
6.4 Proposed strategy for future resourcing Council needs to explore new resourcing strategies for CCP to allow for future growth such as the sponsorship model used to fund Cragcare activities.	No change to document. Council is developing a sponsorship policy which could be used to provide for business sponsorship of other CCP activities in the future. As this is still in development it is not appropriate to include this in the current document.

7 INTEGRATED SUPPORT FOR CCP	
7.1 Promotion of CCP Add action to promotion table to target the wider community by providing information packs direct to new home buyers in the City about CCP	Add to action table in document. A Residents Guide is distributed to new home buyers in the LGA which includes some information on Bushcare but does not specifically promote other CCP activities. An action will be added to update this document to reflect the current CCP.
Add action to promotion table to target the wider community to include advertisement of CCP activities on the Council page in the Gazette.	The Council page in the Gazette is used to notify residents of significant official events and developments and may not be the appropriate vehicle for regular promotion of CCP. However, Council does promote CCP through media releases and paid advertisements in the Gazette from time to time (as per media promotion quoted in the table).
7.2 Communication Support biannual volunteer surveys / annual would be too onerous; Suggest volunteer surveys should be annual to coincide with BMCC Operational Plan development	No change to document. Conflicting submissions indicate divided opinion within the community. Specific programs may choose to hold more frequent surveys of their participants, but minimum should be biennial
Support 3-5 year forums ; Forums should be 3 yearly, 5 yearly too infrequent to effect change when required	No change to document. Conflicting submissions indicate divided opinion within the community. Forums may be held 3 yearly but 5 yearly remains a maximum time interval between events.
7.3 Integrated CCP across catchments and conservation landscapes Support Council support for catchment groups	Acknowledged
No reference is made to ongoing support for existing catchment groups. Support from both the Bushcare and Environmental Management teams has been shown to be valuable to groups by providing access to a range of expertise and Council networks. Please specify levels of ongoing support to be provided.	Add reference to this section and action to Implementation action table.
8 SPECIFIC PROGRAMS	
8.1 Bushcare and Landcare	
8.1.6 Delivery Model Object to introduction of the part supervision model on grounds of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental risk • WHS • Unreasonable expectations of responsibility for volunteer co- 	No change to document. This model was proposed after extensive consultation with stakeholders and a review of other Council programs. The part supervision model is commonly used by other Councils and has broad support by

<p>ordinators to take on supervisory role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for group disharmony • Increased administration and logistical load to implement will negate productivity gains 	<p>local Bushcare volunteers as it would support the formation of additional groups or would allow existing groups to work additional days whilst operating within the current resourcing provided by Council. Adequately skilled and experienced Bushcare groups could voluntarily elect to operate with only part supervision by Council and with full supervision by a Volunteer Bushcare Co-ordinator. Additional training is proposed for Co-ordinators to address potential environmental and WHS risks. Review of the implementation of the part supervision model by staff and volunteers is proposed after the first year of implementation at which time the model will be assessed to decide whether continued implementation can be recommended.</p>
<p>Support concept of part supervision model as described but needs more safeguards to address risks (broadly as above)</p>	<p>No change to document. Specific concerns raised have been noted. More detail of implementation and safeguards to address concerns will be included in the updated Bushcare Procedures Manual.</p>
<p>Part supervision model should be based on minimum quarterly attendance by Bushcare Officer, not four monthly</p>	<p>Amend document. Consensus of staff and volunteers seems to indicate quarterly attendance should be the minimum to provide for good risk management and adequate support.</p>
<p>The option of satellite groups of experienced volunteers from existing groups who work without supervision one or more additional days during the month should be included in this plan.</p>	<p>No change to document. The specific conditions under which this option could be implemented would be more appropriately addressed in the updated Bushcare Procedures Manual.</p>
<p>Support concept of volunteer agreements to ensure compliance with program principles and appropriate behaviour</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p>
<p>Reference to role of Bushcare Officer, volunteer co-ordinator and volunteers in ensuring annual workplans are adhered to should be added</p>	<p>No change to document. Concern noted and will be addressed in Bushcare Procedures Manual.</p>
<p>8.1.7 External grant management Grant applications for works which may impact on CCP sites should only be submitted after consultation with affected groups & formal consultation with affected groups should be part of the application & implementation process (particularly if using Bushcare hours as in kinds).</p>	<p>Statement added to document clarifying conditions under which groups must be consulted as part of the application process.</p>
<p>Criteria for project selection should include capacity of Council / Bushcare / Landcare group to maintain & extend the gains achieved on completion of the grant.</p>	<p>Add statement to document</p>

8.1.8 Blue Mountains Bushcare Network Support Council's ongoing commitment to support the network as it is an important component of Bushcare activity	Acknowledged
Community Water Monitoring	
8.2.5 How we do it Support integration of Streamwatch / Bushcare services	Acknowledged
8.2.6 Delivery Model Add a specific reference to volunteers' obligation to upload data to the Streamwatch site	No change to document. Concern noted for inclusion in the Community Water Monitoring Procedures Manual and volunteer agreements.
Trackcare	
Construction of off road cycling trails should not be part of a bushland conservation program as they damage bushland	No change to document. Construction activities under the Trailcare program reduce impacts of existing tracks on bushland sites and address potential damage caused by unauthorised off road cycling by engaging with the rider community to promote socially and environmentally responsible usage. Affiliation of Trackcare programs with other volunteer conservation programs promotes partnerships to encourage community stewardship of bushland by recreational users.
Suggest formation of volunteer walking track maintenance program in addition to Trailcare and Cragcare	No change to document. Support the concept of an additional volunteer group for bushwalkers etc. Limited resources available for Trackcare activities are currently fully utilised supporting existing groups but this concept may be developed as resources allow.
8.3.6 Delivery Model Support full supervision of Trackcare workdays	Acknowledged
8.3.7 Contractor management Suggest additional condition 'that contractors are supervised by a suitably environmentally trained Council Officer'.	Add statement to document
Bush Backyards	
Support introduction of conservation agreements.	Acknowledged
Support concept of conservation agreements but concerned that additional administration may detract from resources available to support participants on ground.	No change to document. Conservation agreements support sound governance and will facilitate continued funding and investment in the program by clearly demonstrating conservation benefits. The additional administration entailed is necessary to promote continuing program support.
OTHER	
Impacts of dog walking areas on CCP sites and bushland reserves needs to be better managed	No change to document. This issue is beyond the scope of the plan to address.

Issues which attracted a high level of concern (raised in more than 50% of submissions) included:

- Council consultation with volunteer groups during the development application process and in planning for Council activities which would affect their work sites
- Support for catchment groups; and
- Objections to or reservations about the part supervision model for Bushcare groups.

The submission raised a number of issues which will require a procedural or operational response and will be addressed later during the review of procedures manuals. Revision of the procedures manual for each program is an action proposed in the CCP Plan.

On review of the submissions, it is recommended that the CCP Plan should be adopted generally as exhibited except for the minor changes suggested in the table above.

A summary of the key features of the CCP Plan for adoption is provided below:

1. The current service models for all sub-programs have been substantially retained. Changes to some programs are based on consultation outcomes and better alignment to Council conservation program objectives.
2. The Bushcare model has been expanded to allow for more flexible delivery, with the introduction of 'accredited' groups, endorsed to operate independently on some sites, that is without Bushcare Officer supervision.
3. Community Water Monitoring will be delivered in partnership with the Australian Museum, through its "Streamwatch" program. To improve co-ordination of conservation outcomes, and achieve better governance and workplace safety, Streamwatch volunteers will be integrated with the Bushcare program, in that Streamwatch volunteers will also be assigned to a current Bushcare group.
4. The Bush Backyards program will introduce a commitment by participants to 'conservation agreements' which will better define the partnership, including conservation outcomes agreed to, and their linkage to broader, City-wide conservation objectives.
5. To drive better co-ordination and targeting of conservation effort, and build partnerships, CCP program participants will be encouraged to adopt a landscape scale approach, through sub-catchment community conservation groups. This will facilitate greater inter-group co-ordination and provide a mechanism to improve alignment between community conservation effort and Council's broader environmental programs. Council will provide administrative and technical support to build these processes.
6. The current Trackcare model has been retained without change. The proposal by some volunteers to allow for self-managed workdays was not adopted due to risk management considerations.
7. Risk management for all sub-programs has been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, Working with Children regulations and current Council protocols and insurance policies.

Under this revised CCP, Council's delivery of volunteer conservation activities will provide improved and measurable conservation outcomes, a flexible delivery model to meet changing community and organisational needs, and an improved governance and risk framework to meet Council's legal and moral obligations. Table 12 of the CCP Plan provides a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan to measure the conservation, volunteer and program outcomes.

Sustainability Assessment

Effects	Positive	Negative
Environmental	CCP better integrated to meet Council's conservation objectives. Range of programs to meet cross tenure / landscape scale biodiversity outcomes.	Nil
Social	Promotes/ develops ongoing investment in social capital- Council & community partnership. Provide clearer direction on roles, commitments and responsibilities of staff & community involved in program. Increased flexibility of service to provide support to a wider range of participants & increase participation numbers.	Potential stakeholder resistance to change
Economic	Capitalises on partnerships with state programs & sponsoring businesses. Directs staff effort & project funding for most effective support of Council and community objectives.	Nil
Governance	Improved transparency of program and in risk management. Improved alignment of service delivery with relevant Council teams. CCP review provides an effective review of service levels associated with CCP delivery.	Nil

Financial implications for the Council

The CCP is an existing program and the implementation of the plan can be achieved within existing budgets.

Council invests some \$80,000 per annum in operational funding and \$330,000 in staff resources for on ground support and co-ordination. Resourcing of CCP programs significantly expands Council's ability to deliver on weed and bushland management outcomes and helps to reduce risks associated with recreational infrastructure.

Long term resourcing considerations

Council staff and operational budgets to support volunteer conservation programs are sourced from core budgets and the Environment Levy, which provides 20% of the CCP budget. The current Environment Levy expires in June 2015.

External budget funds of \$7,000 p.a. from the Australian Museum for the Streamwatch program provide Council with funds to employ staff to support Community Water Monitoring groups. The current funding agreement between Council and the Museum is in place until March 2016.

Sponsorship from local businesses provides materials and contractor expertise to support the Trackcare program. Indications are that this may increase in future years.

Environment Levy implications post 2015

The environment levy currently funds the following components of the CCP:

- The Bush Backyards program;
- Council's technical support of Community Water Monitoring;
- One part time Bushcare Officer position which supports 8 Landcare groups and delivers the nursery weed awareness and liaison program; and
- Components of the track management budget which provide materials to support to the Trackcare program.

Support for each sub-program will have to be reviewed after June 2015 in the event that the renewal of the special variation that includes Environment Levy works is unsuccessful and an alternative funding source is not available.

Legal and risk management issues for the Council

A key driver for the review was to identify and make recommendations for addressing key risks in the current program. This has been done, and strategies for mitigating risk are recommended in the Plan.

More generally, personal accident and public liability insurance cover is provided for all volunteers when undertaking Council approved activities on Council managed land. Streamwatch participants are covered by Australian Museum insurance policies whilst all other programs except Landcare are covered by Council. Landcare participants are covered by the Greater Sydney Local Land Service policies.

External consultation

Council consulted with both internal and community volunteer stakeholders in development of the draft plan as detailed in the earlier report.

The draft CCP Plan was exhibited from 11 July to 8 September 2014, a period of 60 days, and submissions invited. Notification was specifically provided to identified community and interest groups and relevant stakeholders, such as the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Blue Mountains Off-road Cyclists, Sydney Rock-climbing Club, Blue Mountains Cragcare and all current CCP volunteers.

Conclusion

The CCP Plan has been developed to provide direction for Council's continuing support of conservation volunteer programs in the City. It outlines revised models for delivery which provide for service levels and conservation outcomes agreed between staff and volunteer stakeholders to meet changing community and organisational needs. Risk management and governance have been reviewed to ensure that Council is meeting relevant legislative responsibilities and that program management is compliant with current Council policies and protocols.

The CCP makes a significant contribution to the delivery of the Community Strategic Plan, Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025. In particular, in the Key Directions of Looking After People, Looking After The Environment and Using Land.

The Community Conservation Program Plan provides a sound foundation to guide the Council's actions and obligations with respect to governance and support of community conservation in the Blue Mountains and is recommended for adoption.

ATTACHMENTS/ENCLOSURES

1	Enclosure 1 - Draft FINAL Community Conservation Program Plan	14/208017	Enclosure
---	---	-----------	-----------

* * * * *