



# Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

Annual Report  
2019-20



**Sutherland Shire Environment Centre** is actively involved with local community organisations, businesses, government, and residents on a wide range of projects to protect, improve and maintain the natural beauty and character of our Shire, its bioregions, surrounding waterways and parks. We promote sustainability, support environmental education, and welcome community involvement to help us address environmental issues.

SSEC is a totally independent, non-government community organisation. It is an incorporated Association guided by a constitution and governed by a Board elected at an Annual General Meeting by members of the Association.



## Board Members 2019-20

Dr Tassia Kolesnikow (Chairperson)

Jenni Gormley (Treasurer)

Lily Meier (Treasurer)

Lyn McLean (Secretary)

Sarah-Jo Lobwein

Melinda Millen

Dr Sally Stockbridge

## Executive Officer

Dr Catherine Reynolds

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## Statement of Purpose

The Sutherland Shire Environment Centre works with others in the community – including business, council, government and residents – to achieve a sustainable environment in the Sutherland Shire and its bio-regions.

## Statement of Functions

The Board agrees that the following list comprises the priority functions of the SSEC:

1. Establish the SSEC as the Peak Environment Group in the Sutherland Shire and its bio-regions, one that supports low-impact lifestyles, practices and behaviours in the community.
2. Establish efficient communication processes with the community.
3. Develop and conduct education initiatives.
4. Campaign publicly for protecting and improving the quality of the environment in Sutherland and its bio-regions.
5. Support members and local community organisations in their efforts to protect their local areas.
6. Establish efficient information, operation and management systems for Sutherland Shire Environment Centre.
7. Strengthen relationships with Sutherland Shire Council, other councils and other community and environmental organisations.
8. Raise funds to carry out the functions of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre.

For all of the above, the principles of working in partnership with others and in concert with other initiatives apply. Consultation and collaboration are vital elements of effective partnerships. The overall aim is to create an Environment Centre! One that is welcoming and useful for the community. And one that models and demonstrates environmental and sustainability values in its decisions, practices and actions.

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this Land, the Dharawal and Gandangara peoples, who have cared and continue to care for country. We recognise that Aboriginal Sovereignty has never been ceded. It is our goal to build restorative relations between peoples, and we pay our respect to their elders – past, present, and emerging.

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## Chairperson's Report

Tassia Kolesnikow

My third year as Chairperson has certainly been the most challenging. We had the tragedy of an unprecedented fire season that devastated millions of hectares of bushland, close to 13 million in NSW alone and the final horrific count of over 3 billion dead animals. As we were clearing our lungs of smoke and taking stock of the damage, the COVID pandemic descended, disrupting our ability to work, communicate, and even travel to natural places for respite.

We have all been forced to adapt and find ways to continue despite the changes. I would like to commend our members and volunteers for not just surviving the past year, but for the brilliant execution of phenomenal programs, engaging activities and high-profile campaigns.

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has always encouraged its members to **Think, Write and Act** for the benefit of the environment and to engage with others to do the same. Environmental education is at the core of this mantra as it promotes people to **think** about the environment. This year, we launched the UNSW Environmental Research Thesis prize to acknowledge the relevance of academic study to improving the environment. The \$1,000 prize will be awarded for a Masters or PhD research thesis with a focus on the Sutherland Shire and its bioregions.

This annual review provides details on the many wonderful activities, events and programs run by Speaking 4 the Planet, Sunny Shire, SO Shire, Greening the Shire, EcoSavvy-Business and Plastic Free Sutherland Shire, some which engage students, and others that appeal to individuals and local businesses to adopt sustainable practices for the benefit of the planet.

Last October Sutherland Shire Environment Centre was proud to co-host the hugely successful Active Nature conference. More than 200 Environmental Educators and students from all over NSW and Victoria came together to network and share ideas. It was a truly inspirational event for all involved! Special kudos to Phil Smith and Jenni Gormley for the extraordinary time and effort they expended to make it happen.

The origins of our Environment Centre stem from the passion of our founder, Bob Walshe, to provoke beneficial change through **writing**. He was the author, co-author and editor of over 40 books. His successful publishing company, Martindale Press, saw an innovative and extensive programme of educational and academic publications. Bob Walshe also valued prose and poetry, and formed writing groups to encourage others to write. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre continues to honour the importance of writing with the RD Walshe Writing Award, which received over 80 entries from young Australians reflecting on the topic 'I am Earth'.

Throughout the year, Environment Centre members and volunteers have continued to write submissions and letters, to engage with council, state and federal government and to network with politicians and organisations on important issues including active transport infrastructure, zoning and development issues, tree canopy preservation, world heritage listing for the Royal National Park, and to appeal for additional resources to look after our precious flora and fauna, including a special focus on solutions to address koala road kill hotspots.

Over the past decade, communication with the public has shifted substantially towards online and social media platforms. Jenni Gormley was quick to ensure Sutherland Shire Environment Centre remained relevant in this arena – she implemented this technology and built our profile across a range of electronic and social media platforms. The online tools established by Jenni have been skilfully utilised by Catherine Reynolds, appointed as our Executive Officer in August last year, to increase our public outreach. She has put a great deal of time and thought into the content and organisation of our website to further build the profile of our campaigns.

Catherine’s management and careful choice of posts on the Environment Centre’s facebook page and masterful moderation of the comments they provoked has increased our public profile, not only in the Shire, but far beyond. A large amount of interest from the public has been directed at the campaign to stop mining under the Woronora Reservoir. This campaign, largely conceived and led by Catherine, raised public awareness and mobilised volunteers to collect over 10,700 signatures on a petition to oppose it. It attracted attention and widespread reporting in sources as diverse as an Al Jazeera video segment, the Sydney Morning Herald, Renew Economy, The Guardian, Independent Australia, ABC Radio Breakfast, 2SSER and ABC Illawarra Radio interviews, Nine News online, Juice Media, and even First Dog on the Moon. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre was specifically mentioned in many of these reports, raising the profile and public regard for our organisation, as well as public concern about the damaging impact of coal mining in our water catchment.

Clearly the efforts of our Environment Centre members have resulted in **action**, whether it be hands-on activities, such as beach clean-ups or planting of verge gardens to improve our local areas, motivating dozens of volunteers to attend markets and fetes to collect signatures to stop mining under the Woronora or taking part in rallies, protests and as shareholder proxies in AGMs for large companies to provoke action on climate change. This year, we launched the Bill Ryan Activism Award to highlight the critical role that activism has in provoking positive change, as well as to honour Bill Ryan, who passed away in December.

The admirable vision that Bob Walshe had for the Centre to serve as a springboard for ideas and actions of community members to benefit the environment remains constant due to the efforts and energy expended by a community of like-minded people both past and present. I acknowledge the contribution of founding Sutherland Shire Environment Centre member, Jim Towart, who passed away in March this year. I did not have the good fortune to overlap with Jim as an Environment Centre Board member but know that his efforts towards environmental conservation were substantial, including his role in founding and working with the Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance.



Jim Towart (second from the left)

After 15 years of service to the Environment Centre, Jenni Gormley retired from her final role as Treasurer at the end of June. Jenni's contributions are so numerous that they are detailed in a separate tribute within this annual report. It is a great understatement to say that Jenni will be sorely missed.

We are of course fortunate that generous, dedicated and intelligent people continue to step forward to participate in maintaining Bob Walshe's vision. I am particularly grateful for the time, support and effort volunteered by our Board this past year. Lastly, I thank our members for their interest, support and ideas. Achieving our purpose of advocating for the environment in the Sutherland Shire and its bioregions would simply not be possible without you!

## Vale Bill Ryan

The death of longtime Sutherland Shire Environment Centre member Bill Ryan in December was keenly felt by all who interacted with him. Bill was kind, compassionate and articulate. He was greatly admired for his commitment to non-violent direct action as a means for calling attention to social injustice and inaction on climate change. Sutherland Shire Environment was proud to help host a celebration of Bill's life that was held at GyMEA Tradies on March 8.

The event was attended by numerous campaigners and coordinators from iconic activist organisations including Greenpeace, Market Forces, Stop Adani and Lock the Gate. Bill often referred to himself as a die-hard fan of the Knitting Nannas and the sea of women clothed in yellow and black that arrived from all over NSW was an indication of the high regard that this group of wise female activists had for Bill.

The Bill Ryan Activism Award has been launched this year by the Environment Centre to honour Bill and acknowledge those who share his spirit of non-violent direct action for the benefit of the environment. The nominations for this year's award have been truly outstanding and are a testament to the power of creative, persistent and courageous activism.

Sutherland Shire resident, Veronica Hester has been selected as the winner for her climate change related activism. Veronica has organised school strike action at local and national levels and participated in a week of creative action in Canberra in front of parliament house. It takes particularly brave young person to confront climate change apathy in a Liberal strong-hold such as the Shire. Veronica has done this on multiple fronts, handing out leaflets at election booths and organising and speaking at a climate change rally in front of Scott Morrison's office. Veronica is now a litigant in a class action to halt expansion of Whitehaven's Vickery coal mine: the case is being brought because of the harm this mine will cause young people by exacerbating climate change.<sup>1</sup>

We have awarded an honorable mention to Jo Evans for her long-standing and creative actions and constant monitoring of Santos and Whitehaven to stop coal seam gas and coal mining in the Pilliga and Laird State forest; to James Stanton-Cooke (aka Jimmy Halfcut) and Jessica Clarke for

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<sup>1</sup> ABC News, 9 September, 2020 "Class action to stop planned coal mine extension filed by climate action-focused Australian teenagers" <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-09/class-action-against-environment-minister-coal-mine-approval/12640596>

their outstanding campaign to raise funds to combat deforestation; to Fiona Lee who co-founded Mid-Coast Extinction Rebellion, and exhibits amazing fortitude by continuing to create political art works and organise submissions and protests calling for action on climate change despite losing her house to the 2019 bushfires.

A final honorable mention was awarded to local activists, Barbara Koppe, Wally Koppe, and Phil Targett for their methodical and persistent campaign to stop the development at Heathcote Hall. They showed exceptional creativity by devising an impressive number of different mechanisms to engage the authorities on this issue. In doing so, they created vigilant and committed community to hold decision-makers to account. Their dedication illustrates the foundation upon which the SSEC was built and is precisely the grassroots community action needed to halt the relentless push by government and powerful stakeholders to sell off our natural and heritage assets to the highest bidder.



Bill Ryan (right), Colin Ryan and Tassia Kolesnikow at Sutherland Local Court in 2014 after paying fines imposed over a protest against a mine development. **Picture: Chris Lane**

## Celebrating a remarkable life

HUNDREDS of people will come from far and wide to celebrate the remarkable life of climate activist and World War II Kokoda Trail veteran Bill Ryan.

Mr Ryan, of Caringbah, died on December 23 at the age of 97.

A Celebration of Life will be held in the Elouera Room at Tradies Club, Gymea, on Sunday March 8 from 1pm-5pm.

His son Colin Ryan said last week more than 200 people had advised they would be attending and the number would grow.

"People are coming from all over and from lots of different groups," he said.

"We have hundreds of photos that will be screened during the afternoon, choirs will sing and there will be an open mike where people can get up and talk about their experiences with Dad."

Although legally blind, partially deaf and of limited mobility, Mr Ryan was actively involved in many human rights and climate issues.

He was admired by many for his belief in non-violent but direct action.

Mr Ryan protested against

the use of fossil fuels and in support of refugees and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

He was arrested at least seven times for taking part in protests.

In 2016 he was one of three members of Sutherland Climate Action Network who were among 67 people arrested in a protest to stop coal trains from reaching Newcastle.

Mr Ryan was arrested again in 2018, one of 26 people following an anti-coal protest at Newcastle.

– MURRAY TREMBATH

## Tribute to Jenni

John Nelson

Jenni Gormley has, over a very long period of time, been a committed and truly dedicated “environmental activist”. In her time on the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre Board, Jenni has taken this passion and played a major role in building upon the foundations that Bob had put in place for the long-term operational success and financial security of the Centre.

Jenni joined Sutherland Shire Environment Centre over 15 years ago and brought to it fresh eyes and new ideas. Having served as a Shire Watch councillor (1999 – 2003), Jenni was well versed in the issues and challenges faced by the local community when dealing with environmental matters. She brought invaluable knowledge on the workings of local and state government and of the many individuals and organisations that threatened the unique environment of the Shire. With the support of Graeme Booth, she applied this knowledge and worked tirelessly in pursuit of the goals of the Centre.

As Bob looked to take a step back in his fight for the environment, Jenni took up the mantle and became the glue that held the Centre together and kept it on an even keel. She also became a huge support for Bob in his preparation and publication of papers and letters on the environment. She met with and traded faxes with him on a regular basis – as friend and confidant, this continued until Bob’s passing.

She and Graeme worked as a team and as astute business thinkers they helped guide the Centre through various challenges and opportunities that it faced through the years. These ranged from downsizing the Centre from a shopfront to office to online through to managing the agreements with tenants in our office and loans with the bank.... and lots in between.

As the Centre evolved and as sub-committees developed, Jenni worked with each to encourage their growth and evolution. Her support enabled many to flourish locally and in instances such as Speaking 4 Planet, extend beyond the confines of the local region. She proudly represented the Centre at Nature Conservation Council events, Eureka activities and various environmental conferences and gatherings.

Jenni’s retirement from her multi-faceted roles at the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre was carried out with the thought and care she has shown towards the organisation throughout her involvement. She first handed over the chairperson’s role in Sept 2017, which she had held for 9 years - since 2008. Then stepped down as executive officer – a position she had held for 15 years. This year, Jenni announced her decision to resign from her role as Treasurer and to retire from the board completely. It is quite fitting that Jenni’s long and dedicated service finished with Sutherland Shire Environment Centre treasurer as the stable financial future that the Centre has today can be largely attributed to the strategies and investments that she oversaw with assistance from Graeme, John Nelson and past and present Board members.

Over these many years, Jenni has truly been an asset to the Centre.... a rare gem who on many occasions put her beliefs and efforts ahead of herself. She has worked tirelessly in playing various roles seeking to deliver and extend upon Bobs’ dream. And it is now, as she steps back from her role on the Board that we thank her for her commitment, her belief in the organisation

and the support and the friendship that she has brought to all who have been involved the Centre.

Thank you, Jenni



We campaign for the environment • We advocate for sustainability

## Achieving our Purpose in 2019-20

### ActiveNature Conference

Phil Smith



In October 2019, Sutherland Shire Environment Centre partnered with the NSW Chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEENSW) to host a conference at Kirrawee High School; *ActiveNature: Learning, Citizenship and Activism for Sustainability*.

A number of Environment Centre members worked incredibly hard to help make the event a success. Special thanks go to Jenni Gormley, Sophie French, Judy Walker, Colin Ryan, Catherine Reynolds, Tassia Kolesniknow and her family.

With global climate strikes by students and protest actions occurring around the world during 2019, the conference struck a timely and urgent chord. The conference framing paper was prepared with the intention of giving the event a strong focus on activism. Members and supporters of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and AAEENSW understand that education and active citizenship will be vital tools to address the sustainability crises humanity faces.

Over three days, almost 200 educators from a broad range of sectors and locations came together to take a deep dive into the topics of learning, citizenship and activism for sustainability. It was a reinvigorating and energising time where participants shared ideas, swapped stories and resources, acknowledged others and were acknowledged themselves, discovered wisdoms, and left united in a common pursuit of a vibrant and sustainable future.





Highlights - hard to single out from an exceptional pool of speakers - included 8-year old Ruby the Climate Change Kid, student activist Nosrat Fareha, and of course the ever encouraging and inspiring Costa Georgiadis. Marty Branagan spoke on peace activism, Harry Burkitt told us about the Warragamba Dam campaign, and Peta White gave the **Allen Strom Memorial Lecture** on the role of environmental education research in our education and activism work.

We also put our message into practice. Sustainability measures at the conference included -

- Minimal use of paper, with the program on the conference website
- A water bottle refill station
- Recycling and compost bins for all waste, plus a Return and Earn collection
- Plastic-free packaging for field trip lunch and snacks
- The **Bundeena Mug Library** and the **Library of Things Sutherland Shire**, generously allowed us to use their mug and cup library, and washable dishes for all catering. The coffee cart on site only used reusable mugs.
- Public transport encouraged, and a delegate carpool system was facilitated.
- A pond was installed on site for a workshop demonstration, and was donated to the venue.

Both the [conference framing paper](#) and [conference presentations](#) are available on the AAEENSW website:

- <http://www.nswconference.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Activism-Framing-Paper-for-2019-conference-FINAL.pdf>
- <http://www.nswconference.org.au/program/>

## Bob Walshe Writing for the Environment Award 2020

Our Writing for the Environment Award has gone from strength to strength this year. The inaugural competition which was started in 2019 to honour our patron, Bob Walshe, this year attracted over 80 entries.

There were two age categories, under 18, and 18-25. Submissions on the topic, **“I am Earth”**, ranged from pleas for help from Mother Nature and sci-fi stories of a future Earth, to stories of hope about helping to make the planet healthy again.

Finding the winning pieces from such quality is a tough task. The process was thorough – and took some time!



**Our winner in the 18-25 age category is Olivia Rushin for *Germinate*.**

Dakota Brown is the runner-up, with *Lungs on Fire*. Highly commended, *A Safe Bet*, by Thompson Brinkworth.

**Our winner in the Under 18 age category is Katrina Hayler for her story, *I am*.**

The runner-up is Laura Wrigley-Carr for *The General*. Highly commended to Jessica Cash for her piece, *The End*.

Another award is being given this year. The Sutherland Shire Writers Group has now also offered a prize of \$100 for a junior writer. The prize will be called the Pat Strong Award. Pat Strong was a foundation member of the Sutherland Shire Writers Group – the group Bob Walshe set up 50 years ago. She is still writing, and she helped judge this year’s submissions (for the under 18 category).

For 2020, the Pat Strong Award goes to a student from Sydney, Charlee Rose Murtough-Coombes, for her story, *Tired, Tired Earth*. Pat was impressed that such a young writer (13) could capture the situation on Earth with such power and emotion.

One of our judges, Pam Cook, is a published author. She said this:

All entries were of a very high standard and I thoroughly enjoyed reading them. I truly hope these writers continue developing their talents and I do think the Earth is in good hands if the sentiments expressed in these pieces are indicative of the attitudes of our young in relation to caring for the Earth. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to read these fabulous pieces of writing.

We're so grateful to all the judges for the time and energy they gave:

Pat Strong, Helen Hawkins, Marcus Addison and Vince Diamond – all from the Sutherland Shire Writers Group. Alex Talbot – winner of the 2019 RD Walshe Writing for the Environment Award. Elisha Kennedy, Pam Cook, Laura Kirk, Syd Smith, Rowan Cahill, Pat Kennedy, Tassia Kolesnikow, Barbara Koppe, Geoff Sykes, Jim Heather, Dave Scott (Canada), Barbara MacGregor, Peter Spence (Qld), David Butler (SA). Thank you to you all.

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre member Barbara Koppe was so taken with the quality of the writing that she and her husband, Wally, have very generously offered a \$500 prize for a third category in 2021: seniors.



## Speaking 4 the Planet

Phil Smith

Despite the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had across Australia, and globally, the Speaking 4 the Planet program has had some remarkable success – culminating in Phil Smith’s recent nomination for the Earth Prize International 2020.



### New South Wales

As a result of the pandemic, the eight or so planned S4P events in NSW were condensed into one online competition. The theme was, *All Choices have Implications*. Students from around 400 schools were invited to submit their entries under seven categories, and approximately 60 entries across all the categories were received:

- speaking,
- drama,
- art,
- writing,
- video,
- meme,
- and TikTok.



Winning submissions will be added to the Speaking 4 the Planet website, but here’s a look at the winning pieces of art – this year there were joint winners! Sutherland Shire Environment Centre member Liz Donley’s help with the judging was much appreciated.

**Jasmine Wu’s** acrylic painting portrays the divergence of two contrasting roads which our whole human race must now choose between. The ominous path on the left symbolises the destructive impact of bad decisions while the bright path leads to a better, more certain future for the planet despite the roots that may stump us early on.



**Vibasri Balagi’s** portrait shows the life of Mother Earth. Beginning with a peaceful smile in an undistributed oasis into an anxious retorting state, the landscape shows the continuous movement of people developing their world through infrastructure and technology but what we do not realise is we are unintentionally making tough decisions that have the most impact on nature, dragging us into the past.



## Interstate

In 2020, S4P is being piloted with a group of five local councils in the east of Melbourne. This inaugural Victorian event is happening toward the end of the year. It is being conducted in partnership with the Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning and Environmental Education Victoria. The theme is ***I am Water***. Here is a link to the page created for the event: <http://easl.com.au/activities/speaking-4-the-planet>

## University

Working with colleagues at Deakin University in Victoria, Phil piloted a university version this year. Speaking UP 4 the Planet was a national online event for teacher education students. Participants were invited to create a three-minute speech starting with the tag line, "I will be a climate change education leader in my community..." Zoom events in universities around Australia led up to a national competition on Friday 14 August. Sarwat Surovi, a teacher education student at Western Sydney University, was the NSW entrant. Thanks to Sutherland Shire Environment Centre members Greg and Judy Walker for assisting with the judging. Their brilliant comments and suggestions helped Sarwat prepare for the national event. The winning speaker was Toby Winters from QUT. His talk was well-framed, coherent, and powerfully presented.



## International

In November, 2019, S4P was held in Thailand - a significant part of a Youth Camp that preceded the 2019 World Environmental Education Congress in Bangkok. The speech made by a Thai student at the opening ceremony is online: <https://weec2019.org/globe-youth-camp/> The Thai camp was so successful that the idea is being taken up for the 2021 WEEC in Prague.

A S4P event was held again this year in Christchurch, New Zealand. Negotiations are underway with an educational organisation in Hanoi to hold a S4P competition there.

Later in 2020 an international, online competition is being piloted for high school students and teacher education students. The theme is ***Bridging the needs of People and Planet: If we don't get the human stuff right, we can't get the environmental stuff right*** - a topic deliberately linked to the theme of the 2021 World Environmental Education Congress, Building Bridges. Winners of the 2020 S4P competition are invited to participate in the international event.

## Kids 4 the Planet

No Kids 4 the Planet event (face-to-face or online) was held. Lakemba Public School is keen to host one next year!

## Nature and Learning

Phil Smith

Nature and Learning program sessions are run in conjunction with Katie Denoon, Canopy Officer at Sutherland Shire Council for P&Cs at Preschools across the Sutherland Shire.

The sessions provide information on the benefits of being in nature. Parents enjoy them very much and welcome the suggestions of visiting the Royal National Park and taking their children into nature. Katie Denoon provides updates about what Sutherland Council is doing; and this includes providing advice on trees indigenous to specific areas of the Shire.

Planning for a session with the P&C at Bundeena Public School was underway when Covid-19 intervened. No sessions have been run this year, but Katie Denoon and Phill are keen to get back into them asap!

If you'd like to read Phil's first contribution to The New Bush Telegraph, newspaper and online journal, which speaks to our intimate relationship with trees, and how we need to value that relationship, please see – <http://newbushtelegraph.org.au/?p=727>



For more information about the Speaking 4 the Planet, Nature and Learning programs see the Environmental Education page on the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre website - <https://ssec.org.au/our-campaigns/environmental-education/>

And the Speaking 4 the Planet website - <http://speaking4theplanet.org.au/>



Image courtesy Dr Ian Wright

## POWA - Protect Our Water Alliance and the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre Woronora Reservoir campaign

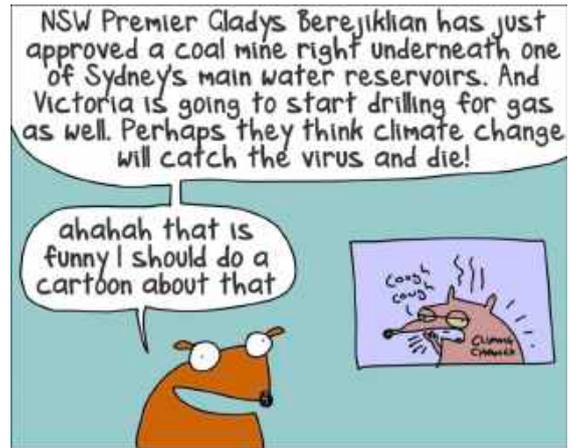
Greg Walker and  
Catherine Reynolds

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has been a member of the Protect our Water Alliance (POWA) since July 2019. The Alliance includes many organisations, with the steering committee comprised of a dedicated and talented group based in the Illawarra. Fortnightly meetings are held on Saturday mornings. The COVID crisis led to adoption of online meetings (Zoom subsequently transitioned to Jitsi and is now a hybrid F2F plus Jitsi access model).

The POWA steering group has been very active in the past year. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has supported POWA endeavours by continuing a strong campaign that mainstreamed the issue of mining in the Woronora Special Area catchment. The response across Sutherland Shire has been shock and horror that mining directly under the Reservoir is taking place. The Woronora campaign, with the petition to protect our water which was finally debated in the NSW State parliament in June 2020, has in turn drawn public attention to the issue of mining in the wider Illawarra catchment.

By late 2019, 25 environmental conservation organisations and local community groups signed [a statement](#) drafted by Sutherland Shire Environment Centre calling for the permits allowing the mining at Woronora to be rescinded. Four Councils have now condemned what is taking place, including Sutherland Shire Council, and the City of Sydney Council thanks to the intervention of Dr Kerryn Phelps.

The issue has been reported widely, in an *Al Jazeera* video segment, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Renew Economy*, *The Guardian*, *Independent Australia*, *ABC Radio Breakfast*, *2SSER* and *ABC Illawarra Radio* interviews, twice in *NineNews* online, a number of times in *The Leader*, and even *First Dog on the Moon*. Over the last year Sutherland Shire residents and Environment Centre members have sent multiple letters to *The Leader* and these continue to be published, months after the debate.



Following the debate Greenpeace sent out an email outlining the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre campaign, with a new online petition calling for a halt to the mining under Woronora. This petition in turn gained well over 10,000 signatures <https://act.greenpeace.org.au/nswmining>

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has received considerable support from POWA, and advice with the Woronora campaign. Both organisations were equally disappointed with the result of the debate in State Parliament. The Environment Centre put in a huge amount of work into this campaign – as did the community as a whole. Each week dozens and dozens of signed petitions were sent in the mail from people who had prompted their friends and family to sign. It is also due to the hard work and support of our members that the issue of mining under our water catchment received the attention it did. Special mention goes to Beth Buchanan, Peter Donley, Charlie Attard, Greg and Judy Walker, Catherine Reynolds, Moya Turner, and Susanna Foran, all of whom put considerable amounts of time and energy into letting people know about the issue and encouraging them to sign the petition.

Community opposition to the mining made the lack of support on the part of our local State parliamentary representatives even more reprehensible. Lee Evans MP for Heathcote spoke in favour of the mining continuing, over the interests of residents. Mark Speakman the New South Wales Attorney General and member for Cronulla, and Eleni Petinos (member for Miranda) did not even have the courtesy to stay in the Chamber for the debate.

Labor's defence of the mining was particularly disappointing, especially given the opposition of local Labor members. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre met with Labor MPs, and gave extensive information to Labor in the lead up to the debate which was ignored. It seems political pragmatism triumphed. Both Labor speakers in the debate are based in electorates where their vote is dependent on coal: shadow Water Minister Clayton Barr has noted '20% of

#### MYSTIFIED BY APPROVAL

I'm mystified as to why the state government has given approval for coal mining beneath Woronora Dam. A debate has not gone ahead in state parliament to give voice to the concerns of tens of thousands of local & statewide residents. To allow longwall mining of coal underneath the main water catchment area and reservoir that supplies our whole Southern region is sheer madness. This decision shows an irresponsible attitude towards the inherent dangers and problems down the track which have already manifested through earlier & existing mining in the area.. Our water resource is a precious commodity which should not be risked for the sake of the short term benefit of extracting coal.

Let us remember the recent bush fires & ongoing drought, as a reminder to put our natural environment ahead of unwarranted gains by mega fossil fuel companies. **Susanna Foran, Grays Point**

his electorate earns its income from coal'.<sup>2</sup> Paul Scully, Labor member for Wollongong, claimed 3,500 jobs were at stake – a misleading reference to Bluescope in Wollongong. Approximately 300 people were employed by Peabody at the Metropolitan Mine – in May 2020 it was reported 150 workers were to be retrenched.<sup>3</sup> It remains unclear how many are currently employed there. Another speaker, Upper Hunter Nationals MP Michael Johnsen, has two Peabody mines in his electorate. Unsurprisingly he was in favour of the mining continuing. Greens MP Tamara Smith was blocked from speaking to oppose the mining under our catchment by both major parties.

Both Labor and the LNP have now blocked the possibility of any Senate inquiry. Meanwhile the 'Woronora Reservoir Impact Strategy Panel' 'engaged' by Peabody, the Department of Planning, and two members of the Independent Expert Panel looking into mining in the catchment have rejected WaterNSW's request for a more detailed 'water balance' study which might supply further evidence of water loss from mining induced subsidence. State Liberal MPs continue to advise constituents that Peabody's 'Woronora Reservoir Impact Strategy Panel' is 'independent'.

In February 2020, in a move signalling utter contempt for community concerns, the company felt confident enough to apply for yet another exploration licence, a new, additional permit to explore for coal across a further 2042 hectares of the Woronora 'Special Area' catchment under and around the left arm of the reservoir, and the upper Woronora River.

For a more detailed account of the issue, links to the many articles about the mining at Woronora, and a fuller response to the debate see: <https://ssec.org.au/our-campaigns/stop-woronora-mining-petition/>

During the last year both POWA and Sutherland Shire Environment Centre have made a number of submissions to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment opposing the mining in the Special Area catchments. These include -

- a Sutherland Shire Environment Centre submission opposing Peabody's Excavation Plans for Metropolitan Coal Longwalls 305-307 at Woronora. We subsequently met with the Department of Planning's Executive Director of Resource Assessments, Mike Young, and Ben Langford from

<sup>2</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, "Labor turns up the heat on union over coal" February 22, 2019 <https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/labor-turns-up-the-heat-on-union-over-coal-20190222-p50zpk.html>

<sup>3</sup> Illawarra Mercury, "Some Helensburgh miners will be forced out of a job, says union" May 28, 2020 <https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/6772598/some-helensburgh-miners-will-be-forced-out-of-a-job-says-union/>

## Mining under Woronora Dam

Water, housing and food, three essentials for mankind. How can our government even consider the security to its provision of water to the Shire? Some may say "use the desalination plant" however the cost of desalinated water is four times the cost of dam water. The government has spoken about increasing the number of dams but why jeopardise the existing Woronora dam. No other country in the world would contemplate mining under dams. Our elected taxpayer-funded representatives, Mark Speakman and Eleni Petinos were absent from parliament when mining under the dam was recently debated. A very crucial debate over a very relevant issue that impacts on shire residents. Peabody mining (a multinational company) does not care about our need for water. What studies have been done and by whom that have allowed the approval of further mining to go ahead. Water is a critical resource and loss due to seepage and contamination is a threat to our water security.

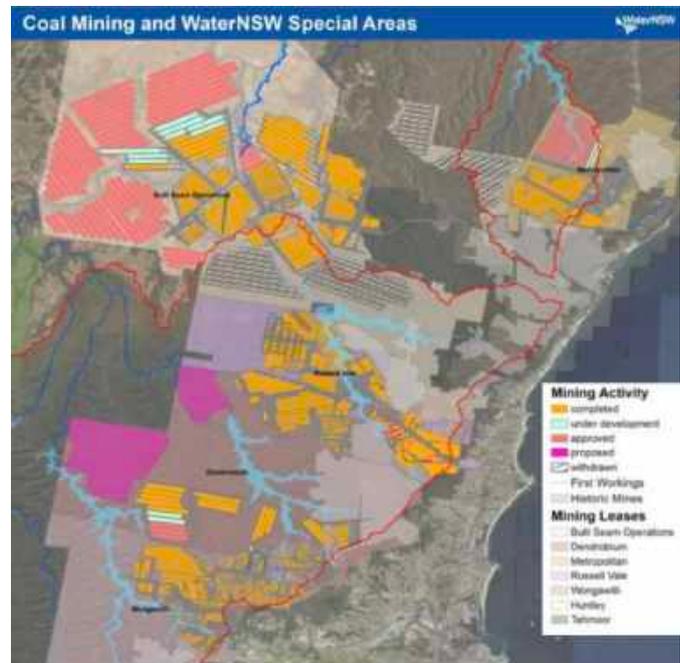
Vicki Cattell, Cronulla

the Planning Minister's office, to discuss the matter. Our submission and petition may have had some influence over a further reduction in the width of the longwalls subsequently approved.

- submissions opposing Wollongong Coal's Russell Vale Colliery Expansion Project.
- a submission opposing Illawarra Coal's Proposed Mine Extension for Dendrobium.

The proposed Russell Vale Expansion and the Dendrobium Mine Extension Project remain POWA's major concern. The Russell Vale mine, if approved, will run underneath two previous mines. The longwall dimensions at Dendrobium are far more aggressive than those at Woronora. POWA has closely monitored the Dendrobium proposal throughout the year, with follow-up letters and submissions to the Planning minister.

POWA has a strong presence on social media, and POWA activities are being reported on local Illawarra media (Illawarra Mercury, ABC Illawarra, and WIN TV). POWA continues to develop media strategies, producing brochures and videos for campaigns, lobbying local Illawarra MPs, speaking and forums and rallies and demonstrations. The Illawarra Knitting Nanas group work closely with POWA.



Other POWA activities during the last year include a demonstration outside Wollongong Coal's annual general meeting, picketing outside South32's offices, supporting the Climate Strike in Wollongong, and a catchment tour with Peter Turner, the National Parks Association mining spokesman. The POWA Walk on World Water Day in March was successful, as was a petition presentation at the Illawarra Climate Justice Alliance rally, the Illawarra Climate Coalition / POWA film presentation, presentations to local High School students, speaking on digital Climate Strike, and watching brief on mining and steel making activities in our catchments.

With support provided by Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, POWA has letterboxed households with flyers.

A POWA working group has also been established to research arguments to counter claims that steel making is dependent on coal from Illawarra mines.

For more information about POWA see

- <https://www.protectourwateralliance.org>
- <https://www.facebook.com/protectourwateralliance/>



## Sutherland Climate Action Network (SCAN)

Judy Walker  
Tassia Kolesnikow

The profile of Sutherland Climate Action Network and the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has continued to rise.

This has been largely due to the Woronora Dam Campaign. Members of SCAN collected signatures at markets, fetes and fairs in the Shire - at Sutherland markets, Gymea, Bundeena, Engadine, Miranda, Yarrowarra, the Menai Bushcare fair, the Festival of Wood in Bulli, various Shire and Northern Illawarra businesses, and at the Gymea Tradies Club. SCAN members also attended a protest at Martin Place organised by the Illawarra Knitting Nanas that specifically focused on the issue of mining under the catchment. Special thanks to members of the community and members of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre who obtained signatures from friends and organisations they are involved with. The target of 10 thousand signatures was surpassed. Under State legislation this meant the Petition had to be presented in NSW State Parliament.



Beth Buchanan at Bundeena markets



Gymea Village Fair

In addition to collecting signatures on the petition SCAN members helped in negotiations with the Nature Conservation Council and a number of NSW State parliamentarians. The Covid-19 crisis meant that no members of the public could attend the debate. Both major parties did not support the Petition when it was debated in NSW Parliament. However, the action taken about the mining under the Woronora Dam and the quality and quantity of water in the Dam, has brought public attention to the problems involved in our Sydney water supply. (See also the POWA - Protect Our Water Alliance Report.)

Over the past year, SCAN members attended the Annual General Meetings for Whitehaven Coal, Soul Pattinson, Cardno and Marsh Insurance brokers to ask pointed questions about their commitments (or lack thereof) for action on climate change. This prompted productive dialogue with the Cardno Board, followed by a public statement that their civil engineering company would rule out engaging in any work for the Adani coal mine:

<https://www.afr.com/companies/mining/cardno-to-cut-ties-with-adani-20191010-p52zh2>

For additional information on the AGM action, and the testy response of Soul Pattinson Chairman see: <https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/soul-patts-meeting-shut-down-over-coal-20191206-p53hod>

For questions posed to Marsh regarding their contract as insurance broker for Adani – prior to the March 2020 AGM see: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=709448779800838>

Prior to the pandemic, SCAN members attended several rallies including two in front of the offices for Lloyds and AIG Insurance brokers asking them to rule out assisting Adani, and an event at WestPac headquarters to demand WestPac improve their climate change policies. SCAN members also participated in the School Strike 4 for Climate rallies. One of our members has continued to provide support to Strike 4 for Climate throughout the COVID19 crisis.



Tassia and Sue McKinnon

SCAN members have also made a number of written submissions to the State and Federal government. These are available on the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre website and include submissions to -

- [the Federal Government Inquiry into Australia's Activating Greater Trade and Investment with Pacific Island Countries](#)
- [the Review of the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation \(EPBC\) Act.](#)
- [the Independent Planning Committee's \(IPC's\) Inquiry into the Narrabri Project \(Coal Seam Gas in the Pilliga\)](#)

Through the year SCAN members have written regularly to The Leader about climate change issues and have had several letters published.

SCAN has continued to be involved with the Climate and Energy Working Group (CEWG) of the NSW Nature Conservation Council (NCC). This means SCAN learns about the actions of similar groups in NSW. This involvement leads to a sharing of resources and information.

The critical role that trees have for counteracting climate change prompted SCAN to examine the loss of mature trees in the Shire. Specifically, SCAN has examined Councillors self-appointed power to remove healthy, mature canopy trees, often against the advice of their own council arborists.

### Who do our politicians work for?

There is "overwhelming private sector interest" in Renewable Energy Zones and renewable energy generation. Add to that the fact the majority of Australians support more government action on climate change. So you'd think our State Government would dump the idea of extending a tax-payer subsidised environmentally unfriendly, gas industry (including proposed new transmission pipelines) and back the cheapest, cleanest, sustainable employment option of renewables. Nope - not happening. The NSW Government has recently endorsed Santos' Narrabri Gas Project which if approved by the Independent Planning Commission, will keep NSW in the dark ages of expensive, dirty fossil energy production. You've got to ask yourselves, who do our 'pollies' work for?

**Megan Benson, Bundeena**

Two letters have been written to the CEO of Sutherland Shire Council inquiring for clarification on Council's removal of trees which appears to clash with the objectives of Council's Urban Tree and Bushland Policy. As yet there has been no reply or acknowledgement of SCAN's letter.

There has, nevertheless, been progress in Sutherland Council's recognition of the Climate Crisis. In March 2020 Sutherland Shire Council unanimously passed a resolution to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and to examine the ways to transition to 100% renewable energy. SCAN members are greatly encouraged by this commitment and have requested to participate as community representatives when a committee is formed. SCAN members have also attended two meetings of the newly formed Transition Sutherland group. We hope that there will soon be progress in actions by Sutherland Shire Council and cooperation between Council and SCAN.

## Active Transport

Tassia Kolesnikow

The social distancing imposed by the COVID19 pandemic has led to an enormous increase in the purchase and use of bicycles in the Shire. The completion of the Woollooware cycleway and the near completion of Stage 1 of the Sutherland to Kirrawee section of the SCATL (Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport Link) are timely for the surge in cycling and walking.

Despite over a decade of lobbying, the timeline and funding for completion of this critical infrastructure remains unclear. Continued oversight has been necessary to ensure that promises for preferred routing within the rail corridor are kept. We continue to network effectively with members of the North and Central Miranda Precinct Residents Association to monitor and counter any development applications that interfere with building SCATL along the preferred route. Multiple letters have been written to the local State MP for Cronulla, Mark Speakman, to thank him for the new paths that have been built, and requesting SCATL be fast-tracked as it is a shovel-ready project that would stimulate the economy and provide transport options to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

To date there have been no announcements about funding infrastructure for bike lanes or routes by either the State or Federal governments. Letters have also been sent to the local member for Miranda, Eleni Petinos, MP, and to Premier Berejiklian. No replies have yet been received.

## SO Shire and Plastic Free Sutherland Shire

Sarah-Jo Lobwein

It's been another huge year, very busy - throughout the year SO Shire has worked to promote sustainable and plastic-free Solutions across the Sutherland Shire, celebrating the contribution of local plastic free heroes, people and organisations doing what they can to turn the tide on plastic pollution. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a resurgence in single use plastics and SO Shire has been at the forefront of encouraging sustainable local business during this time, promoting the use of compostable takeaway packaging, reusable carry bags and long lasting "keep" cups.

Sarah-Jo Lobwein's work has not gone unnoticed either – we are so pleased about her recent nomination Westfield Local Hero Award 2020, and that she is now a finalist!

One of SO Shire's recent initiatives is Plastic free certifications that recognise businesses choosing sustainable solutions, and avoiding single use plastic packaging. Certifications have been awarded to a number of businesses, including Sustainability Award winners The Point Preschool and Bella Cibo. We are grateful to Sutherland Shire Environment Centre member and graphic designer, Sophie French, who has contributed her talent, skills and time designing the certification, and other SO Shire material, including a workbook and poster.



SO Shire is also very pleased to now be working with Tradies Gymea, facilitating the plastic-free and sustainability certification of the business as a whole, with separate certifications for their separate venues. Tradies is donating all profits from their community beer on tap during winter to SO Shire.

## Plastic free July



PlasticFreeJuly 2020 was packed with SO Shire activities. A competition was held with Bourke Street Bakery, Kirrawee and Green Caffein. The prize of a month's free take away coffee awarded to Leia Berryman.

Social media communications have been valuable during the pandemic - a Plastic Free July film project featuring sustainable local businesses was shown in short excerpts on social media. This footage will be used as part of a longer film in the future. SO Shire made videos of tips and tricks (including #contactlesspour for Covid-safe coffee pouring at CaféY). Other participants included War on Waste Sutherland Shire, The Point Preschool, Bella Cibo, Green Caffein, Bourke Street bakery Kirrawee, Table to Earth, Cubbyhouse Menai, Dennis Dal Santo from Tangaroa Blue Volunteers, Clare Cao from AUSMAP, Leesa Pratt for ORRCA. The project is ongoing, and will later feature Boomerang Bags, Wildlife Rescue, Honua, and Cheeky wipes, among others.

Another SO Shire social media competition featuring reusable / handmade and plastic free products offered by local businesses, featured Our nourish Nest Bundeena, Honua, Bambu toilet paper, War on Waste Sutherland Shire, Pineapple Republic, Cheeky Wipes, Hello Snowglobe and A Green Abode.

PlasticFreeJuly also saw the launch of a live roaming podcast series in local cafes on Friday mornings - Shirepod's Bean There? SO Shire featured in episodes at the Woronora Boat shed, Café Y, and The Pavement: <https://shirepodbonusepisodes.podbean.com>  
A separate six part SO Shire Sustainability podcast series is coming soon.

## Submissions

SO Shire has continued its important role as advocate for environmental sustainability making submissions on critical issues. Two of these include the Cleaning Up Our Act: Redirecting the future of Plastic in NSW in May 2020, and Sutherland Shire Council's Bate Bay Coastal Management program.

## Grants

SO Shire has received a Communities Environment Program Federal grant of \$3,300 for a pilot Sustainable Schools program, commencing in term 4, 2020.

## Ongoing SO Shire advice to Business, Education, Beach Clean ups and Community Outreach

Sutherland Shire beaches continue to be subjected to pollution from plastic and other debris, either washed up on the sand or left by thoughtless visitors. Volunteers continue to contribute hours of their own time to address this. SO Shire has organised and participated in a number of beach cleans, including Kurnell historic Drive clean ups, Tangaroa blue Volunteer cotton tip clean ups, other cotton tip audit clean ups at Boat Harbour Bay in September and December 2019 – these were sponsored by the Clean Ocean Foundation, and incorporated a survey of ocean outfalls. May 2020 saw a three day clean up after a container ship lost its cargo in rough seas. The Leader reported on the cargo spill and the clean up:

<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6778471/shipping-containers-debris-litters-cronulla-beaches/>



In December, 2019 SO Shire co-hosted the fabulous Seaside Scavenge event. This involved a clean up of the park and beach which saw 160.9kg of litter removed, 87.4kg of recycling and 73.5kg of landfill thanks to the help of the 84 people who took part.

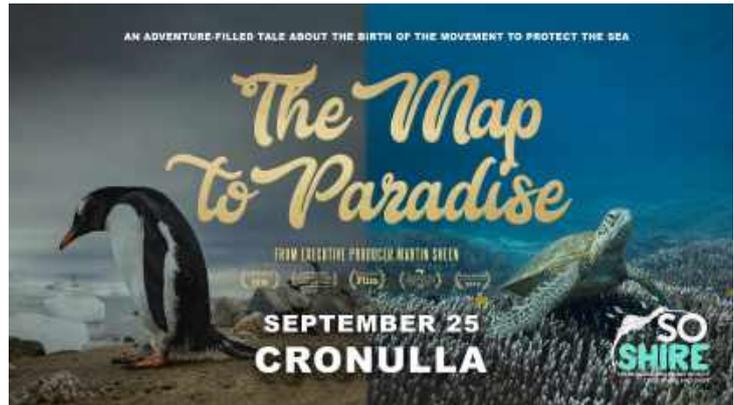
Sustainable community and social enterprise stalls at the Seaside Scavenge market saw 124.5kg of second-hand clothes, books, and toys redistributed. Boomerang Bags Sutherland Shire had a stall, as did War on Waste Sutherland Shire, and Sea Shepherd volunteers. There was a microplastics citizen science demonstration by AUSMAP.

A coffee mug library was available at surrounding cafes, donated by Library of Things Sutherland Shire. The Welcome to Country was given by Indigenous local Graham Avery. Talented local musicians performed live including Darian Lenton, Jordan Kenny, and Junkyard Beats using instruments made out of recycled trash items. The amplifier was powered by a pedal power bike – hugely popular.

For the younger children there were life-size wooden games such as a huge Connect Four thanks to Caringbah Craft Centre (Sylvanvale) and colouring activities provided by Plastic Free Sutherland Shire. The Leader reported the event prior:

<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6521417/trade-beach-trash-for-clothes-or-beer/>

Other SO Shire community education outreach stalls through the year were held at the GyMEA Village Festival in October 2019, at the Feel Good Fair at South Village Markets in November, and the ANSTO Family Christmas Day Fair in December 2019. So Shire had an information stall at the Map to Paradise screening, co-hosted by SO Shire at Cronulla cinema in September 2019.



More recently, as part of National Science Week in August 2020 SO Shire took part in an innovative live online Port Hacking Shiprock Reserve virtual dive with the Abyss Project, analysing microplastics that were found. The dive was live streamed to primary schools around Australia. The event was featured on different mainstream television news outlets - Grays Point Public School were filmed watching the dive, with kids from the school learning in real time, and logging what they found: <https://www.scienceweek.net.au/event/dive-with-marine-scientists-without-getting-wet-virtual-experience-with-the-abyss-project>

Throughout the last year SO Shire has participated in a number of virtual seminars have been run on plastic, pollution and waste. An important intervention was an online [live reading and analysis of the NSW Plastics Plan](#) with Boomerang Alliance. SO Shire presented to the University of the Third Age, and participated in the AAEE Conference.

### Future activities

Pandemic permitting, a number of activities are planned for the latter part of 2020, including Towra Point clean up in September, the IMB Cook Community classic, Seaside Scavenge at South Cronulla Park on 5 December, and the production of a video with Plastic Unwrapped UK. 'SUP' stands for 'single-use plastics' - during the new SUPtember campaign SO Shire will be working with Ocean Action Pod and Boomerang alliance on further virtual activities. The planned Small Business and Supplier Expo at Tradies GyMEA will unfortunately need to remain on hold until 2021.

For more SO Shire information see -

Web: <https://www.soshire.org>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/so\\_shire/](https://www.instagram.com/so_shire/)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SOSShire/>

Web: <https://www.soshire.org/plastic-free-sutherland-shire>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/plasticfree\\_sutherlandshire/](https://www.instagram.com/plasticfree_sutherlandshire/)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PlasticFreeSutherlandShire/>

## First National Park

Bob Crombie

### World Heritage Listing for the Royal Reserves

Australia currently has 20 sites on the World Heritage list.<sup>4</sup> We wrote to the Honourable Matt Kean MP late last year with a renewed request that he and his Department reconsider World Heritage Listing for the Royal Reserves. This letter was the result of an initially positive response on the part of the Minister at the National Parks Association Annual dinner where Sutherland Shire Environment Centre Chair Tassia Kolesnikow asked him for support with our campaign.

In late May this year the Minister replied to our letter. It was not the response we hoped for. The Minister reiterated advice provided by previous reports given to his Department by consultants. It seems “the only potential pathway for the inclusion of Royal National Park and Reserves on the Australian World Heritage Tentative List might be as part of a serial nomination which could identify a collection of sites under a new theme – the evolution of protected areas and conservation philosophy.”

This is exactly the same stance as taken by previous ministers as a result of advice given to them by Robert Quirk of the NSW NPWS, and it appears that the Liberal government has locked itself into this position. Labor and the Greens have previously shown support for World Heritage listing for the Royal Reserves. It is likely we will need a change of government before we can make further progress.

An excerpt from the Matt Kean’s response:

“In March 2017, Minister Frydenberg wrote to the previous Minister for the Environment, the Hon Gabrielle Upton MP, advising that the consultant findings do not provide an encouraging foundation to continue the work, particularly given the resources required and with no guarantee of a successful nomination. The NSW Government, in partnership with the Australian Government, would need to be the lead on developing a new theme and a new serial listing proposal, and would also need the support of other State Parties with protected areas that fit into the theme.

The NSW Government would also need the support of other jurisdictions in Australia to place the Royal Reserves on Australia’s World Heritage Tentative List. This endorsement is generally carried out at the Meeting of Environment Ministers when deliberating on additions to Australia’s Tentative List.

As you note, the process to establish a new theme and pursue a serial nomination would be complex. At this stage, the NSW Government is not proposing to take further steps to progress this, given the significant resources that would be involved in pursuing it.”

As noted in last year’s Annual Report, the British industrial sites have been inscribed because they were representative of a genre of cultural heritage, *and the British thought that they were*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world-heritage-list>

*important enough to nominate.* Which sites are nominated for the World Heritage List depends upon who takes the initiative at the national level: the Convention recognises that countries possess different characteristics regarding their political, cultural and economic circumstances.

The World Heritage committee has an ongoing interest in cultural landscapes, sites significant to the development of protected areas, and one of the most important areas in the history of conservation - the development of national parks. At Royal National Park a whole new approach to recreation - a breakthrough - developed. Instead of public parks being man-made in grassy landscapes inside cities, we now had a new kind of park - a national park, which was much larger in area and essentially natural. It inspired the development of a widespread system of national parks devoted to nature conservation as well as a distinct type of recreation.

The First National Park Facebook group is going strong despite the obstruction to our campaign, it is a wonderful opportunity to post beautiful photos and engage people's interest in the parks <https://www.facebook.com/FirstNationalPark/>



The image above was included in one recent facebook post – it is of the Bee Cave, which is located on the western edge of the Moss Gardens, in the Royal National Park. It was described in the early 1900s, and named for the large hive of stingless bees it has contained for over one hundred years now. The hive has come and gone over the last 15 years being destroyed and rebuilt again and again. A beautiful rock formation called The Guardian stands outside cave.



Another recent post featured Puff the Magic Dragon - at the top of the hill on the Robertson's Roundabout Track at Audley. Lying curled in a hook shape, the track at the top of the hill goes over his tail. His head is on the side track about 30m away. You can see the scales on his back quite clearly.

For future updates about the First National Park campaign please also see our webpage: <https://ssec.org.au/our-campaigns/first-national-park/>

## Sutherland Shire Council Community / Verge Gardens Policy

At the end of 2019, Bob Crombie met with David Ackroyd, formerly of Sutherland Shire Council, and various current council officers to discuss a draft Verge Gardens Guidelines for Sutherland Shire. These guidelines were prepared by David Ackroyd, and were accepted and passed on to various Council departments for their input and approval. In May 2020, Bob Crombie wrote to the Mayor Carmelo Pesce inquiring as to the current status of the policy, but has not yet received a response. David Ackroyd sent a follow up email to other council staff in early August, noting that the Covid-19 crisis has meant many council staff members are still working from home and that Council priorities over the last few months have had to be directed toward other areas. We are hoping that this draft policy will progress further shortly.

## Cawley's Bridge conversion - Wildlife movement facilitation, and the *Koalas and resilient habitat in the Sutherland Shire* report

Our ongoing campaign proposal to repurpose Cawley's Road bridge over the F6 Freeway at Helensburgh to a multipurpose bridge servicing the needs of both the community and wildlife has progressed. A report on this matter was presented in July to Heathcote State MP Lee Evans. He has passed it on, with his support, for the consideration of the NSW Minister for Energy and Environment Matt Kean. The proposal was also presented directly to the appropriate section of the Wollongong Office of Transport NSW, Roads and Maritime Services section, where it is currently being considered. Initial feedback has been positive.

Other local groups have now also thrown their weight enthusiastically behind the proposal. Sutherland Shire Environment Centre in conjunction with National Parks Association Southern Sydney, Georges River Environmental Alliance, Sandy Point Residents Association, Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society, and Friends of the Royal National Park have collaborated, submitting a second report to Wollongong and Sutherland Shire Councils that draws on the main recommendations of the Cawley's Bridge proposal, and adds additional recommendations relating to koala / wildlife friendly crossings along Heathcote Road.



Koalas have been seen around the Sutherland Shire over the last year at Kirrawee, Sandy Point, Gymea, Engadine, and in the Royal National Park. The top right photo here was taken in Engadine by National Parks Association Southern Sydney branch President Brian Everingham. Credit for the second photo below it goes to the Facebook group [Gymea Bay Koala Spotting Society](#).

The impetus for the second report to Sutherland and Wollongong councils was not the koala sightings alone, but the release of the findings of the NSW Legislative Council's inquiry ***Koala populations and habitat in New South Wales***, which stated that without urgent government intervention koalas could become extinct in NSW by 2050. The inquiry



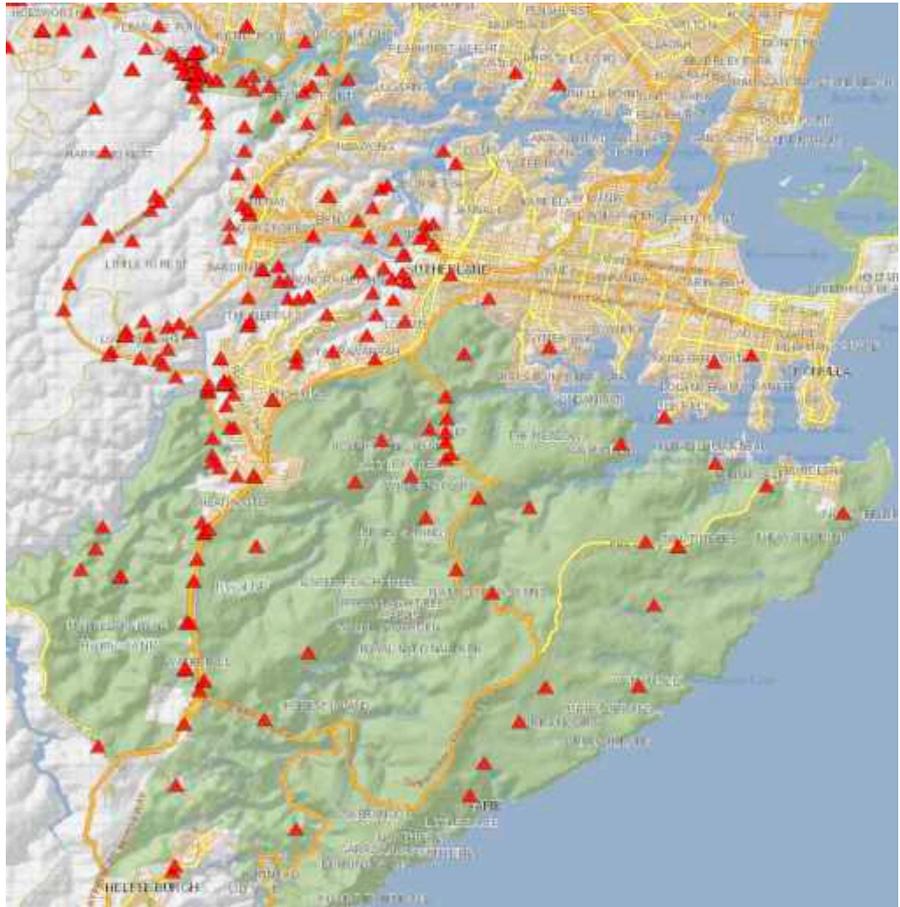
recommends the State government 'urgently prioritise the protection of koala habitat and corridors in the planning and implementation stages of urban growth areas', and notes councils can play a critical role in conserving koala habitat.

Recommendation 3 of the Report specifically states 'That the NSW Government fund and support local councils to conserve koala habitat, including by identifying pockets of urban bushland to include in the State's protected area network.'

Recommendation 27 of the NSW Legislative Council inquiry states 'That all councils with koala populations be required to develop comprehensive koala plans of management in a timely manner.'

Sutherland Shire Councillors Diedree Steinwall and Tom Croucher gave very positive initial support for the Report.

Sutherland Council has since advised they are 'supportive, in principal' of the modifications along Heathcote Road, but this would also require the support of the RMS. Council has advised they 'will raise matter these matters with the relevant state government departments when the opportunity arises.'



The image above is taken from the official NSW government BioNet report of koala sightings around the Sutherland Shire to 13 July, 2020: [www.bionet.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bionet.nsw.gov.au)

Wollongong Council has been slower to respond to the report, however Wollongong historian Michael Organ has added his voice to the issue: in an article in the Illawarra Mercury he states "the escarpment and adjacent conservation areas could be ideal protected areas for koalas".<sup>5</sup>

For an overview of the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre report see our webpage: <https://ssec.org.au/our-campaigns/koalas-and-resilient-habitat-in-the-sutherland-shire/>

<sup>5</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, "Recent sightings show Wollongong is 'home of the koala', historian says", 13 August, 2020 <https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/6877690/recent-sightings-show-wollongong-is-home-of-the-koala-historian-says/>

## Save Our Shire (SOS)

Neil de Nett

### New Planning Code

The new NSW planning code commenced in every council on July 1. The 'Low Rise Housing Diversity Code' (previously the Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code), allows multi-unit development and dual occupancies through private certifiers, without reference to council and with no opportunity for affected neighbours objections to be assessed. Approximately 60% of the Sutherland Shire would be impacted if the code is instituted in its current form.

Late in 2019 Council wrote to the State government noting the new code will have "a detrimental effect" on existing residents, including "loss of privacy, overcrowding, reduced numbers of large family home sites, a decline in family wellbeing and a decline in the quality of life and the environment".<sup>6</sup> Sutherland Shire Council has now successfully sought an exemption from the code for residents living in R2 low density residential zones.<sup>7</sup>

Overdevelopment remains an issue across Sydney. The Blue Mountains Council has been seeking an exemption since 2018. The Blue Mountains Local Planning Panel - the state government's own independent planning panel - supported an exemption from the code, stating that the code has the potential to undermine the World-Heritage listing and did not "adequately respond to the unique environmental conditions".

Maintaining the trees and greenery across the Shire, and limiting the intense urban consolidation that inflicts Sydney would provide a graduated approach from the city to the bush of the Royal National Park. The proliferation of high-rise buildings contribute to the loss of green space in the Shire, however, increasingly changes to the single dwelling areas, with smaller lots, decreased landscape area, have had a similar impact. Where there was one dwelling there can now be two or four. This increased density leads to an equivalent loss of tree canopy.

Do we want a Shire that follows the same pattern of development as has been imposed on other Sydney council areas? Or should we demand that planning controls be adopted that maintain our Green Shire? The exemption from this new planning code is a start, but it is increasingly becoming the case that residents have little or no power to challenge State government planning decisions.

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<sup>6</sup> The Leader "New housing code fast tracks development and packs in more people" 16 July, 2020 <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6835455/new-housing-code-starts/>

<sup>7</sup> The Leader "Shire gains major concession in new code governing dual occupancies, terraces and manor houses" 4 September, 2020 <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6909797/housing-code-win-for-shire/>

## Heathcote Hall

The approval of the Heathcote Hall development in December 2019 was another blow caused by State government planning decisions. The Hall was built in 1887 and is one of the oldest buildings in Southern Sydney. Hundreds of residents from the Save Heathcote East group fought a long, hard battle, only to have the State government's Sydney South Planning Panel approve a development application for 35 townhouses and 20 apartments on the site by a vote of 3-2. Barbara Koppe, a member of the Save Heathcote East group and Sutherland Shire Environment Centre also spoke against the proposal.

Two local councillors on the Sydney South Planning Panel voted against the DA, arguing it was "not in the public interest; does not conform with the character and desired future locality of the East Heathcote area; and does not demonstrate that the application would not have significant adverse effect on the amenity of the surrounding area". They also stated that "approval of the application would establish an undesirable precedent that would fundamentally change the character of the surrounding area, which is zoned E4 Environmental Living... In our opinion, the application does not minimise or mitigate (and in fact may increase) the well documented risks put forward when developing the zoning for this area."<sup>8</sup>

Restoration of the original building was purportedly a condition of the development approval however it still remains in a neglected and dilapidated state. Numerous established canopy trees will be cut down on the site. Sutherland Shire Council has refused to lodge an appeal claiming the likelihood of success would be very slim.



<sup>8</sup> The Leader "Updated: Residents 'shocked' but developer 'excited' by approval of Heathcote Hall development" December 16, 2019 <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6542092/shock-and-elation-over-heathcote-hall-decision/>

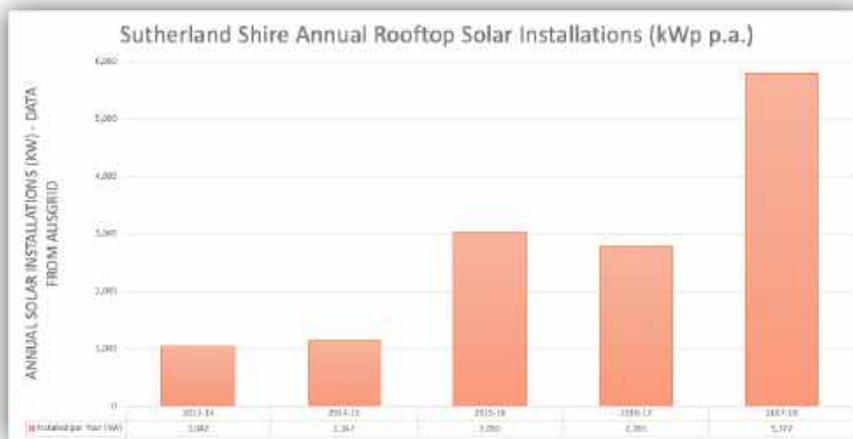
## Sunny Shire

Jonathan Prendergast

### Solar Bulk Buy

The solar bulk buy continues, with 10-20 enquiries per month. There has been a solar boom in the last 2 years in NSW, and across Australia. In the Sutherland Shire in the 2016/17 financial year, 2,785 kW of solar was installed. We estimate that Sunny Shire facilitated installations were one third to one half of this figure.

By the 2018/19 financial year, 10,553 kW were installed, based on Ausgrid data. This is an extraordinary increase – an almost 4-fold increase in annual solar installations.



For information about the Solar Bulk Buy see <http://sunnyshire.org.au/bulk-buy-3-prices-and-faq/>

We see a major benefit of Sunny Shire Solar Bulk Buy has been stimulating interest in solar in 2016 when it launched, and building trust with local competent solar companies. The second benefit has been the shire adoption of high quality solar using local solar companies, educating consumers as to why the cheapest quote can come at the risk of poor installation and no after sales support. Many people speak directly to the Sunny Shire trusted local solar companies directly now, rather than going via Sunny Shire.

Promotion of the bulk buy throughout the year has, nonetheless, been ongoing, especially on social media, very successfully, with both the [Sunny Shire Facebook page](#), and the associated [Sutherland Shire Solar Facebook Group](#) continuing to actively engage with and respond to people who already have solar and have questions, as well as people who do not have solar but are interested in installing it. The most positive feature of these interactive groups is that they have become a forum where people can find reliable information from people they trust, and learn from the experience of other members of the community who already have solar.

In October 2019 Jonathan Prendergast, Jay Banyer and Sean Thomas also attended the Gynea Village Fair at the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre stall. It was an excellent opportunity to talk to the local community face to face about solar, batteries and EVs.

## Home Batteries

Sunny Shire Bulk Buy continue to assess a battery bulk buy. There are many different offers via various Virtual Power Plants (VPP). It is currently very disaggregated, meaning if a household chooses one battery type, it may exclude itself from many other offers. This makes any particular recommendation very challenging. Hopefully this will consolidate, or a more open architecture will arise in the near future.

## Bundeena Battery and EV event



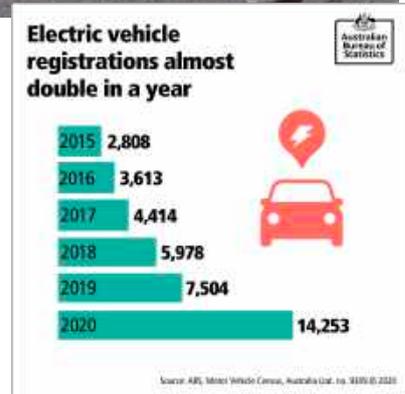
In February, Jay and Jonathan gave a presentation to the Bundeena community at a battery and VPP event organised by Vera Auerbach for the Bundeena Maianbar Solar Energy facebook group. The event was preceded by interested community members inspecting Jonathan's and Jay's new Tesla Model 3 electric cars for an hour, and chatting to them about the practicalities and benefits of EV ownership. Both events drew considerable interest from the community and were well attended, despite inclement weather. The key message was that solar is very financially attractive, but the case for batteries is still emerging.





## Solar For Schools

Sunny Shire continues to advocate and support installation of solar on schools. The NSW Department of Education has a program where they do the feasibility, run the tender, manage the installation contract and provide 50% of the funding. This can see a 2-3 year payback for schools and ongoing savings of ~\$20,000 per annum. A 100kW system can be purchased by schools for \$50,000 can save \$20,000 per year - money that can be spent on education rather than electricity bills. After the Port Hacking High School P&C Association consulted with Sunny Shire the School has recently installed 100kW of solar! It was great to meet the P&C and now to also see the result of their hard work. They now join other Shire schools like Menai and Caringbah High in having high capacity rooftop solar.



## Wattwatchers

Wattwatchers is a supplier of energy monitoring equipment and software. Their mission is to make household and business energy usage data cheaper to get and more available. They have received a \$3.5 million ARENA grant to deploy their monitoring devices and build an energy app ecosystem. In the future, households may be able to choose from various different offers from retailers and VPPs to provide their data and give control of various appliances, like hot water, battery storage and EV charging.

Wattwatchers is partnering with community organisations to assist in deploying this technology and program. Sunny Shire co-founder Jonathan Prendergast has had a device installed on his house, to assess the benefits of the program prior to promoting more widely.

## Eco-savvy Business and the Sustainability Award Lyn McLean

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre is proud to support and encourage businesses that have strategies in place to reduce their impact on the environment. Through sponsoring the 'Sustainability Award' in the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards we recognise the efforts of locals who ensure their businesses operate in ways that, at best, benefit the environment and, at least, do minimal harm to it.



We have had some exemplary entries again this year.

The Awards presentation evening will be on 28 September and we look forward to announcing the winners and finalists!

**SUTHERLAND SHIRE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE  
INCORPORATED  
A.B.N. 96 127 431 611**

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020**

2019 \$	Note	2020 \$
	<b>INCOME</b>	
	<b>OTHER INCOME</b>	
654	Subscriptions	933
90	Donations	23,904
-	Grants	3,000
8	Interest Received	203
48	Fund Raising Events & Other Income	50
70,405	Gross Profit From Rental Operations	72,591
-	ATO Cash Stimulus (COVID)	10,000
<u>71,207</u>	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>110,681</u>
	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
174	Bank Charges	151
28,396	Consultants Fees	1,009
-	Conference	133
3,638	Depreciation	3,580
-	Donations	-
	<b>Environmental Projects</b>	
1,006	Scan	2,557
38	First National Park Campaign	-
-	Speaking 4 the Planet	-
2,931	Environmental Education	3,830
2,146	Eco News	1,806
1,592	Eco Savvy Businesses	1,500
228	Sunny Shire	-
-	Other (Veg-in & Ridge Action)	1,351
630	SO Shire	4,805
663	AAEE Conference	977
68	Over Development	38
<u>9,303</u>		<u>16,863</u>
163	General Expenses	1,655
-	Honarium	1,350
-	Insurance	370
621	Interest	248
259	Meeting Expenses	69
426	Postage	335
836	Printing & Stationery	-
13,476	Rates & Strata (Merton Street)	15,124
260	Subscriptions & Licences	272
924	Telephone & Internet	3,982
-	Wages & associated costs	28,330
<u>58,476</u>		<u>73,473</u>
<u>12,730</u>	Profit / (Loss) before income tax	<u>37,208</u>
<u>12,730</u>	<b>Profit / (Loss) for the year</b>	<u>37,208</u>
564,429	Retained Earnings at the beginning of the financial year	<u>577,159</u>
<u>577,159</u>	<b>Retained Earnings at the end of the financial year</b>	<u>614,367</u>

**SUTHERLAND SHIRE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE  
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**BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 30 JUNE 2020**

<b>2019</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>\$</b>		<b>\$</b>
	<b>MEMBER'S FUNDS</b>	
577,159	Retained Earnings	614,367
<u>577,159</u>	<b>TOTAL MEMBER'S FUNDS</b>	<u>614,367</u>
	Represented by:	
	<b>ASSETS</b>	
	<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
321	Cash on Hand	69
12,074	Public Gift Fund	36,133
35,989	Main Account	50,715
-	Trade Debtors	-
123	Other Debtors	31
12,407	Prepayments	10,505
1,692	GST on acquisition	4,233
<u>62,606</u>	<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<u>101,686</u>
	<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
	<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
506,353	Building - at Cost	506,353
53,168	Furniture & Fittings - at Cost	53,168
(37,188)	Less Prov'n Depreciation	(40,768)
<u>522,333</u>	<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<u>518,753</u>
<u>522,333</u>	<b>TOTA NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<u>518,753</u>
<u>584,939</u>	<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>620,439</u>
	<b>LIABILITIES</b>	
	<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
-	Accrued Expenses	2,195
-	PAYG Liability	720
1,742	GST on supplies	3,157
<u>1,742</u>	<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<u>6,072</u>
	<b>NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
6,038	Loan - Commonwealth Bank	-
<u>6,038</u>	<b>TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<u>-</u>
<u>7,779</u>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<u>6,072</u>
<u>577,159</u>	<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<u>614,367</u>