

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Sutherland Shire
Environment Centre

About SSEC

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.

<https://www.ssec.org.au/>

The SSEC Board

Chair
Ian Hill

Board Members

Lily Meier, Constantine Lawrence (Treasurer)

Scott Dovey

Grant Kirk (Secretary)

Cooper Riach

Ross Jeffree

Phil Smith

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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.

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Report from the Chair

SSEC ACHIEVEMENTS

Since the last AGM in September 2023 the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre (SSEC) has continued to promote the needs of the environment in the Sutherland Shire and adjacent areas through ongoing campaigns, advocacy by social media and submissions, holding events and providing grant funding to local environment projects.

In addition to the long-running campaigns described later in this annual report, a new environmental activity has been initiated by SSEC board member Professor Ross Jeffree who has engaged ANSTO to undertake a collaborative project with the University of Wollongong to enable core testing at Audley. The core samples will be analysed by sophisticated technology using non-destructive, high resolution, sediment core scanners incorporating X ray fluorescence spectrometry and radiochronology. This will provide a historic record of coal pollution events in the Upper Hacking. The University of Wollongong is providing a university honours student who will be reporting the results as part of the associated honours project

MEMBERSHIP

The Centre currently has 93 members.

ADVOCACY

SSEC continued to address a large range of environmental issues impacting Sutherland Shire and the broader Sydney region through Facebook page and its website.

The SSEC Facebook page has again achieved very high standards of presentation and content achieving almost 4,350 followers and has served as a reliable and respected source of quality

information in the community for environmental topics. It raises awareness of issues, flags concerns where appropriate, provides current information on the status of issues, promotes upcoming events, celebrates environmental achievements and provides a voice for the environment.

SSEC members have spoken at Sutherland Council Meetings regarding the 3M tree policy. ShireCAN also carried out important tree advocacy work on Council's DCP amendment and successfully galvanised a public campaign against it. Despite 91% of public submissions being against the proposal, Liberal Councillors voted to defer a decision, calling instead for another report from Council staff.

Electrify Bundeena had a meeting with the Sutherland Council Environmental Science Unit in which the Council officers expressed an intention to consult further to develop a similar pilot project for the Shire.

Further advocacy was achieved in the NSW State Upper House by the provision of information to Greens MLC Cate Faehrmann. Cate then related in parliament how Peabody Coal had recently released more than two and a half million litres of waste water into Camp Gully Creek which then flows into the Hacking River. She then asked the NSW Minister for the Environment Penny Sharpe, what steps she would take to ensure that Peabody's on-going pollution won't lead to the death of platypus in the Hacking River.

Recently SSEC member Georgia Wallace Crabbe received a commendation from Judy Hannan MP the State MP for Wollondilly for Georgia's brilliant film *The Koalas*. Georgia has organised many screenings up and down the East Coast of Australia with expert panel speakers, including Saul Deane from TEC, and Jade Peace and Stephanie Carrick from the TEC's Sydney Basin Koala Network.

Environmental Education
 Greening the Shire
 Shire Climate Action Network
 (Over)Development – Save Our Shire



SCATL – the Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport link



Botany Bay

SO Shire & Plastic Free Sutherland Shire

Bate Bay

Our Sutherland Shire Shorebirds



Port Hacking

Electrify Bundeena

Sunny Shire

Our First National Park



Coal mining underneath Woronora Reservoir – our drinking water

Coal waste pollution, the Royal National Park, and Peabody's Metropolitan Colliery

Koalas and Sutherland Shire wildlife corridors



SUBMISSIONS

SSEC has made four significant submissions since the last AGM which can be seen in the SSEC website under Submissions and Resources.

In 2023 a submission was made to the Illawarra Sutherland Rural Fire Service regarding the Sutherland Draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plan, 30 November, 2023.

SO Shire made a submission to the Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Environment and Water,

regarding the draft Bill, Regulations for Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) 2023.

In 2024 two submissions were made. The first was to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment regarding the “Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to create low and mid-rise housing” proposals and the second was to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water regarding the NSW Koala Strategy Review.

A submission has recently been made to Sutherland Council for the Draft Tree and Bushland Policy.

EVENTS

The Habitat forum was a marine initiative on the Port Hacking which was free for participants including SSEC members. This was a joint exercise where SSEC organised the event and provided the majority funding. NPA southern Sydney Branch and member George Cotis provided the balance. The event highlighted the facts and issues facing shore birds, mangroves, seagrass and the marine ecosystem. Mark Speakman (Member for Cronulla and Leader of the NSW Opposition) and Maryanne Stuart (Labor MP for Heathcote) attended as did Sutherland Councillors Leanne Farmer and Hassan Awada. The 3 hour voyage provided a most enjoyable, educative and productive time was for all participants.

An ongoing SSEC event has been the Streamwatch program involving ongoing monthly water testing program in the Hacking River. This was organised by member Diana Smidt with assistance from Greater Sydney Landcare.

SSEC member Pam Campbell provided six bushwalking events with a view to observing coal

pollution in the Hacking River and lower Camp Gully Creek.

On the 8th November 2023, SSEC was delighted to greet Tom Hunt and Simon Leslie at Audley Weir as part of their epic intrepid 'Sail for Sanity'. This was a voyage in a small craft from the Illawarra to Newcastle as part of the Rising Tide People's Blockade of the Worlds largest Coal Port. Tom and Simon sailed up the Port Hacking Deeban river to help draw attention to Peabody's pollution of Australia's oldest National Park and the company's infamous record of funding climate change denial organisations.

The Christmas gathering for members was again held at Wattle Forest providing a relaxing end to the year.

Sarah-Jo Lobwein SO Shire held a successful beach clean-up in conjunction with Cronulla Rotary and the annual "Clean Up Australia" activity in March with Tradies GyMEA. SO Shire also continued photo logging all balloon debris found in support of NO BALLOON RELEASE AUSTRALIA.



Politicians and speakers on board the ferry at the conclusion of the Habitat forum.

Left to Right: Hassan Awada (Sutherland Councillor), Julie Keating (Sutherland Shire Environment Citizen of the year 2022), Phil Straw (BirdLife Australia), George Cotis OAM, Mark Speakman (Member for Cronulla and Leader of the NSW Opposition), Leanne Farmer (Sutherland Councillor), SSEC Board member Professor Ross Jeffrey AM, Dr Paco Martinez Baena (Sydney Institute of Marine Science), Elisabeth Dark (BirdLife Australia), Debbie Andrew (NPA), Sarah-Jo Lobwein (Sutherland Shire Environment Citizen of the year 2021), Gary Schoer (NPASSB), Maryanne Stuart (Labor MP for Heathcote). Photo credit Ian Hill

LEAF

The Local Environment of Australia Funding (LEAF) grants program was established by SSEC founder Bob Walshe to assist a number of environmental projects.

Grants for the financial year went to SO Shire for their presentation at the Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Congress, to ShireCAN for attendance fees for the Gynea Festival, numerous flyers for stalls and a film screening, to Speaking for the Planet in the Sutherland shire and nationally, Boat hire for the Habitat Forum and venue hire for the screening of James O'Connor's documentary Coal Creek.

Feedback from a previous 2023 project was provided by Keiran Tapsell for Banksia Bush Care at Stanwell Park.

MERTON STREET

SSEC owns a commercial property at Merton Street which remains tenanted. This has enabled general funds to accrue throughout the year despite levies for the Fire Safety Upgrade for the building required by Sutherland Council.

This upgrade will be reaching its most expensive phase for the quarterly levies required by the strata management for the six months to December 2024 and then continuing at a very taxing rate till 2026.

By exercising budget frugality, SSEC should be able to survive this extensive challenging period and maintain ownership of the Merton Street property.

THE BOARD

The Board regretfully acknowledges the resignation of Lily Meier who has been the Treasurer of SSEC for three years. Lily has provided a great service to SSEC functioning throughout this time.

As a consequence of the departure of Lily, the board welcomes the appointment of Constantine Lawrence to the role of treasurer.

Membership of the board has otherwise remained unchanged.

GRATITUDE AND RECOGNITION

SSEC operates upon the goodwill, grace and giving of its active members without which the organisation would be unable to function.

To all our members thank you to all for your continued support.

It was a great shock to learn of the sudden passing of respected member Barbara Koppe who was very kind and good hearted and brought a spirit of joy and care to every event she attended. Barbara was a staunch supporter, reaching out to other members, assisting with functions, and attending events. She was a generous benefactor providing extensive financial support. She will be greatly missed.

SSEC is very thankful and grateful to the generous benefactor Ben Watson from Otford.

Also, from the same area, Symbio Wildlife Park kindly donated \$5000 for Electronic Road signs to alert drivers of Koala crossings on Heathcote Road.

A very special vote of thanks goes to the departing treasurer Lily Meier. Lily provided a solid bedrock for SSEC functions by her good management of finances and her enthusiasm for environmental issues. Thankfully she will be continuing a role in SSEC as an active member.

I would like to thank Sadaf Basamraz for her valuable work as Public Officer.

Yet again very special thanks to SSEC member Catherine Reynolds for another year of outstanding dedication. Catherine has been an ongoing source of energy, enthusiasm and good ideas. She manages two significant campaigns being the Coal Waste Pollution, Royal National Park, Peabody Metropolitan Colliery and the Koala and Sutherland Shire Wildlife Corridors campaigns plus the website and the Facebook page. Catherine also wrote a most comprehensive submission guide for the Sutherland Council Draft Tree and Bushland Policy. She also provides good strategic initiatives and continued enthusiasm.

Thanks also to John Slouweris for his work in the Koala campaign

Thanks to Phil Smith who expends a great deal of effort with managing and reviewing the 'Writing for the Environment Award' and 'Speaking for the Planet' entries. Thanks also to the panel of judges who assist with the assessments.

Thanks to Gay Curtis for leading ShireCAN and the contribution of their members.

Thanks to Sarah-Jo Lobwein for managing SO Shire. Thanks also to the Sunny Shire group led by Jay Banyer and Jonathan Prendergast.

Thanks to Tradies for the AGM venue and the discounted fee.

Thanks also to Diana Smit for initiating the Streamwatch program.

Thanks to those involved with the Koala Campaign.

Thanks also to the Electrify Bundeena team who worked to make this campaign a success. Thanks to Scott Dovey, Vera Auerbach, Valerie Etienne, Ken Heskett, Greg Walker, Jim Tsinganos, Rebecca Mills, and special thanks to Jay Banyer, Daniel Debreceeny and Jonathan Prendergast for sharing their expertise in renewable energy at Electrify Bundeena events.

I extend a great amount of thanks to the board members for their continued support and commitment.

I would like to thank all members for any contributions they have made.

DONATIONS

I would like to thank all those who have made donations to the SSEC since the last AGM.

THE FUTURE

SSEC intends to continue advocacy and support for the local environment in the coming year. It has a good website and the Facebook page plays an important role as a source of environmental information.

Local environmental challenges which lie ahead include the Shire's tree canopy cover, which had plummeted to 24.7% in 2020. There are endangered and critically endangered species throughout the area, and Sutherland Council's biodiversity Strategy has data that is 30 years out of

date. Better Koala protection along Heathcote Road is also a priority.

A significant challenge is the operation of Peabody's Metropolitan colliery which has two undesirable aspects. At the surface operations there is the history of coal waste pollution into Camp Gully Creek and thereby into the Hacking River and this problem requires continued input. In the Woronora catchment the underground longwall mining beneath causes subsidence fracturing which impacts the strata above including the surface. The mine has been granted an additional 2042 hectares extending out from the existing mining areas while the Government and the opposition both allow this process to continue.

Marine protection is poor with Sutherland Council approving the downgrading Port Hacking Protection from W1 to W2 and just a few metres of declared protection exists in the Port Hacking along Ship Rock. Greater protection is also required along the southern shore and for Cabbage Tree Basin.

Shore birds on Deeban Spit is also an ongoing concern with the need for greater protection of the habitat and need for greater public education. Protection of their food source along the southern shore of the Hacking and reducing human disturbance affecting the resting and sleeping of the birds is essential.

Shore birds on Deeban Spit are an ongoing concern with the need for greater protection of the habitat and greater public education. Protection of their food source along the southern shore of the Hacking and reducing human disturbance affecting the resting and sleeping of the birds is essential.

SSEC will continue to encourage local area environmental projects financially through LEAF funding.

The SSEC board encourages more members to become actively involved. Currently a great deal of the achievements rise from the good work of a few dedicated board members.

SSEC aims to provide a leading role on environmental matters for the Sutherland Shire for the year to come.

Ian Hill
Chair SSEC

Competitions

2024 RD Walshe Writing for the Environment Competition Through the Eyes of Nature

Phil Smith and Alex Talbot

Once again, the RD Walshe Writing for the Environment Awards, has provided people from around Australia and opportunity to use their writing skills to wonder about and work towards shaping a sustainable world.

This year, writers were asked to see the world from an alternative perspective. The competition invited them to 'become' in their writing an endangered animal anywhere on the planet, an island sinking, sinking in the Pacific, a mountain, a tree, a fish in the sea, an albatross, an elephant, an insect, a koala, your favourite fruit or meandering river...

We received 68 entries across the three categories:

- Under 19: 42 entries
- 19-26: 9 entries
- Over 60: 17 entries

Three teams of judges were created. Thank you to all judges who helped determine the winners. Their rankings are vital. But so, too, are their insightful comments about content and style. Thanks you Pete, Sharelle, Grant, Cooper, Helen, Sandy, Dawn, Syd, Rowan, Pat and Nic.



Overarching comments

Judges in each category commented on how writers were able to take on different perspectives and view what humans are doing to the planet from that viewpoint. All observed the damage. Some writers saw little way out. Others offered hope.

Under 19

FIRST PLACE (\$500)

Change (Hey Boss) by Emika Saville

<https://www.ssec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/wpforms/27170-5091fc2816b87e44ca0e059354c15f29/change-f2a32bddbd54c059522b14d6dc3873d4.docx>

SECOND PLACE (\$250)

Was it Worth it? by Sarah Polkinghorne

THIRD PLACE (\$100)

Eldara: The Sentinel of Time by Aanya Singh

Pat Strong Writing Award for Young Writers (\$100)

Glimmer of a Dream by Sarelia Kresevic

“This was a tough category to judge. So many writers. So many good perspectives. So many different narrative styles.

“The judges welcomed the creativity and passion and vivid descriptions. Writers captured beautifully in words their emotions of hope and despair, frustration and determination, and anger and gratitude. Many submissions are full of the power and concerns of youth, and, as with last year’s entries, some of the writing was very moving. In *Change*, the story spans a little more than a decade. It experiments with narrative, jumps time, tells a story, addresses the challenge of the task, makes the environmental points, but does so in a non-declarative/listing way. There is despair and there is hope, and the author comes down on the side of the latter, and also suggests that one person can make a difference. An imaginative and creative literary response.”

19 -26

FIRST PLACE (\$500)

Small by Connor Finn

<https://www.ssec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/wpforms/27170-5091fc2816b87e44ca0e059354c15f29/Small-e9e8d4c25965a03a3671be9cbbc3dddc3.docx>

SECOND PLACE (\$250)

It isn’t all for me? by Jessica Gough*

THIRD PLACE (\$100)

Changing Times by Luke Waldie

“The quality of writing in this group was very high, with many writers demonstrating a lyrical and/or poetic style of writing. *Small* was a standout. It resonated with all the judges. Humans are put under the microscope in this ominous story written from the perspective of a mountain. The result is a critical though empathetic analysis of our species, and the judges welcomed the strong last line.”

*Jessica Gough won Third Place in 2023.

Over 60

FIRST PLACE (\$500)

The Watering Place by John Scholz*

<https://www.ssec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/wpforms/27170-5091fc2816b87e44ca0e059354c15f29/watering-place-793f2117a6fb668b104b8c4bc35079d3.docx>

SECOND PLACE (\$100)

The Storm by Jenny England*

“The judges were very impressed with the imagination and creativity of the over 60 group. *The Watering Place* took the top spot as all three judges listed this as their number 1. For me, this story feels like the start of a novel, and I wish it was a novel as I was so immersed in the story. It is a bittersweet story about our connectedness to nature that reminds us we have the power to revive and reinvigorate the natural world, should we choose to apply ourselves to the work.”

*John Scholz won the 2023 competition in this age category. Perhaps a novel is in the making!

*Jenny England won the ‘highly commended’ prize in the 2023 competition.

Speaking 4 the Planet

Phil Smith, Petur Farkas and Hanh Do

The past 12 months have included these S4P events:

- National online competition with a focus on trees.
- MidCoast Council live competitions (2) with a focus on koalas.
- Burwood, Strathfield, Canada Bay Councils live event at Domremy College with a focus on trees; this event was managed by Robin Smith from Climate Action Burwood Canada Bay who managed the development and delivery of this event!
- Kids 4 the Planet at Lakemba Public School with a focus on listening to the earth. Congratulations to Ms Rasha Zreika for running this 7th event.

A speech by Minh Khue, an 8 year old student at Ba Dinh Primary School in Ha Noi, Viet Nam,

was shown at the commencement of the 2024 competition.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHXAg3mnQto>

- Cat Tien National Park, Vietnam, with a focus on speaking for those species that cannot speak. 36 competitors in teams of 4 from 9 schools. Plus a bus-load of students from each school as audience. Extraordinary. We made national television in Vietnam.
- St Mark's College, Nomagama, Uganda; this event asked the school teams how they can make a contribution to sustainability. Note that Bruno Muyunga from the school was at the World EE Congress in Abu Dhabi in early February. So inspired was he that he returned and got the event up and running in less than two months. His principal described it as the best teams event ever!



Support package for MidCoast Council live competition.

- Christchurch, NZ, with a focus on SDGs chose by the local government. Congratulations to Jocelyn Papprell from Environment Canterbury for her 7th year of S4P events in Christchurch!

Thanks as always to SSEC for its ongoing support. And thanks to the councils that participated this year.

Thanks again to Petur Farkas in Hungary for his incredible design and layout skills! Thanks to Hanh for the research and website and design work she did.

Thanks to Rasha Zreika and Amber Mangraviti (Acting Principal) at Lakemba PS for inspiring their schools and others in the neighbourhood to participate in these incredible events!

Thanks to Emma Williams and Michael Kozok at Paddy Pallin – a company that has supported S4P from the very beginning!

Thanks to all the councils that supported S4P during 2024.

Journey to a Greener Future
Speaking 4 the Planet Competition
 • Speaking • Writing • Drama • Visual Art • Digital Art

Enter in one or more of the five categories of this environmental competition and have your say about the importance of protecting our future, our Planet!

World Environment Day 5 June 2024
 Domremy College, Five Dock

To participate, schools must register by **Thursday 7 March 2024**.
 To register, contact Robin at footprintsabcb@gmail.com

With support from
 Burwood City of Canada Bay STRATHFIELD COUNCIL CLIMATE ACTION National State Environment Centre *Blue Cross* World Environmental Centre for Children



Preparation for the competition. S4P's biggest live event to date, Cat Tien National Park Vietnam

Campaigns

Greening the Shire and the Sutherland Council draft Tree & Bushland Strategy 2024

Dr Catherine Reynolds, Cooper Riach

We have some beautiful natural areas in the Sutherland Shire, but our tree canopy is declining at a rapid rate. Many people have contacted us over the last few years, especially when beautiful street trees they loved were cut down with no notification.

In August this year Council released a new draft Tree and Bushland Strategy, intended to guide how they manage our trees up to 2034.

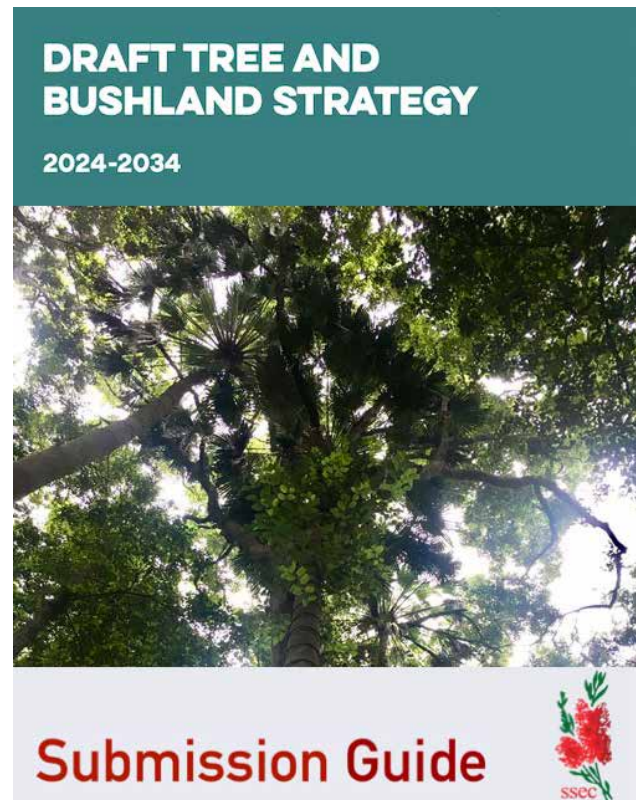
We were pleased Council included us in stakeholder consultations in June 2023, and many of the issues we raised have been included in the draft Strategy. But open communication has not been evident in Council decisions regarding trees more generally. This is especially concerning given Council's own very conservative (and dated) estimates about what is happening to our canopy across the LGA.

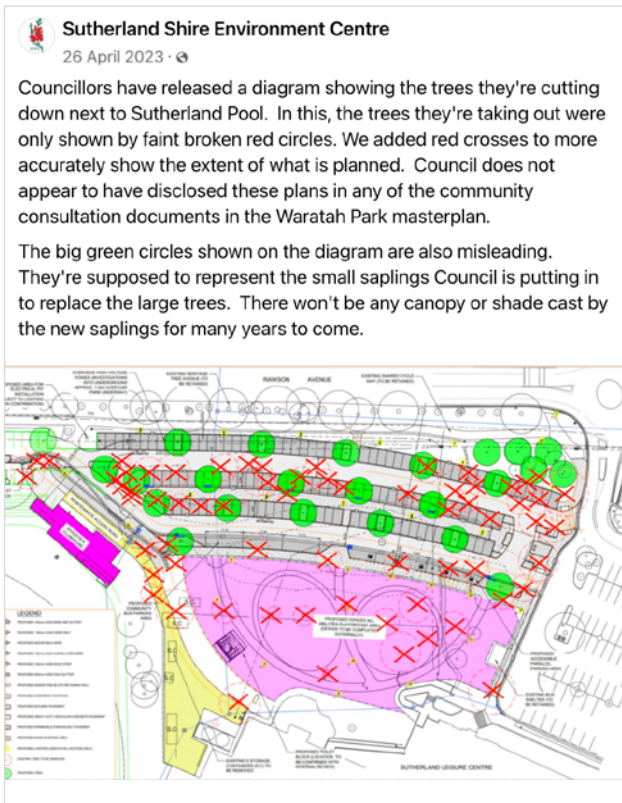
- the draft Strategy notes that between 2016 to 2020, 68.1 hectares of tree canopy was cut down across the Shire.
- the Strategy states that in 2020 Sutherland Shire only had 24.7% canopy cover in urban areas.
- we have no data for 2020-24 period, but Council staff estimated the 2021 Urban Tree and Bushland Policy would result in an additional 250+ trees being lost each year, on top of the 2016-20 pattern of decline.
- it's likely that many more hectares of trees have been cut down since 2020.

We produced a submission guide after reviewing the Strategy, and Scott Dovey spoke to the issue of a Council meeting in August, suggesting Council had a lot more work to do to get this draft over the line.

This draft Strategy will be in place until 2034, so it's vital to get the details right to make sure our beautiful parks and mature canopy trees are protected. The question is what the incoming Council will do after the local government election to ensure this happens.

The State government has set a target of 40% canopy cover across residential areas, and this is included as a key aim in the draft Strategy. But no date has been set for target to be reached, and no detail has been provided about what steps Council needs to take to get there.





Saplings take years to grow to maturity so a proactive forward planning planting schedule is vitally important.

One huge concern is that the draft Strategy only proposes increasing tree cover in urban areas beyond the 2020 benchmark by 2034 (see p.6). This target is very weak, and it will do nothing to recover the significant amount of canopy lost over the last few years.

As a comparison, Georges River Council has a Tree Policy that aims for 40% by 2038.

Why should Sutherland Council be less ambitious? We should aim for an increase in canopy cover to 40% by at least 2034-8, state this explicitly in the Strategy, and back it up with quality operational plans.

We do need to change course.

Over the last few years Council has cut down swathes of mature canopy trees around public recreational areas.

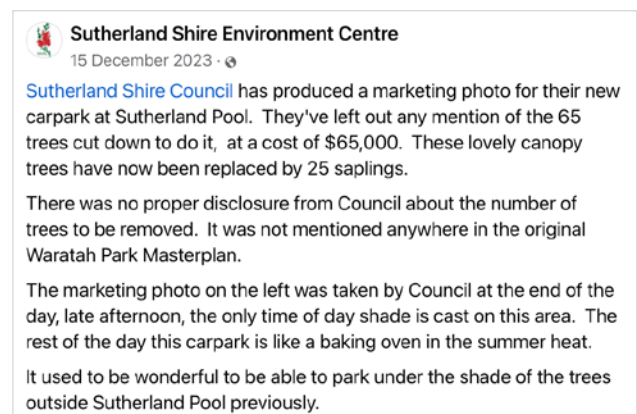
Sutherland Pool infamously lost over 65 mature trees, replaced with a heat sink carpark and 23

saplings. Other trees were lost at Seymour Shaw Park, Miranda. Now similar plans are proposed for other park areas, including Oyster Bay Oval, a potential loss of 74 beautiful mature trees that have enhanced the area for decades.

Recently Liberal Councilors tried to put up a proposed amendment to the Development Control Plan (DCP) allowing trees to be cut down within 3m of proposed properties and pools. These Councilors subsequently set aside the results of a formal community consultation where 91% of people opposed the proposal. They stalled with an old delaying tactic, calling for yet another council report on the issue. Will they try to push this through in the next term of Council?

This DCP amendment acts directly against the Principals and Vision of the draft Tree and Bushland Strategy, even as weak as it currently is. Councilors should not be facilitating, or encouraging the removal of trees.

Another concerning motion supported by Liberal councillors in August proposed that land zoned C3 / C4 Environmental Protection and Conservation be changed to R2 Residential – if this rezoning proceeds significant canopy loss is likely to occur.



With the target to increase canopy to 40%, removing trees should be a last resort. Trees should be cared for to ensure they are healthy, along with new saplings that are planted.

Whether this will occur is uncertain. As is, key aspects of this Strategy are not funded, including “standardised operational procedures for assessment, planting, establishment, maintenance, and management” (see p.45). Actions in the implementation plan such as “Monitor canopy change” and “Monitor tree removals and replacements” are not funded.

To ensure this Strategy is not just empty rhetoric, quantifiable performance measures need to be added detailing how the 40% canopy cover

increase will be achieved. Timeframes for actions to be implemented should be included, and how outcomes will be reported, and how often.

Continuing on this trajectory will make it impossible to increase our canopy cover from 24.7% to the 40% target.

There’s a range of other issues we’ve flagged with this draft Strategy. Please see our Greening the Shire webpage for more information about the threats to our trees, and how the current draft strategy fails to adequately address these:

<https://www.ssec.org.au/our-campaigns/greening-the-shire/>



Dying trees outside Sutherland Pool after the installation of the carpark, roots suffocated and waterlogged. Photo credit Lily Meier.



Koala advocacy 2023-24

Dr Catherine Reynolds and John Souvleris

It's been a busy year with ongoing advocacy for the Sutherland Shire koalas.

In October 2023 we put forward a motion that was passed unanimously at the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) Annual General Meeting. This motion was drafted in consultation with representatives from Save Sydney Koalas, the Sydney Basin Koala Network, and the Friends of the Koala at Lismore. It called for electronic signs to be installed in known koala vehicle strike zones across NSW, for the speed limit in these areas to be cut to 60kms in locations where Transport NSW (TfNSW) have delayed installing effective mitigation measures. The motion called for speed cameras to enforce the reduced speed limits. The NSW Roads Minister John Graham subsequently dismissed NCC's request for a meeting to discuss the issue.

Since the Annual Report last year TfNSW have still done nothing to prevent koalas accessing the road at the Deadman's Creek kill zone. It is now over three years since we met the TfNSW consultant on site at Deadman's Creek in April 2021 to discuss the parameters of what was a fully funded project to prevent koalas accessing Heathcote Rd. To date, TfNSW has not yet submitted the Review of Environmental Factor documents to Liverpool Council to put in a fence they have decided to put in through the middle of an endangered ecological community (Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest). We have made it clear that our groups would prefer the option of a fence alongside the road, an option that would avoid time consuming negotiations with local and federal government to obtain relevant permissions. Putting the fencing through an endangered ecological community as a mitigation measure to save another endangered species is counter intuitive. Yet TfNSW have proven inflexible, while the delays resulting from TfNSW's decision to go with this option have meant koalas are continuing to be hit on the road.

In October 2023 we co-signed a letter with 12 other environment organisations, including WIRES, Total Environment Centre (TEC), the International Federation for Animal Welfare (Ifaw) and the Sydney Basin Koala Network. The letter expresses a loss of faith in TfNSW to take the issue of koalas

being killed on NSW roads seriously. These groups included WIRES, the International Federation for Animal Welfare (Ifaw), and the Total Environment Centre. The letter was again sent to John Graham the Roads Minister, also the Transport and Environment Ministers:

Environment and wildlife groups have been raising the alarm for some time but have now lost faith in Transport NSW (TFNSW) to take this issue seriously.

We are frustrated that action to address the risk to people and endangered wildlife only comes via intense effort and lobbying by environment and wildlife groups, case by case. There is no transparency on the decision making process and, it appears, very little interest by TFNSW to resolve issues with the urgency needed, or to adopt best practice when forced to intervene.



John Souvleris, Kellie Sloane MP, and Tina Ayyad MP



Tina Ayyad MP, Liverpool Councillor Karess Rhodes, John Souvleris, Charles Waife Liverpool Council, and Stuart Vowles from Sandy Point Residents Association

It is volunteer wildlife rescuers and carers who bear the impact of dealing with these dead and injured animals. Both the State and Federal government remain silent about the significant number of koalas being killed on roads across south west Sydney, at one point it was over 40 dead koalas in just one year.

We've met a number of times with local Federal MP for Hughes Jenny Ware to discuss the ongoing delays on the part of TfNSW's installation of fencing. Jenny Ware subsequently raised the issue in Parliament, organised a petition, and a site visit with Shadow Federal Environment Minister Jonathon Duniam.

We've had other meetings with shadow Environment Minister Kellie Sloane, and meetings and site visits at Deadman's Creek with Liverpool Councillor Karess Rhodes, and State MP for Holsworthy Tina Ayyad. The member for Holsworthy later raised the need for further koala protection in State Parliament.

The NSW Koala Strategy team, Sutherland Council and Liverpool Council are continuing to engage productively with us on the issue. We've been advised both Councils intend to put up koala electronic signage to alert motorists - if they are given permission by TfNSW.

In March 2024 Catherine attended the NSW Department of Environment Koala Summit at Taronga Zoo. This Summit had representatives from groups across the State, all reviewing the effectiveness of koala conservation efforts with the view to shaping the future direction of the NSW Koala Strategy. It was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with affiliated groups. A TfNSW representative dominated the vehicle strike mitigation table and ruled out recommendations for temporary reduced speed limits in vehicle strike hotspots where TfNSW was failing to take action.

Our subsequent submission to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water regarding the NSW Koala Strategy Review outlines a range of continuing threats to the south west Sydney koala population and gaps in State government action to address these threats: <https://www.ssec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Submission-NSW-Koala-Strategy-Review-2024.pdf>

This submission was complemented by a November 2023 submission to the Illawarra Sutherland Rural Fire Service Sutherland Draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plan: <https://www.ssec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SSEC-submission-Sutherland-Draft-Bush-Fire-Risk-Management-Plan-2023.pdf>



Peter Stathis WIRES, Ifaw, Stephanie Carrick Sydney Basin Koala Network, and Saul Dean TEC.



Taronga Koala Summit - Xuela Sledge NSW Koala Strategy, Saul Dean TEC, Maria Matthes Friends of the Koala, Catherine Reynolds SSEC, and Diana Pryde Save Sydney Koalas.

Marelle Burnum Burnum’s Woronora Valley Residents Association and Sandy Point Residents Association both continue to support koala protection measures, and it has been positive liaising with both groups. A number of SSEC members also attended the Sydney Basin Koala Network koala training day in March 2024. There was an overview of research carried out by Biolink, the specialist koala ecological consultancy.

Sutherland Shire Council has continued to engage positively with us and support the same measures that we have been advocating: Council Bushcare actions to protect koala habitat have been supported by Federal government grant funding (\$200,000). As a result of representations we made, in November 2023 Council again resolved to urge TfNSW to address vehicle strike hotspots, and again ask the State government to put a Sutherland Shire Koala SEPP in place. A motion put up by Councillor Diedree Steinwall in July 2024 after we

made representations to her called for an updated report on koala habitat protection, and for an update on Council’s request for inclusion into the Koala SEPP. This was passed unanimously by all Councillors.

We were also very pleased we were able to facilitate a koala drone survey at the Lucas Heights State Conservation area. This was carried out by Greater Sydney Landcare as part of their Wildseek Program, with thanks to Sutherland Shire Council approving this initiative. Only a few koalas had been recorded in the Lucas Heights State Conservation area previously. We suspected this area was an important koala corridor, and it was exciting to have this confirmed with 21 confirmed koala sightings, in a survey that took place in just one evening, in a few hours between 2am to 8am.

In 2023 Sutherland Shire Environment Centre provided a grant for road signs with brightly

coloured variable messages, including the “Koalas looking for love”. We received further donations from a crowd funding campaign, additional funding from Woronora Valley Residents Association, and a further \$5,000 from Symbio Wildlife Park, so \$10,000 in total.

Ideally environment groups and members of the public should not have to put forward money to provide effective signage, but the results were very successful - no koalas were hit or killed on Heathcote Rd (that we know of) for over nine months from October 2023.

With the signs down as koala mating season has started again, the grim news is that four koalas plus a joey were hit on Heathcote and New Illawarra Roads in the second part of July this year.

In some ways we are better off than the rest of the Australia: Greg Miller and Georgia Wallace Crabbe’s Koalas film came out in cinemas in June, and the situation for koalas up and down the east coast of Australia is dire. Their research documenting what is taking place is comprehensive. Having been engaged with the film from the beginning we’re very glad to see the impact of the final cut. It’s given a powerful voice to koala advocacy groups who have been fighting to save the species and calling for changes in government policy.

There’s concrete reasons why koalas are predicted to become extinct in the wild by 2050. It is not apparent that State and Federal governments are doing enough to prevent this happening. SSEC will be supporting a local screening of the Koalas film at Audley Dance Hall on 21 September.

 **The Leader** ✓ ...
17 December 2023 · 

A large donation by Symbio Wildlife Park will mean koala safety signs on Heathcote Road will remain in place for the rest of summer



THELEADER.COM.AU 

Symbio Wildlife Park funds koala warning signs on Heathcote Road for rest of mating season

  494 31 comments 19 shares

John Souvleris and Lily Meier with Symbio koala keepers

In the News:

- August 5, 2024, “Calls for action: 17 koalas killed on Heathcote Road in last two years”, *The Leader*
- 8 April, 2024, “Future of koala population in shire ‘in jeopardy’, new report warns“, *The Leader*
- 16 May, 2024, “Koalas documentary exposes shaky future for our favourite tree dwellers“, *Screen Hub*
- 13 May, 2024, “21 koalas detected in Lucas Heights bushland area by drone thermal imagery“, *The Leader*
- 14 March, 2024, “BioNet’s incomplete koala records prompt concerns over south-west Sydney housing development approvals“, *ABC Illawarra*
- 1 March, 2024, John Souvleris interview with *2SSR Sutherland Shire Radio*
- 17 December, 2023, “Symbio Wildlife Park funds koala warning signs on Heathcote Road until end of mating season“, *The Leader*
- 1 December 2023, John Souvleris radio interview with *2SSR Sutherland Shire Radio*
- 30 November, 2023, “Koala habitat sites at Engadine, Woronora Heights and Woronora to benefit from \$200,000 in federal govt funding“, *The Leader*
- 30 November, 2023, “Sandy Point couple rescue another koala from middle of Heathcote Road“, *The Leader*
- 23 November, 2023 “Spike in koala deaths prompts call for better road design, lower speed limits in NSW“, *ABC Illawarra*
- 24 October, 2023, “Koala sustained no injuries despite near-death experience on Heathcote Road“, *The Leader*
- 23 October, 2023, “Safe koala crossings back on the agenda“, *Daily Telegraph*
- 16 October, 2023, “Public support enables Sutherland Shire Environment Centre to extend koala warning signs on Heathcote Road“, *The Leader*
- 9 October, 2023, “Valiant attempt to save injured koala on Heathcote Road has sad ending“, *The Leader*



Georgia Wallace Crabbe and Greg Miller

- 4 October, 2023, John Souvleris radio interview with *2SM*
- 3 October, 2023, “NSW Roads Minister urged to lower Appin Road speed limits to address rising koala fatalities“, *ABC Illawarra*
- 2 October, 2023, “Sutherland Shire Environment Centre adds two more koala warning signs on Heathcote Road“, *The Leader*
- 20 September, 2023 “New signs to be installed on Heathcote Rd to protect koalas in mating season“, *Daily Telegraph*
- 18 September, 2023 “Concerns at delay in introducing measures to deter koalas from crossing Heathcote Road at key locations“, *The Leader*

Electrify Bundeena

Scott Dovey

The Electrify Bundeena campaign was inspired by the work of the Australian renewable energy and electrification guru, Saul Griffith. Saul's book *The Big Switch* lays out a pathway to achieving huge cuts in our carbon emissions through the total electrification of our homes and workplaces, powered by cheap, clean, renewables.

A team of local volunteers in Bundeena are putting Saul's ideas into practice, with an ambitious

program of community education, lobbying and commercial partnerships to achieve 100% net renewables in Bundeena's energy usage by 2028.

Following its public launch on 10 September 2023 in the Bundeena Community Centre, the Electrify Bundeena campaign has:

- set up a website and Facebook page.
- developed fact sheets and other resources.



Getting to know the heat pump

- conducted a baseline energy use community survey across Bundeena and Maianbar.
- run a successful fundraising event to support the project.
- held an information night about heat pumps, attended by about 40 people.
- implemented a heat pump bulk buy scheme for Sutherland Shire residents, with 11 households signing up.
- attended the GyMEA Fair and the Bundeena Art of Living festival to promote the electrification message.
- held an open house day, showcasing real world examples of residents who have electrified their homes and vehicles.
- held an information night about solar panels and batteries, which was very well attended.
- rolled out a heavily discounted solar/battery package, with the assistance of AG Solar. 23 solar and battery packages and 2 solar-only systems were installed, comprising a total of 194 kw of solar generation capacity and 234 kw of battery storage.
- held an EV taster day, giving those interested in EVs a chance to talk to EV owners, see a range of EV makes and models, and take a ride in an EV of their choice.
- explored options for the installation of public EV charging stations in Bundeena.

- joined the network of electrification groups coordinated by Saul Griffith's Rewiring Australia organisation.

After two further community events are run later in 2024 (Women and Renewables, and Get Off the Gas), the team will be conducting a second community survey to get feedback on the campaign so far and to measure how far the community has come on the electrification journey.

While it's easy to feel powerless (pun intended) in the face of climate change and soaring electricity prices, the future is also in our hands. Every step towards making our homes energy self-sufficient reduces fossil fuel dependency, takes pressure off the grid, and builds capacity for distributed clean energy generation and storage. We can all do something positive for the planet, while saving ourselves money at the same time.

The Electrify Bundeena committee would like to thank Bec Mills and Ken Heskett for their work on the committee for 2023/24, and the SSEC for their seeding grant to get us started.

The Electrify Bundeena committee (in alphabetical order):

Vera Auerbach, Scott Dovey, Valerie Etienne, Jim Tsinganos, Keith Trigwell, Greg Walker



EV taster day, a chance to talk to EV owners

Shire Climate Action Network (ShireCAN) 2023/2024 Year in Review

Gay Curtis, ShireCAN Coordinator

Shire Climate Action Network (ShireCAN) has had another productive year.

State: ShireCAN continued to network with other NSW climate groups via the Nature Conservation Council's monthly Climate and Energy Working Group meetings and supported various campaigns. In particular, lobbying via a petition to stop the government with their proposed Hunter Valley Operations Continuation Project (HVO) the biggest coal project in NSW since the Paris Agreement in 2016.

ShireCAN supported Lock the Gate's campaign with submissions and petitions to the EPA asking for changes to strengthen their draft Climate Change Assessment Requirements and Guide for Large Emitters. We worked collaboratively with 350.org Australia on their campaign to recommend that NSW councils change their local planning policies to require the electrification of new residential and commercial developments. Resources and knowledge from this campaign were used to discuss the recommendations with the Sutherland Shire Council (SSC) Environmental Science Unit.

Federal: ShireCAN continued ongoing support with campaigns from aligned climate organisations including the Climate Council and Lock the Gate. Our members wrote submissions and signed petitions related to the government's long-awaited implementation of fuel efficiency standards and calling for fundamental reforms to strengthen the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act including a request to place protection of a safe climate at the heart of the law.

Shire-based: ShireCAN members continued to work productively with the Environmental Science Unit of the SSC, sharing information and cross-promoting climate initiatives as well as continuing to attend quarterly meetings to discuss and contribute to Council's development of climate change and sustainability initiatives.

We continue to work with SSC and BicycleNSW to advocate for re-routing parts of the pathway into

the rail corridor for the Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport Link (SCATL) Stage 2 West. This included writing to the Minister for Transport to lobby the case. ShireCAN also attended the Transport NSW stakeholder briefing for the Stage 3 Community Reference Forum.

With ShireCAN's support Jannali Preschool was awarded a Tradies 'iPromise Sustainability Grant' to install rooftop solar. ShireCAN members then enjoyed a morning educating the children about how solar panels work. Our story in The Leader published is [HERE](#)

ShireCAN members agreed to endorse the 'Yes' Campaign, creating a social media tile and signature to promote our support.



In May, ShireCAN organised a Film screening of 'Climate Changers', Tim Flannery's search for climate leadership, followed by a talk and strategy sharing session. ShireCAN would like to thank Tradies who supported the event, providing the room and equipment, marketing and also sponsoring David Ross as host and facilitator.



Dr Sally Stockbridge, ShireCAN member, introducing Climate Changers Screening at Tradies

From 18-21 June, ShireCAN volunteered at the De La Salle College (Caringbah) Sustainability In Action/ Climate Fiction Symposium. Year 9 students at the college presented their projects on sustainability and climate fiction to a panel of industry experts including a member of ShireCAN.

Our group continues to grow as concerned residents in the Shire reach out to find comfort in working together to protect our planet and being connected to others who are anxious about climate change and wish to take action. We continue to engage with Shire residents by holding market stalls and attending fairs at Sutherland and Gymea. We host quarterly café meet-ups, send out regular newsletters to 370+ subscribers and post on Facebook to 135 members. We developed an “Electrify Your Home” flyer to help people understand the importance of electrification.



ShireCAN members at a Quarterly Café Catch up

Future priorities for ShireCAN are: critiquing SSC’s Draft Tree and Bushland Strategy and Draft Climate Strategy to ensure they are as effective as possible. ShireCAN will encourage SSC to follow the lead of 13 other NSW councils, implementing rules for new homes and businesses to be powered by electricity.

ShireCAN Coordinator, Gay Curtis sincerely thanks members of ShireCAN team ‘we have achieved a lot for a relatively small team. It’s been a pleasure working with you all for the benefit of the climate.’ British journalist, Killian Fox interviewed climate scientist and author Susan Solomon. He shared this fundamental message from her book, *Solvable: How We Healed the Earth, and How We Can Do It Again*: ‘If you’re an ordinary person worried about the climate crisis, the most impactful thing you can do is to band together with others to push for change.’ That’s exactly what ShireCAN have been striving to do.

SO SHIRE and Plastic Free Sutherland Shire 2023-2024 SSEC summary

Sarah-Jo Lobwein

SO SHIRE and Plastic Free Sutherland Shire have again been very busy this past 12 months, but here is a quick snapshot of the main projects:

Citizen Science Clean Ups

We continue our monthly cleans ups at Wanda beach with Rotary Cronulla plus one-off cleanup events including our annual “Clean Up Australia” clean up in March with Tradies GyMEA. At these clean ups we sort, count and identify the items and try to determine the source of the litter and debris items to work on solutions to stopping the items

becoming litter in the first place. To give you an idea, in our August clean up 35.3kgs consisted of 9433 individual pieces!

We are still finding legacy litter from the eroding sand due to the east coast lows – aluminium cans, plastic food packaging, polystyrene, straws and other containers from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

We complete weekly balloon debris and plastic cotton bud debris counts at one site in Kurnell. We have photo logged all balloon debris we have found since 1st January 2023, and continue to



eDNA sampling, Brett and Sarah-Jo Lobwein. Photo Credit John Veage, from The Leader newspaper.

support NO BALLOON RELEASE AUSTRALIA, using our data as evidence to encourage the NSW Government to ban the release of balloons. Our two-year balloon debris report will be released January 2025.

We have noticed a massive decline in the amount of plastic cotton bud stems 'regularly' washed in from the local sewage found in our weekly clean ups, such as only in quantities of maximum 10 'stems' in 200 metres. which was to be expected (or hoped!) since their 'soft' start ban from sale in NSW from 1st November 2022. however in our most recent clean up (August 2024) with the east coast lows we found a high number again – 1081 full plastic cotton bud stems, 77 pieces, and 275 lollipop stems and 18 lollipop stem pieces. Most of these stems were clean (no algal growth or UV deterioration). This suggests that people still have stock and are still flushing them down the toilet and/or Sydney Water had large overflows (releasing unfiltered sewage), but also that perhaps the plastic stems have been locked in the deeper water and sand offshore and then with the swell have been released on to our beaches. The legacy litter we find in the eroded sand also does not have algal growth, indicating when trapped in sand it stops marine algal growth that you would see on items that have been floating at sea for a time.

eDNA – discovering hidden marine biodiversity

This year's National Science Week theme in August was "Species Survival – more than just sustainability" highlighting the innovation and scientific research needed to keep ecosystems across the globe. It was a perfect time to share with the public the SO SHIRE citizen science Sutherland Shire eDNA marine biodiversity project! SO SHIRE have been studying the biological diversity in Sutherland Shire's marine environments using eDNA sampling. Inspired by a similar citizen science program in Sydney Harbour, that links species identified from the eDNA sampling with photographic records on Inaturalist, SO SHIRE wants to compare what species had been photographed in local waters and investigate what species were "hidden" from sight of swimmers and divers.

Availability of such resource data can engage and advance the public's understanding of the importance of protecting certain areas and species, and to support policy and legislation (convince governments of the biodiversity treasures worth conserving as sanctuaries) as we work towards 30% of the oceans being fully protected from resource extraction. We also encourage others to use this collection of public data for their research and conservation purposes. Knowing what species are present, may be used to assist environmental review and conservation planning efforts.

Our monthly pilot program over Autumn and Winter 2024 was primarily funded by Blue World (2023 grant) and a sample day thanks to National Parks Association Southern Sydney Branch supported by Sutherland Shire environment centre volunteers. Our initial funds have run out and we would love to keep the seasonal data program running (for at least Spring and Summer) and longer, if possible, for temporal studies. **Each kit costs \$290 NZ plus postage and return to laboratory, so please get in touch with us if you can donate or finance our eDNA project:**Info@soshire.org

Please also upload your photo observations to the @inaturalistorg App or website, preferably under "Shelly Ocean Swimmers" from your swims, snorkels, dives or rock pooling and beach combing.

On the following website, is an interactive map of all publicly accessible Wilderlab eDNA sample data. You can zoom in on the East Australian coast and when hovering on the site on the map press "explore sample" to see the species detected. <https://www.wilderlab.co.nz/explore>



Protecting the Royal National Park and Woronora Reservoir Catchment

Dr Catherine Reynolds

One of the most positive aspects of this campaign has been the response from members of the public – overwhelmingly people regard the pollution spills from the mine as deplorable, and want the Royal National Park and our water catchment to be protected. Unfortunately the government seems determined to keep the mine open despite the risk it represents.

Peabody has let the Department of Planning know that next year they intend to submit plans to extend the current longwall operation. The new long walls will not even be in the current mining lease area - the expansion plans extend into an exploration license zone. If this extension goes ahead it will be the first new in-principle approval since Labor first allowed the mine to go ahead in 2009.

As is, it seems highly likely that Planning Minister Paul Scully may sign off on the expansion. There may be a closed door ‘independent’ review with mining industry consultants from the government’s “Independent Expert Advisory Panel for Mining” where the public have a chance to put in opposing submissions. However the Minister will likely to have discretionary power over the approval.

Advocacy on this issue over the last year has been challenging. We’ve had ongoing communications with EPA officers, the Resources Regulator, the Department of Planning and Environment. Assessing the detail of the pollution license (EPL) and status of the various pollution reduction programs the EPA has required the mine to meet, and other aspects of the mine’s operation has been time consuming. There’s



Coal at Audley, still washing up after every flood. Photo Credit Bob Crombie.





"Walk a Hidden Gem"

been ongoing correspondence with Tony Chappell the CEO of the EPA, Paul Scully from Planning, the Environment Minister Penny Sharpe, Cate Faehrmann and Sue Higginson from the Greens.

The EPL remains full of holes and 'get out of jail cards' for the mine. Pollution reduction program deadlines have not been met, including the new Surface Water Facility Management plan which was due to be submitted by 30 September 2023.

In June 2024 the EPA has issued a new pollution reduction control program with 'aspirational' high conservation water quality targets for discharges from the Water Treatment Plant - but Peabody is only required to write a report about how to meet these targets, not to actually meet them. The new targets will not apply to continuing discharge from the sediment dams.

A second landslide appears to have occurred yet the EPA have made no admissions about this.

The NSW government's strategy in the media and on social media has been to maintain a steadfast silence about the coal pollution in the Royal. When the Environment Minister Penny Sharpe was asked about the pollution in interviews, she minimised and underplayed the damage, claiming the platypus 'prove' the river has been cleaned up. Cate Faehrmann MP raised the issue on our behalf in State Parliament on World Environment Day, and the Minister again used the platypus to gloss over ongoing discharges of wastewater from the mine.

The government and Environment Minister also have stayed silent about the coal waste washing up over Audley lawns after every flood. In correspondence the EPA have been claiming - as in the past, that the larger coal waste in the river is from previous spills. Professor Ross Jeffree is liaising with ANSTO regarding a core sediment testing project in the Hacking River. The results will definitely show the extent of the pollution, but this may not come back in time for the EPA court case against Peabody, now set for a week in November.

It appears that Peabody is intending to attempt to minimise the extent of the environmental damage, fighting to reduce the fine. The EPA have dropped two of the five charges, so the maximum possible penalty will be \$3 million. Prejudicial statements made by the Environment Minister about the river being cleaned up suggest it is possible the fine will be reduced further.

There's been some positive initiatives through the year from people working on the campaign: the lovely series of Camp Gully Creek walks run by Pam Campbell, "Walk a Hidden Gem". These have been so important and have given us a chance to introduce new people to the area while keeping a focus on what is happening there, including visible wastewater discharges from the mine during one of the walks. Pam has taken some beautiful photos.

Bob Crombie, Russell Edward, Tony Markham are continuing explorations of the area, including the nearby Flora and Fauna Reserve. The Sutherland Shire Bushwalkers group have also shown an interest, and asked us along to speak about the issue at a recent meeting.

Diana Smit has been staunch - the ongoing water testing program at Camp Gully Creek she devised has been another check and allowed us to cross check data from Peabody's glitchy water monitoring. More volunteers to share the monthly testing are always welcome.

Greg McDonald's macroinvertebrate water bug training day held by last November was another terrific initiative. We added what we found into the Waterbug Blitz app, and received a "your site is impacted" result. Poor water quality was also confirmed with NPWS's Eco-Health check report.



Greg McDonald right supervises water testing during a training event.



The brilliant new short film “Coal Creek” by James O’Connor was screened at Port Kembla and Hazelhurst in February with both screenings well attended.

It was great working with James on the production and have key issues documented properly.

Dr Chad Beranek, Dr Ian Wright, Sue Higginson MP, Shannon Kaiser and Bob Crombie all spoke at the launches highlighting ongoing risks to the integrity of the ecosystem.

The verbal promise given by the Resources Regulator and the EPA of a complete rebuild of the mine embankment to prevent contaminated groundwater seepage is now looking less certain. There is a discrepancy between information given by Peabody to the Department of Planning, and verbal advice I have received from both agencies advising that the whole

length of the embankment will be rebuilt. Peabody is currently contesting a GIPA request for the release of instructions given by the Resources Regulator to Peabody regarding precisely what the mine has been asked to do to deal with 1. stabilising the whole site, and 2. ensuring groundwater is no longer allowed to discharge from the mine surface facilities.

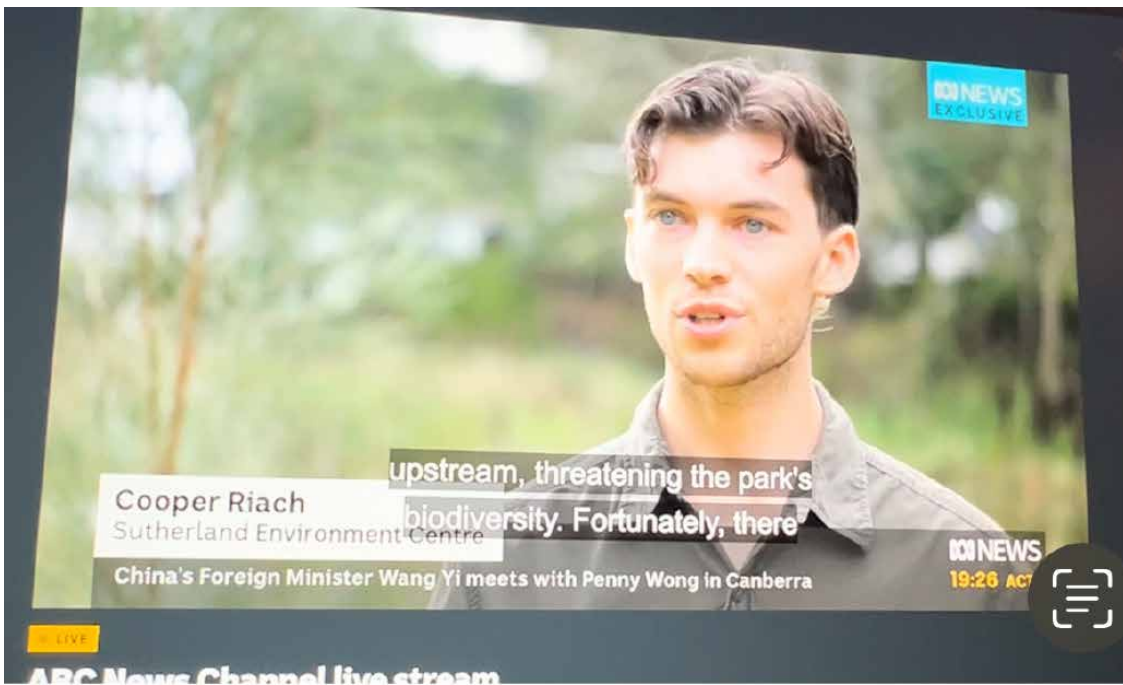
Planning has regurgitated advice from Peabody re an old train tunnel and the risk to Royal National Park waterways rather than conducting a fuller investigation. The tunnel has a steep gradient and is regularly flooded, posing a huge risk to the Royal if a landslide were to occur.

Yet Peabody claims the tunnel is not used for water storage, so it’s a case of nothing to see. It is not apparent this tunnel is adequately accounted for anywhere on the mine’s risk management plan, or surface facility water management plan.



Sutherland Shire Environment Centre
 5 June ·
Peabody discharge into the Royal National Park
 What are your thoughts on the information about when the "high conservation values" discharge limits will be enforced?
 The mine's own monitoring indicates that electrical conductivity in that waste water is still tracking around 3-10 times the levels specified by the ANZS "high conservation value" guidelines. As Environment Minister, using Section 350
 5
 10
 15
 View more video insights
 Like Comment Share

Cate Faehrmann MP speaking about the Peabody pollution in State Parliament on World Environment Day
<https://www.facebook.com/SutherlandShireEnvironmentCentre/videos/1481884609433109>



Cooper Riach did a terrific job as spokesperson on an ABC News news report in March: the story was about the new platypus puggle, and it was the first time the Royal National Park coal pollution was

acknowledged in a mainstream TV news platypus story. Cooper's comment that "at some we have to ask ourselves which do we value more" was entirely on point.

In the News:

- 28 July, 2024, “Housing, mining blamed for water quality issues in Royal National Park“, *Illawarra Mercury*
- 10 April, 2024, “Kristy worked on flood rescue all night. When she got home her town was covered in coal“, *Sydney Morning Herald*
- 24 March, 2024, “Helensburgh mine operator pleads guilty to three water pollution charges“, *The Leader*
- 20 March, 2024, “Platypus back in Royal National Park after 50 years“, *ABC News*
- 25 January, 2024, “Peabody seeks new longwall as film about its pollution failures launches“, *Illawarra Mercury*
- 24 January, 2024, “‘Coal Creek’ doco to premiere at Port Kembla Servo on Sunday“, *The Illawarra Flame*
- 30 October, 2023, “Peabody’s Metropolitan Colliery sent the bill for EPA cleanup investigation and testing“, *Illawarra Mercury*
- 16 October, 2023, “Real-time water monitoring for Camp Gully Creek goes live“, *Waste Management Review*
- 1 October, 2023, “Camp Gully Creek pollution – a year on, what has changed?“, *The Illawarra Flame*
- 11 September, 2023, “EPA takes action over pollution incidents“, *Wave FM 96.5*
- 11 September, 2023, “Metropolitan Collieries faces fines of up to \$5 million over pollution incidents at Camp Gully Creek, which flows into Hacking River“, *The Leader*
- 9 September, 2023, “Mine attracting attention: interview with Sue Higginson“, *ABC Radio Sydney*

Financial Report

INCOME

In the 2023/2024 Financial Year the SSEC generated total income of \$ 92,499.54 which was made up of:

- \$16,514.00 Grant from LEAF Perpetual (Local Environment of Australia Fund)
- \$3,504.95 General donations
- Fundraising Activities \$10,545.31
- \$ 1,705.29 Membership fees
- \$ 18.18 Service Fee Income
- \$ 59,839.85 Rental income Merton Street, Sutherland.
- \$371.96 Interest Income

\$ 92,499.54

The balance related to various fundraising activities carried out during the year under review. Total income is significantly higher than the previous year due to the income, generated from the lease of Merton Street property from the new Tenant BR NSW/ACT SERVICES PTY LTD. Funds collected for Electrify Bundeena have been treated as income.

EXPENSES

Overall expenses amounted to \$59,009.08:

- \$ 6,102.18 LEAF Grants funding
- \$ 4,280.00 Legal Advice on Special Strata Fire levy and tenant agreement
- \$23,420.28 Council Rates and Strata fees including Special Fire Levy
- \$ 4,500.00 Repairs & maintenance Merton St. property
- \$17,980.00 Wages
- \$ 1764.00 Superannuation
- \$ 1,630.38 Website maintenance
- \$ 9,366.50 Kitchenette

BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet looks very impressive compared to the previous year.

Two significant items have propped up the Balance Sheet. The first one is that the Property on Merton Street has generated full Income for the Year.

Electrify Bundeena Project has an income of more than \$7K and \$6.9K in current assets has been accounted for in the books for the Year under review.

SUMMARY

Though there have been some temporary setbacks in the previous Financial Year, the SSEC has bounced back to a healthy position financial position.

I wish to express my gratitude to the previous Treasurer and the members of the board for welcoming me with open arms. It will be a wonderful experience to collaborate with this highly skilled group of individuals who willingly dedicate their time and energy to shoulder the responsibility of SSEC and further its missions, particularly in these challenging environments. The Board extends its heartfelt appreciation to past and present members and supporters of SSEC, whose backing and foresight have empowered SSEC to achieve financial autonomy.

Constantine Lawrence

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

Profit and Loss Comparison

July 2023 - June 2024

	TOTAL	
	JUL. 2023 - JUN. 2024	JUL. 2022 - JUN. 2023 (PY)
Income		
Donations	2,070.00	710.00
General donations	210.00	0.00
Koala Signs	1,224.95	0.00
Total General donations	1,434.95	0.00
Tax Deductible Donations	16,514.00	11,098.00
Total Donations	20,018.95	11,808.00
Fund raising activities	3,121.27	0.00
Electrify Bundeena	7,424.04	0.00
Total Fund raising activities	10,545.31	0.00
Membership Subscriptions	1,705.29	1,297.15
Rental Income	59,839.85	5,282.06
Service/Fee Income	18.18	120.00
Total Income	A\$92,127.58	A\$18,507.21
GROSS PROFIT	A\$92,127.58	A\$18,507.21
Other Income		
Interest income	371.96	55.59
Total Other Income	A\$371.96	A\$55.59
Expenses		
Accounting and bookkeeping	254.56	254.47
Auditor's fees	440.00	420.00
Total Accounting and bookkeeping	694.56	674.47
Advertising and marketing	0.00	235.44
Bank charges and fees	120.63	0.47
Conferences and seminars	0.00	78.39
Depreciation	2,000.00	2,000.00
Gas and electricity	63.50	0.00
General Expenses	77.27	181.82
Insurance	1,143.60	1,045.16
LEAF Funding	0.00	0.00
Active Transport	0.00	45.00
Bob Walshe Writing Award	2,400.00	1,400.00
Electrify Bundeena	3,441.83	0.00
Greater Sydney Landcare (Peabody)	281.82	3,767.27
Other	4,836.36	0.00
ShireCAN	573.06	0.00
Discretionary Spending ShireCan	0.00	299.00
Total ShireCAN	573.06	299.00
SO Shire	0.00	590.91
Sydney Basin Koala Network Koalas	7,764.00	0.00
Total LEAF Funding	19,297.07	6,102.18
Legal and professional fees	890.91	4,280.00
Meeting Expenses	307.91	533.65

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

Profit and Loss Comparison

July 2023 - June 2024

	TOTAL	
	JUL. 2023 - JUN. 2024	JUL. 2022 - JUN. 2023 (PY)
Other Campaign Funding (Non LEAF)	74.26	350.00
Postage & shipping	158.18	11.82
Printing, stationery & supplies	1,448.41	187.53
Rates & Strata Fees	26,587.64	23,420.28
Repairs and maintenance	1,186.36	4,500.00
Shipping, Freight, and Delivery Postage & Handling	0.00	139.09
Staff amenities	0.00	0.00
Storage	1,117.27	854.52
Subscriptions	797.65	923.13
Superannuation	0.00	1,764.00
Telephone & internet expenses	390.94	196.29
Wage expenses	0.00	17,980.83
Website	2,652.92	1,630.38
Total Expenses	A\$59,009.08	A\$67,089.45
Other Expenses		
BAS Roundoff Gain or Loss	0.81	-0.34
Total Other Expenses	A\$0.81	A\$ -0.34
NET EARNINGS	A\$33,489.65	A\$ -48,526.31

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

Balance Sheet Comparison

As of June 30, 2024

	TOTAL	
	AS OF JUN. 30, 2024	AS OF JUN. 30, 2023 (PY)
Assets		
Current Assets		
BA Community Access	39,675.68	8,750.47
BA Community Access Card a/c	292.23	686.90
BA Public Gift Fund	20,768.15	20,582.67
Balanced Fund	0.00	0.00
Cash on hand (deleted)	0.00	78.24
Diversified Shares Fund	0.00	0.00
Electrify Bundeena	6,899.71	0.00
PayPal	251.86	476.24
Other current assets	0.30	0.30
Prepayments	505.00	505.00
Suspense	0.00	0.00
Undeposited funds	0.00	0.00
Total Current Assets	A\$68,392.93	A\$31,079.82
Long-term assets		
Furniture & Fittings - Merton Street	0.00	0.00
Depreciation	-51,366.00	-49,366.00
Original cost	53,168.00	53,168.00
Total Furniture & Fittings - Merton Street	1,802.00	3,802.00
Merton Street at cost	506,353.00	506,353.00
Australian Ethical Balance Fund – ARSN 9255	39,650.00	39,650.00
Australian Ethical Shire Fund – ARSN#9166	35,519.00	35,519.00
Total long-term assets	583,324.00	585,324.00
Total Assets	A\$651,716.93	A\$616,403.82
Liabilities and shareholder's equity		
Current liabilities:		
Accrued liabilities	0.00	0.00
ATO Clearing Account	-3,238.00	-4,088.00
GST Liabilities Payable	5,305.78	4,254.08
PAYG Withholdings Payable	24.00	24.00
Payroll clearing	-233.50	-233.50
Superannuation payable	-166.70	-166.70
Total current liabilities	A\$1,691.58	A\$ -210.12
Non-current liabilities:		
CBA business loan	0.00	0.00
Total non-current liabilities	A\$0.00	A\$0.00
Shareholders' equity:		
Net Income	33,489.65	-48,526.31
Opening balance equity	564,350.57	564,428.81
Retained Earnings	52,185.13	100,711.44
Total shareholders' equity	A\$650,025.35	A\$616,613.94
Total liabilities and equity	A\$651,716.93	A\$616,403.82



**Sutherland Shire
Environment Centre**

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

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