

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURES COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 1 May 2018
Location: Jervis Bay Rooms, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4:00pm

The following members were present:

Clr Kaye Gartner - Chairperson
Clr Patricia White
Clr Nina Cheyne
Clr Mark Kitchener
Russ Pigg - General Manager – left the meeting 5.52pm
David Brawn
Oisin Sweeney
Robert Hayward
Peter McVay
Lorraine Larri

Others present:

Michael Mulvaney – Canberra NatureMapr
Paul Hams – Budawong Coast NatureMapr
Libby Hepburn – Atlas of Life Coastal Wilderness
Michael Jefferis – Budawong Coast NatureMapr
Chris Fulton - Research School of Biology, ANU
Greg Thompson – Shoalhaven Landcare
Kelie Clarke – Manager Environmental Services
Darren O’Connell – Energy Management Coordinator
Mike Harben – Manager Business and Property left the meeting at 6.03pm
Gordon Clark – Manager Strategic Planning
Carmel Krogh – Director, Shoalhaven Water
Andrew Truran – Shoalhaven Water Business Analyst Consultant
Greg Pullen – Manager Economic Development
Marianne Jones – Economic Development Officer
Phil Costello – Group Director, Planning Environment & Development
Jessica Rippon – Executive Manager Communications – left the meeting at 6.01pm

The Chairperson gave an acknowledgement of country.

Apologies / Leave of Absence

A request for leave of absence was received from Clr Alldrick. Apologies were received from Mayor Findley, Clr Levett, and Stephen Dunshea (Director, Finance Corporate and Community Services).

Confirmation of the Minutes

RESOLVED (Peter McVay / David Brawn)

That the Minutes of the Sustainable Futures Committee held on Thursday 01 February 2018 be confirmed.

CARRIED

Declarations of Interest

Nil

PRESENTATIONS

**SF18.10 Marine Climate Change Effects in Our Region - Assoc.
Prof. Chris Fulton**

**HPERM Ref:
D18/17750**

Associate Professor Chris Fulton, of the Research School of Biology at the Australian National University, is a marine biologist specialising in fish. He also comes from a family of primary producers, so comes to the subject with a different approach.

He asked the Committee to think about the marine estate within the bounds of the Shoalhaven coastline, and the importance of protecting the range of social and economic values that make it iconic. These values include fisheries, recreation such as diving, cultural and indigenous traditions, and all are linked to the Shoalhaven's natural assets. Two examples are the sponge gardens, which are appreciated by divers; and the kelp forests, which constitute what is now termed the Great Southern Reef.

Many iconic south coast species originate in and depend on these kelp forests. However, it is likely the kelp forests will die off soon. He has documented a similar degradation at the same latitude on the WA coastline, which experienced an unprecedented heatwave of 3°C sustained water temperature. This was the most severe heatwave recorded in 100 years, and it wiped out more than 10,000 hectares of kelp forest within a month. It has not regrown, and is now a seaweed turf coastline.

If warming is sustained then eventually corals begin to grow – but this is a disaster for endemic species, which rely on the kelp as habitat and particularly as nurseries for juveniles. There is a demonstrated strong relationship between the number of fish and the percentage of kelp in an environment. The collapse of our kelp forests is not a matter of *if*, but *when*.

Prof Fulton showed a comparison of coastal temperatures on the south east Australian coast between 2004 and 2018. He noted that the major point of impact is Tasmania, which is already losing its kelp due to heating water currents, and there will be major consequences for Hobart's fisheries and tourism.

He believes we can make a difference in the Shoalhaven. If we minimise local threats the environment can bounce back. For example, the northern end of the Great Barrier Reef has the potential to come back, but not the southern end. Small pockets of kelp have been found to carry genomes that resist warming water, and it is hoped there may be sufficient of these to regenerate the kelp forest.

Local attitudes and actions matter – behaviour changes at the individual level do have an impact. Community education is essential. He has encountered a lack of awareness in the community that iconic species are under threat. We need to change perceptions about species such as kelp. Some key but 'common' species are not on the protected list, so this is not a trigger to prevent

development over kelp forests. Community participation in actions such as minimising waste and restoring habitats are also key.

Prof Fulton suggested that public forums are the best way to get the issue of climate change understood by the community, being sure to include scientific perspectives. For example, provide information on how plastics pose a problem for fish as well as for the charismatic species (whales, turtles); or the importance of active habitat rehabilitation programs for seaweeds.

He noted that the currents on the Pacific coast are behaving unpredictably this year – we can only watch as heat anomalies build up. The last three years have seen a large number of anomalies.

Clr Gartner asked what Council can be doing to be supportive. Prof Fulton would like to see a reduction of local threats to the oceans by:

- Looking at more strict regulation of plastics industries in our jurisdiction, and at rethinking plastics overall - including bans on single use plastics such as straws. Half of all marine rubbish in a recent census comprised plastic straws. With the recycling crisis there is a large amount of glass and aluminium available to be used as alternatives to plastic.
- Managing waste water more robustly, particularly the overflow of untreated water into the ocean during storm events. A risk analysis is needed of how waste water systems will cope with rising sea levels coupled with increasing pollutants.

Oisin Sweeny recommended reactivating the community seminar series. Jessica Rippon confirmed that the draft Council communications strategy is in place.

Carmel Krogh agreed on the need to work on water quality and waste water issues. Her team has been discussing with affected communities regarding abandoning assets, as Council cannot guarantee to protect them under worsening conditions, e.g. gravity sewers. Contingency plans are needed as there is increasing concern that assets will fail. We need to look into pressure sewer systems, including the work, investment, and disruption this may require.

Kelie Clarke clarified that the Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) is only focused on the open coast. Council has engaged a coastal engineer to look at highest risk key assets and put value to them. We are required to have an emergency action plan by the CZMP.

She added that Council's Our Coast Our Lifestyle community engagement project had covered issues such as sea level rise and climate change; the project had been educational as well as consultative. This engagement showed the community prefers Council to prioritise essential services aimed at natural assets rather than infrastructure such as seawalls.

Clr Gartner said we need information about the survey's response rate, methodology for community consultation, in order to explain its conclusions. We have no doubt about the data, but she felt that communications are not optimal at the moment.

Kelie said the CZMP has mandatory constituents. Part of the CZMP communications plan is to have a coastal engineer contribute to a video explaining the risk assessment process. There is insufficient time to include more, as the plan must be submitted for certification in the next month or two to be eligible for access to funding to relocate assets. The CZMP has to be approved by Council first. Council has identified the key risks / hot spots on the open coast. We had also looked at hot spots on estuaries but have been told not to include them as the format does not meet the requirements of the new Act.

Jessica recommended that community engagement, which is about both informing and consulting, should draw on existing grassroots movements, rather than Council separately try to produce another initiative.

RESOLVED (Peter McVay / Robert Hayward)

That the presentation be received for information.

CARRIED

SF18.11 Representatives from Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness, NatureMapr, and Milton Rural Landcare Nursery - Atlas of Coastal Wilderness/Nature Mapr - Implementation in the Shoalhaven**HPERM Ref:
D18/82179**

Libby Hepburn (Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness), Dr Michael Mulvaney (Canberra NatureMapr), and Mike Jefferis (Budawong Coast NatureMapr) presented to the Committee on the Atlas of Coastal Wilderness/Nature Mapr, and its potential implementation in the Shoalhaven.

Michael Mulvaney described the process for uploading photographs to the NatureMapr app. Users register with their email address, upload an image from a smartphone or GPS camera, and select a range of the abundance of the species. The image becomes available for any user of the site to suggest an ID, which is sent to an expert moderator to confirm or seek further information. Once confirmed the record is entered into the NatureMapr database. Data can be viewed according to criteria such as species distribution or taxonomic groupings.

NatureMapr in ACT have a team of 80 moderators available to identify photos. Four years ago the database held 30,000, and has grown to 1.25 million records of 5,500 species. Most of these records have come from long standing community group survey and monitoring. The Canberra Nature Map has doubled the known populations / locations of nearly 30% of the threatened species in the ACT. It has also been revealing many first reports of weeds, facilitating quick eradication before they can spread. The app is used daily in ACT land management, planning and development decisions.

Libby Hepburn followed with a presentation of the Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness, an implementation of NatureMapr based on the South Coast of NSW. Her group is particularly interested in the marine environment compared with the ACT group, which has no coastline. They are a newer group, but have recorded 22,855 sightings of 5,760 species from 393 members. The app aims to encourage people to spend more time in nature; to create a rich database for our region; to help the community contribute to science and collaborative environmental decision making; and to work and in partnership with natural resource managers.

Mike Jefferis gave an update on progress on use of the app in the Milton area. The group has received some funding, and other applications are pending, including from this Council. Eurobodalla Council is also to be approached. The project has garnered strong community interest, with 60 people asking to be moderators. SCC staff have been supportive. A soft launch is scheduled for the end of June with a public launch late 2018/early 2019. Since going live on 27 April they already have 12 users, three moderators, and 37 sightings. Libby has offered to run a Bioblitz in the area.

Kelie Clarke proposed that regional weed management committees could become involved. DPI funding could be available, and she offered to organise a meeting with the Regional Organisation of Councils. Bushcare volunteers are also very keen. A further discussion outside this meeting about the role of Council and resourcing behind the scenes to manage the program is required.

Oisin noted the potential overlap with tourism: this could be a significant resource of good publicity for the areas covered. The group confirmed they have been promoting the app to local government tourism bodies. Participation in the program can offer visitors a meaningful activity. Ideas for both tourists and community include running photography competitions, biochasing and geocaching (e.g. find Shoalhaven's tallest tree), linking to the 100 Beach Challenge, and mapping walks that facilitate access to particular species. This could be a tool to support the sustainability tourism model.

The program is asking Council for \$20,000 initial setup costs, plus an annual maintenance of \$10,000. Specific projects would be an additional cost.

RESOLVED (By consent)

That the committee recommend to Shoalhaven Tourism Advisory Group that they receive a

presentation from NatureMapr and Atlas of Life in the Coast Wilderness with a view to bringing this into SCC and enhance the tourism experience, and to co-fund implementation in the Shoalhaven.

CARRIED

REPORTS

SF18.12 Outstanding Action Table - Update

**HPERM Ref:
D18/115322**

Electric vehicle charging: Bob Hayward asked about the timeframe, and confirmed he has encountered no opposition to the proposal from the community in Berry. Gordon Clark confirmed Council has been working with NRMA to select the site. A challenge is using NRMA to work through the issues: how do we determine when it ceases to be a public good and becomes a commercial service? A major issue is obtaining development consent, and putting in place the planning regime. Council's approach is to deal with it as a civil permit process, as with infrastructure and activities within the road reserve. Other councils do require a development application process. We will work up a policy position.

Gordon confirmed that Council has advocated a minimum of two car spaces at each charging site.

RESOLVED (Robert Hayward / Lorraine Larri)

That the Outstanding Action Table be received for information.

CARRIED

SF18.13 Progress Report - Sustainable Futures Committee Resolutions - Nature Based solutions - SF17.30. Tree Audit/Sutherland Shire Council Indigenous Tree Canopy Model/ SCC Internal Working Group

**HPERM Ref:
D18/113114**

Kelie Clarke updated the Committee on the Sutherland Shire tree canopy model. She has spoken with their Parks & Reserves team – they have established a fee but they have not yet applied it. The working group will look at what can be achieved using existing frameworks. Sutherland has a revolving fund drawn from prosecutions for tree removal, e.g. they recently dealt successfully with a case of clear felling. Their DA conditions include a requirement to replace removed trees with a greater number of new trees. They focus on areas where the community is supportive. They have had success working with government agencies on tree removal and pruning, and replacing trees with more than have removed.

Kelie confirmed that GIS is used to plan the location of tree plantings. Key to gaining community acceptance is the ability for people to bring their concerns early.

The working group has decided to wait for outcome of tree audit and then look at existing programs.

RESOLVED (By consent)

That the Committee accept the progress report for information.

CARRIED

SF18.14 Progress Report - Cities Power Partnership - group pledges

**HPERM Ref:
D18/113136**

Jessica Rippon explained the draft communications plan is in place. It has had State, Federal, and grassroots level input. An external organisation headed by Lynelle Johnson is working in the digital space running mentoring and youth groups. A team is working on this project, putting together information and background research. We should receive this in the next couple weeks, and it will be launched after that.

The May/June period is a busy time for Council with ongoing engagement processes, so we can either try to include this or wait until there is more time to do a full launch.

Bob Hayward is to communicate directly with Jessica to set up a meeting.

Clr Gartner reminded the Committee that this large engagement process around the DPOP, Budget, CZMP and other topics is an opportunity for members to attend the community engagements, encourage others to attend, and contribute. Kelie acknowledged there are experts in the community who can share their knowledge. It is important to show this is a community-driven program with Council support. Jessica agreed that events are run more effectively if by the community – it leads to more uptake.

Meeting the pledges is to some extent dependent on the Sustainability Advantage program. Kelie confirmed Council is recruiting a sustainability coordinator, with applications closing next Tuesday. Darren O’Connell is assisting in the meantime. Darren reported there will be a strategic review next week, and that OEH is engaging a consultant for a desktop review.

Clr Gartner asked about the status of budget bids for this Committee, to secure its future and support its work. Phil Costello confirmed it is going into the budget bid process, which will come to the May Ordinary Council meeting.

Action: Jessica to email the Committee community members a schedule of the community engagement sessions.

RESOLVED (Clr Gartner / Peter McVay)

1. That the Sustainable Futures Committee receives the action plan for information.
2. That the community members meet with the new Group Director of Finance, Corporate and Community Services; Clr Gartner to chair the meeting.

CARRIED

SF18.15 SolarHaven - Shoalhaven Solar Farm

**HPERM Ref:
D18/122045**

Carmel Krogh confirmed that the status of the attachment to the report is confidential, and is not for discussion or distribution outside this Committee.

She said has reconsidered her recommendation on this project, and now prefers not to proceed. The uncertainty in the energy market makes spending \$8m on a project a risk. Council’s electricity contract is due for renewal at the end of 2019. The figures for power capacity and the costs indicate that this proposal is not the best option. Given the variability in the report she cannot recommend adopting it; we risk selling ourselves short if we do not consider the broader electricity supply context. Council can instead start to look at some smaller solar farms behind the meter. Discussions are starting this week with Local Government Procurement about the next tender process for the electricity contract. There are complexities with feeding into the grid, and more work needs to be done.

Darren O’Connell is developing the options for a policy. He explained that targets and policy will drive the investment in renewables. We need to look more at science-based considerations. We are in the early stages of discussion but expect the policy to be finalised at the end of 2018.

Larraine asked whether Council's target setting will relate to the Sustainability Advantage work. Darren confirmed that it will; the first area will be business sustainability planning, and looking also more broadly, e.g. at waste. The initial focus will be on energy and emissions.

Investment in renewables will need a groundswell of community engagement, as well as support from the business community. Council has a mandate through the CSP and surveys to activate the people, and Committee members are also contributing.

Clr Gartner noted the Shoalhaven Business Chamber had organised an event on energy, but only seven people had enrolled, so it was cancelled.

RESOLVED (Peter McVay / Larraine Larri)

That the Committee determine that:

1. The report be received for information
2. Further analysis and discussion be undertaken on other possible sites and the Callala site be further considered in the preparation for the new electricity contracts.

CARRIED

**SF18.16 Quarterly Update from Energy Management Coordinator
- Darren O'Connell**

**HPERM Ref:
D18/127754**

Darren O'Connell had spoken to this item during the discussion on SolarHaven, above.

RESOLVED (David Brawn / Clr Cheyne)

That the update be received for information.

CARRIED

SF18.17 Climate Leadership Conference - 17-19 March 2018

**HPERM Ref:
D18/132180**

Clr Gartner reported on this two day conference, which had been attended by key people including John Hewson and the head of CSIRO Climate Science. The information presented had been 'horrific'. We have just experienced the hottest April on record, and May will also be a record. We are seeing more complex climate phenomena, such as blocking of climate systems by others, which has not been observed before. The change in climate systems is profound. The conference had suggested there is no hope of staying within a 1.5°C rise in temperature, and a very low expectation of staying within 2.0°C. We have had less autumn rain in the Shoalhaven, and face increasing risks of bushfires, heatwaves, etc.

Commitments to targets are important. We are urged to mitigate carbon emissions and seek other sources of energy. Bob Hayward said building of data and networks in the community will ultimately address these issues – there is a ray of hope.

Clr Cheyne drew the analogy of the body and nutrition with the health and sickness of our planet.

RESOLVED (By consent)

That the Committee receive the report from Clr Kaye Gartner on the Climate Leadership Conference for information.

CARRIED

GENERAL BUSINESS

Clr Cheyne advised that she will be submitting a Notice of Motion to the 26 June Ordinary meeting in support of the Uluru Statement. She asked Committee members to come along if possible.

Kelie Clarke raised the partnership with Griffith University on managing environmental change through planning for transformative pathways. She is hoping to have weekday meetings so people are able to attend.

Peter McVay raised a forthcoming community radio program – Shoalhaven Transition may contact Kelie in relation to this.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 6.26pm.

Clr Kaye Gartner
CHAIRPERSON