

Natural Area Volunteers Group

Meeting Date: Monday, 18 August, 2025

Location: Jervis Bay Room, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra

Time: 4.00pm

Please note: Council's Code of Meeting Practice permits the electronic recording and broadcast of the proceedings of meetings of the Council which are open to the public. Your attendance at this meeting is taken as consent to the possibility that your image and/or voice may be recorded and broadcast to the public.

Agenda

1. **Meeting Conduct Statement**
2. **Acknowledgement of Country**
3. **Apologies**
4. **Confirmation of Minutes**
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5. **Declaration of Interests**
6. **Presentations**
 - NA25.1 The Importance of Volunteers in Managing Natural Areas
7. **Reports**
 - NA25.2 Bushcare Update August 2025.....4
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8. **General Business**

Membership

All Councillors (observers)

CEO (or Nominee)

Mr Tony Jennings

Mr Len White

Mr Wayne Pearce

Ms Siobhan Berkery

Mr Roger Hart

Mr Paul Hayden

Ms Kelly Upton

Ms Emma Williams

Mr Michael Shaw

Mr Jason Carson – Local Land Services

Representative – Office of Environment & Heritage

Quorum: Five (5) - One (1) Councillor and Four (4) Community Members

Note: Any non-voting Councillor in attendance at any Committee Meeting may act as an alternate voting member in circumstances where achievement of a quorum is required, noting that this doesn't apply when quorum specifies the quorum to require community member attendance.

Purpose

The purpose of the Natural Area Volunteers Group is to act as an advisory and representative group on all matters relating to the future directions of the Bushcare Policy and program (MIN10.1461).

Role

To meet the 'Purpose' above, the Group will advise Council on strategic matters pertaining to the Bushcare Program. This will include policies, procedures, resourcing, natural resources management, environmental restoration and preservation techniques and plans, and community and volunteer stakeholder engagement. Natural Area volunteer groups include those managed under Council's Bushcare program that predominantly work on Community Land categorised as 'Natural Area' (*Local Government Act 1993*). These include Bushcare, Dunecare and similar groups.

MINUTES OF THE NATURAL AREA VOLUNTEERS GROUP

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 19 June 2024
Location: Jervis Bay Rooms, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4.07pm

The following members were present:

Clr Patricia White – Chairperson
Clr Tonia Gray – left at 5.04pm
Ms Siobhan Berkery
Mr Tony Jennings
Ms Kelly Upton (Remotely)
Mr Michael Shaw (Remotely)
Mr Paul Hayden (Remotely) – arrived 4.30pm

Others present:
Dr Michael Roberts – Manager Environmental Services
Mr David Rush – Coordinator – Bushcare
Mr Peter Swanson – Lead – Land Management

Election of Chairperson

RESOLVED (By consent)

That Clr White be appointed as the Acting Chairperson for the meeting.

CARRIED

Apologies / Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from Clr Christen, Clr Kotlash, Clr Boyd, Wayne Pearce, Emma Williams and Len White.

Confirmation of the Minutes

RESOLVED (Clr White / Tony Jennings)

That the Minutes of the Natural Area Volunteers Group held on Tuesday 18 July 2023 be confirmed.

CARRIED

Declaration of Interests

Nil

REPORTS**NA24.1 Resignation - Membership - Expression of Interest****HPERM Ref:**
D23/367954**Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)**

That:

1. The Natural Area Volunteers Group accept the resignation received from Ms Frances Bray (community member) and thank her for her commitment to the Committee.
2. The Natural Area Volunteers Group accept the resignation received from Ms Diana Lindsay (Callala Bushcare) and thank her for her interest in the Committee.
3. The vacancies be filled via an Expression of Interest as per the Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED (By consent)

That:

1. The Natural Area Volunteers Group accept the resignation received from Ms Frances Bray (community member) and thank her for her commitment to the Committee.
2. The Natural Area Volunteers Group accept the resignation received from Ms Diana Lindsay (Callala Bushcare) and thank her for her interest in the Committee.
3. The vacancies be filled via an ongoing Expression of Interest as per the Terms of Reference.

CARRIED

NA24.2 Bushcare Program Update**HPERM Ref:**
D24/154563

Note: Mr Paul Hayden joined at 4.30pm

Note: Cllr Gray left the meeting at 5.04pm

Dr Michael Roberts – Manager Environmental Services and Mr David Rush – Coordinator Bushcare spoke to the report.

It was suggested that staff liaise with the Media and Communications Team to develop a recurring media campaign to encourage volunteers.

Kelly Upton advised TAFE NSW are planning courses for 2025 and TVET classes for Students in the Agriculture and Conservation Ecosystem Management space. If courses are successfully setup, students will be looking for sites to access for their studies and project work. Kelly will keep the Committee and staff informed if this course will be successful for 2025.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Natural Area Volunteers Group receive this update on the Bushcare Program for information.

RECOMMENDATION (Cllr White / Michael Shaw)

That the Natural Area Volunteers Group:

1. Receive this update on the Bushcare Program for information;

2. Resubmit the previous recommendation (MIN23.432) to Council in relation to an additional position for Bushcare (funding):

Council fill the Central District Bushcare Officer role as soon as possible to maintain function, morale, supervisory responsibilities particularly from a Work, Health and Safety legislative obligation perspective (as volunteers are defined as workers under the Work, Health and Safety Act 2011) and equity across the Bushcare districts and if necessary, that funding be sourced at a future quarterly budget review.

3. Council staff utilise media and Communications platforms to develop a recurring media campaign to encourage bushcare volunteers.

CARRIED

NA24.3 Bushcare Fact Sheets

**HPERM Ref:
D24/229753**

Mr David Rush – Coordinator Bushcare advised that from the previous meeting last year, it was a requirement to complete and provide these fact sheets.

Fact sheets are for the General Volunteers, Volunteer Bushcare Coordinators, and a Safety Checklist for Volunteers and Coordinators.

These factsheets can be used on the Social Media Platform to try and recruit new volunteers.

Mr Tony Jennings made a comment that some volunteers may not have access to a computer to complete the online volunteer form.

It was suggested that the below additional factsheets be added:

1. A generic introductory fact sheet about Bushcare including the benefits of being a Bushcare Volunteer?
2. Establishing a Bushcare Group; and
3. Bushcare Group Action Plans

It was noted that the Factsheets can be adapted and that the Committee could provide feedback to staff via email.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Natural Areas Volunteer Group receive the draft fact sheets for information and provide feedback for their improvement.

RESOLVED (By consent)

That the Natural Areas Volunteer Group receive the draft fact sheets for information and provide feedback to staff for their improvement.

CARRIED

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 5.14pm.

Clr White
ACTING CHAIRPERSON

NA25.2 Bushcare Update August 2025

HPERM Ref: D25/268118

Department: Environmental Services

Approver: Lindsay Usher, Acting Director - City Development

Purpose:

This report is to update the Natural Area Volunteers Group (NAVG) members on the Bushcare Program.

Summary and Key Points for Consideration:

This report provides an update to the NAVG on the management of Council's Bushcare Program since the previous meeting of the group in June 2024.

Total in-kind volunteer hours and number of groups reporting was higher in the 2024 calendar year compared 2023.

Eight Bushcare Group Action Plans were reviewed and approved since June 2024.

The central district casual Bushcare Field Officer position remains vacant due to financial constraints; however the Bushcare Program continues to provide Council with a significant return on investment.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Natural Area Volunteers group receive this update on the Bushcare Program for information.

Options

1. Receive this report as presented.

Implications: To provide an update of Council's Bushcare Program to the Natural Area Volunteers Group and to permit the dissemination of key information pertaining to this program.

Background and Supplementary information

The Shoalhaven Local Government Area (LGA) is a region of extraordinary natural value. It boasts a diverse array of ecosystems that support a wide range of flora and fauna, including threatened species and ecological communities (TECs) listed under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW) and/or the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth).

Council manages approximately 3,300 hectares of Natural Areas across 240 reserves. Most of these are within or adjacent to urban areas and include a variety of natural wildlife habitats comprising bushland, wetland, escarpments, foreshores, and coastal dunes. Natural Areas also provide opportunities for low impact nature-based tourism.

Bushcare volunteering offers a range of health and well-being benefits, such as improved mental and physical health and enhanced social interactions and community building. Studies show that engaging in conservation activities like Bushcare can lead to a reduction in stress, anxiety and depression, increased happiness, improved cognitive function and a

greater sense of purpose and belonging. Bushcare volunteering is for everyone, and it can help support community connection.

This report provides an update on the Bushcare Program since the previous Natural Area Volunteers Group (NAVIG) meeting in June 2024.

Bushcare Program Update

Shoalhaven City Council's Bushcare Program has been in operation for over 25 years. It employs a Bushcare Coordinator and currently, two casual Bushcare Field Officers.

The central district casual Bushcare Field Officer position still remains vacant even though there have been two NAVIG meeting recommendations to Council (July 2023 and June 2024) to fill this position for the following benefits:

- meet Council's Work, Health and Safety obligations
- motivation and morale of centrally located Bushcare Volunteers
- equity across the three Bushcare districts.

This recommendation was supported by Council on 14 August 2023 (MIN23.432): *'That Council fill the Central District Bushcare Officer role as soon as possible to maintain function, morale, supervisory responsibilities particularly from a Work, Health and Safety legislative perspective (as volunteers are defined as workers under the Work, Health and Safety Act 2011) and equity across the Bushcare districts and if necessary, that funding be sourced at a future quarterly budget review'*. However, given financial limitations, this position has not been resourced at this time.

Bushcare groups are led by a volunteer coordinator. The northern and southern district Bushcare groups each have the support of a casual Bushcare Field Officer who ensure groups work safely, help strategically and technically guide groups in accordance with their respective Bushcare Group Action Plans. The central district Bushcare groups are currently being supported by the Bushcare Coordinator. However, given the demand on this position with their core functions, it is not possible to support all central groups adequately. The program continues to be supported by two part-time indigenous bush regenerators.

There are currently 58 active Bushcare groups (including Bushcare, Dunecare, Community Nursery and Friends of groups) with approximately 590 registered volunteers. Through a review of active participants with each volunteer group surveyed for active members, currently being finalised, approximately 500 are active volunteers.

Two new groups have formed since the last meeting – Shoalhaven Heads Dunecare (following a resolution of Council) and Burrill Rockshelter Bushcare. Over recent years, there have been several groups that ceased to be active and have now been archived. These are:

- Curleys Bay
- Currarong Dunecare
- Collingwood Beach Dunecare
- Hyams Bushcare
- Nowra TAFE
- Pam Weiss Reserve
- Ulladulla High
- William Mulligan Reserve
- Woodhill Cemetery.

The Dyball Reserve and Cudmirrah/Berrara Bushcare groups have recently amalgamated.

The reported volunteer hours and the number of Bushcare groups reporting are illustrated in Figure 1 (below). The number of Bushcare groups reporting for the 2024 calendar year (50) is the greatest number of groups since records have been kept. The total hours contributed by Bushcare volunteers is the highest since 2019 indicating an increasing trend in Bushcare activities/hours since the restrictions of COVID-19.

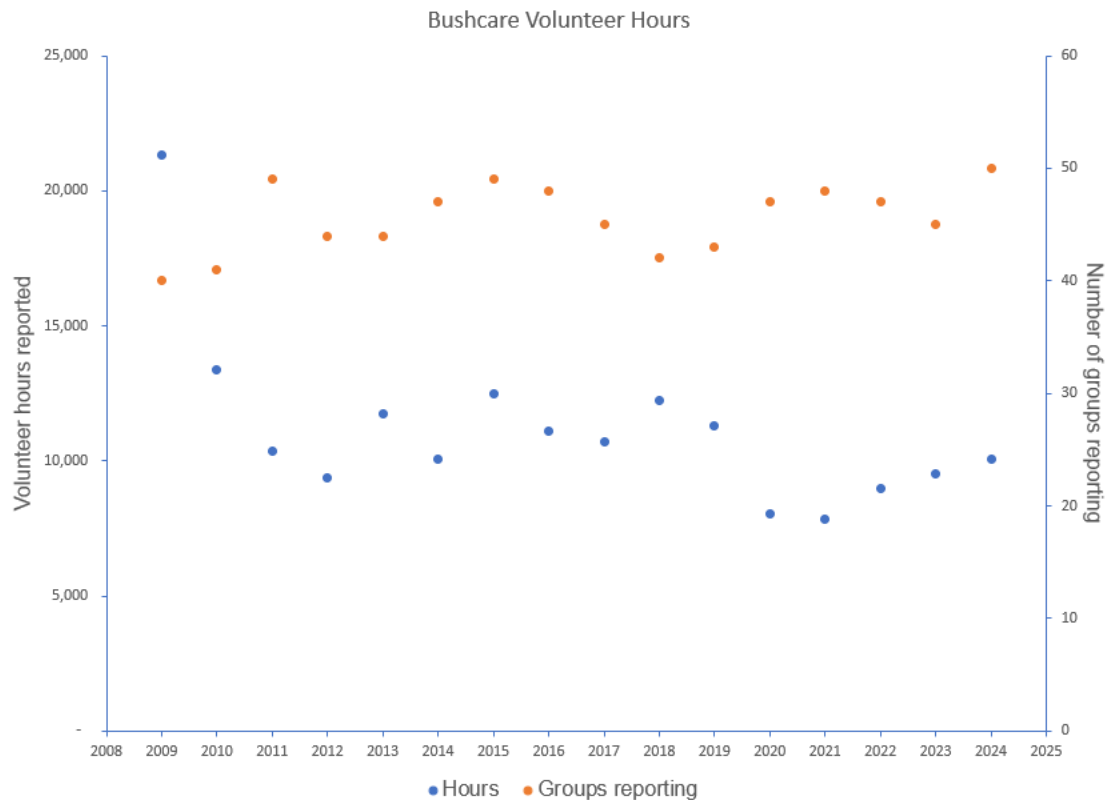


Figure1. Bushcare volunteer hours and the number of groups reporting.

Bushcare Group Action Plans

Bushcare Group Action Plans have continued to be reviewed and updated according to a chronological list with the oldest plans being updated as the highest priority. The following Bushcare Group Action Plans were reviewed and approved since the previous NAVG meeting in June 2024:


- Red Head Villages (Manyana Cunjurong Point)
- Orient Point
- Basin Walking Track
- River Road (Shoalhaven Heads, Jerry Bailey Reserve)
- Shoalhaven Heads (Shoalhaven Heads, Jerry Bailey Oval & Gumley Reserves & Treatment Works surrounds)
- Currarong Village
- Huskisson Woollamia (Currambene Creek, Winnima Wetland, Huskisson Beach)
- Bundewallah Reserve


The following Bushcare group Action Plans are either currently being, or next to be drafted:


- Vincentia (Orion Beach, Violet Clark, Plantation Point, Barfleur Beach & Stuart King Reserves)
- Lower Mulgen Creek
- Kings Point

Community Engagement Activities

Following the last meeting, the fact sheets were updated and placed on the website. There are four fact sheets available at <https://www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/News-and-feedback/Participation-opportunities/Bushcare>:

 [Factsheet - Bushcare - a community program](#)

 [Fact sheet - Thinking of being a bushcare volunteer?](#)

 [Fact sheet - Bushcare group safety](#)

 [Fact sheet - Being a volunteer bushcare group coordinator](#)

The eNewsletter 'Bushcare Links' has been produced each quarter and sent to over 500 people. Anyone in the community can subscribe to this newsletter.

Other community engagement events that were conducted since the last NAVG meeting include:

- Shoalhaven Community Volunteer Nursery Open Day - Crookhaven Heads, March 2024
- Bushcare presence at NAIDOC Week – Nowra Showground, July 2024 and July 2025
- National Tree Day with Vincentia High School students at Nelsons Beach, Vincentia, July 2024.
- Trinity College (Woollamia Campus) students working bees at Currambene Creek Reserve, Winnima Wetland and Huskisson Beach.
- Budawang Coast Atlas of Life (an iNaturalist project) Science Week Workshop – Bomaderry Creek Reserve, August 2024.
- Bushcare/Parkcare Xmas BBQ Picnic and Years of Service presentations, Shoalhaven Heads November 2024
- Canberra Institute of Technology students weed control at Gannet Beach, Bawley Point, December 2024.
- National Tree Day with Berry Public School students at Boongaree, Vincentia, July 2025
- Public National Tree Day event at Mollymook with the Council's Coastal team, July 2025.
- National Tree Day with Kiama High School students at Shoalhaven Heads, August 2025.

A Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) audit of the Bushcare program was completed in 2024 which focused on several key functions in the program including:

- Improved focus on correctly filling out and returning Bushcare Site Record Sheets.
- Inspection and updating of First Aid kits.

- Inducting and training new volunteers to WHS requirements for work on Natural Areas.
- The safety fact sheet mentioned above.
- Updating the Bushcare page on Council's website.

Current Issues and Opportunities

The Bushcare budget has reduced over recent years, while costs have increased. Therefore, the vacant central district casual Bushcare Field Officer position not being able to be filled means that is not feasible to increase overall number of Bushcare groups within the program further.

Consequently, there is currently a focus on supporting existing groups as best as possible and to bolster the existing Bushcare Groups, especially those with low numbers of volunteers using simple local promotions.

Grant opportunities will continue to be sought to assist with promotion, training and supporting Bushcare volunteers. However, such grants typically do not fund additional staff time required to run additional groups or events.

Internal Consultations

Not required for this report.

The review of or creation of new draft Bushcare Group Action Plans are shared with staff within the Environment Section and with other sections of Council (where required) when the plans are relevant to or require approval from these sections. There is also a close partnership with Parkcare.

External Consultations

Not required for this report.

Community Consultations

Not required for this report.

Policy and Statutory Implications

The Bushcare Program is run according to the Bushcare/Parkcare Policy and the Bushcare/Parkcare Procedures. The Policy is currently under review and is presented at this meeting.

Financial Implications

In the 2024 calendar year, Bushcare volunteers contributed over 10,081 hours with an estimated value of \$403,240.

Between 2009 and 2024 (calendar years inclusive), Bushcare volunteers have contributed at least 178,591 hours of work (mostly weed control). Using the Volunteer rate of \$40/hr, this equates to a total of at least \$7.1 million or an average of more than \$446,478 per year representing a significant in-kind contribution to the improvement and maintenance of Council-managed Natural Areas.

Risk Implications

Not applicable – report is for information only.

NA25.3 Bushcare Policy renewal

HPERM Ref: D25/286960

Department: Environmental Services

Approver: Lindsay Usher, Acting Director - City Development

Attachments: 1. Draft Bushcare / Parkcare Policy [📄](#)

Purpose:

Every Council policy is required to be reviewed with the election of each new Council. The purpose of this report is to provide the draft of the reviewed Bushcare Policy to the Natural Area Volunteers Group (NAVG) for information and for the group to provide any feedback to staff.

Summary and Key Points for Consideration:

Bushcare volunteer groups work across Natural Areas and can include Bushcare, Dunecare, school groups, rubbish clean-up groups and the like. Bushcare policy matters are contained within the Council's 'Bushcare/Parkcare Policy'. Policy for these two programs have been combined for many years to ensure a consistent approach by the two volunteer management programs. The policy sets out the overarching framework for the delivery of the Bushcare program. The Bushcare/Parkcare Procedures document describes operational delivery of the policy.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Natural Area Volunteers Group receive the draft of the reviewed Bushcare policy for information, to provide feedback and support this policy being reported to Council for adoption.

Options

1. As recommended.

Implications: The policy is provided as an opportunity for the NAVG to provide feedback. This process provides an opportunity to improve the policy through direct input from Councillors and community representatives.

2. The NAVG may seek other actions or direction.

Implications: These will depend on the recommendations made.

Background and Supplementary information

Shoalhaven City Council has run the Bushcare program for over two decades. Over that time, volunteers have contributed greatly to the maintenance and improvement of Natural Areas across the Shoalhaven.

A Bushcare Representative Group was established in 2011 following a resolution of Council in December 2010 (MIN10.1461). In September 2019, this group was renamed to Natural Area Volunteers Group (MIN19.674).

The Bushcare/Parkcare Policy was first adopted by Council in August 2009.

There was a major review of the Bushcare/Parkcare Policy completed in 2018 after substantial consultation with Bushcare and Parkcare groups, the Bushcare Representative Group and Councillors. This policy was last updated in September 2022.

The current review proposes the following minor changes:

- Additional reference to relevant legislation and Coastal Management programs
- Improved definitions of Bushcare and Parkcare
- Improved definition of Bushcare Group Action Plans
- Updates on department names across Council
- The policy now includes new or renamed sections (Objectives, Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities, Related Legislation, Policies or Procedures, Risk Assessment, Data and Reporting, Ownership and Approval) and
- Minor wording and grammar.

Internal Consultations

Consultation has occurred primarily with the Coastal Management unit, and Parkcare staff.

External Consultations

This engagement with the NAVG provides the opportunity for external consultation.

Community Consultations

This engagement with the NAVG provides the opportunity for consultation with community representatives.

Policy and Statutory Implications

The review of this policy will strengthen the policy around delivery of the Bushcare program within the statutory framework.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Risk Implications

Review of this policy is a key part of the governance framework for the Bushcare program that reduces risks associated with this program.

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

Adoption Date:	11/08/2009
Amendment Date:	20/09/2022
Minute Number:	MIN09.1049, MIN18.518, MIN22.645
Next Review Date:	1/12/2024
Related Legislation:	<p>Work, Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW) Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW) Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) Biosecurity Regulations 2017 (NSW) Coastal Management Act 2016 (NSW) Foreshore Reserves Policy (SCC) Crown Land Management Act 2016</p>
Associated Policies/Documents:	<p>Bushcare/Parkcare Procedures (SCC) Plan of Management – Generic Community Land – Parks – 2001 (SCC) Plan of Management – Generic Community Land - Natural Areas – 2016 (SCC)</p>

	Coastal Management Program (CMP) for the Shoalhaven Open Coast and Jervis Bay – 2024 (SCC) , and future Gazetted CMPs
Directorate:	City Development
Responsible Owner:	Bushcare Coordinator and Parks Programs Officer
Record Number:	POL24/109

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

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Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

1. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the vision, aims and objectives of ~~the~~ Bushcare and Parkcare programs and to describe the roles and responsibilities of Council, staff and the volunteers involved.

2. Objectives

2.1. Policy Statement

The Shoalhaven Local Government Area (LGA) ~~possesses~~ includes landscapes of outstanding natural, cultural, aesthetic, social and economic value. Council is responsible for around 1200 public reserves that are classified as Community Land under the *Local Government (LG) Act 1993* (NSW). ~~These reserves~~ include both Council-owned and Council-managed Crown Land. Over 250 are categorised as Natural Areas, and over 500 are categorised as Parks. ~~The M~~ management of these lands is undertaken in accordance with State Government legislation.

Shoalhaven City Council's vision is that community members are engaged in partnership with Council in conserving, maintaining and increasing the resilience of Natural Areas and parklands. ~~This including includes~~ biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem function, and ~~and~~ social and cultural heritage ~~for~~ for their intrinsic values, as well as supporting liveable communities for the benefit of current and future generations.

The Shoalhaven community has conveyed to Council the high importance it places on the values of public reserves and the desire to build community connection ~~whilst~~ participateing in conserving activities and caring for local environments.

Accordingly, Bushcare and Parkcare meet the following key priorities of the Shoalhaven Community Strategic Plan 2032:

- 1.3 Support community wellbeing through fostering active and healthy communities
- 2.3 Protect the natural environment and enhance sustainability.

Bushcare

Bushcare is a program about volunteer participation in the regeneration, protection and enhancement of Natural Areas in public ownership.

Natural Areas include bushland, wetland, escarpment, watercourse and foreshore – areas of high conservation value that have a high likelihood of occurrence for threatened biodiversity. Natural Areas also have significance for their Aboriginal cultural heritage and the social heritage of the community. As such, they are critical elements of the natural and scenic values, which define the character of the Shoalhaven LGA.

The Bushcare program is a key mechanism for fostering community connection to, and caring for, the local environment. Bushcare is a collaborative approach between Council and volunteers in delivering the management, restoration and regeneration of Natural Areas. This helps foster a greater sense of stewardship to fulfil the core objectives for the management of Natural Areas.

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

Bushcare volunteers may become involved in a variety of activities including bush regeneration, weed control, pest plant and animal control, stormwater control, track and trail construction and maintenance, flora and fauna surveys, public and school education, site assessment and environmental monitoring. [The Bushcare program includes activities across a variety of natural habitat types and includes 'Dunecare' and other types of 'care' groups \(see definition below\).](#)

Parkcare

Parkcare supports volunteer participation in the repair, protection and enhancement of parks in public ownership. The Parkcare program provides an opportunity for members of the community to participate in the maintenance, repair, protection and enhancement of these open spaces [for which the objectives are 'to encourage, promote and facilitate recreational, cultural, social and educational pastimes and activities', and to 'provide for passive recreational activities or pastimes and for the casual playing of games' \(LG Act\).](#)

Parkcare volunteers can participate in a variety of activities within designated parks including grass maintenance, landscape construction and maintenance, weed control, stormwater control, track and trail construction and maintenance, flora and fauna surveys, public education, site assessment and environmental monitoring.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Bushcare	The involvement of volunteers in the management of Natural Areas as defined below. The term 'Bushcare' in this policy includes includes volunteer groups such as Bushcare, Dunecare, school groups, rubbish clean-up groups and the like.
Bushcare Coordinator	An appropriately qualified Council staff member who is employed to coordinate the Shoalhaven Bushcare Program.
Bushcare Group	A formal group of volunteers undertaking Bushcare as per the above definition.
Bushcare Group Action Plan	A plan developed jointly between the Council and the Bushcare group which clearly outlines, amongst other information, the Group's goals and activities for each Bushcare site.
Bushcare/Parkcare Project	A project that is delivered, at least in part, by a Bushcare or Parkcare Group or combination of groups.
Council	Shoalhaven City Council.
Council Land	Land that is either owned by Council; or Crown Land for which Council is the Trust Manager or has care, control, and management responsibility.

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

Term	Meaning
<u>Group Action Plan</u>	<u>A plan developed jointly between the Council and the Bushcare/Parkcare group which clearly outlines, amongst other information, the group's goals and activities for each Bushcare site. These are not reserve management plans, instead providing approved actions that the volunteers are willing to work on. Each action plan must not conflict with any other plans or strategies prepared for the site or surrounding areas, such as specific or generic plans of management, coastal zone management plans and programs, or applicable policies. If any potential conflict arises, these higher-level plans, programs or policies have precedence.</u>
Natural Area	Public land classified as Community Land categorised as a Natural Area in accordance with section 36 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW), managed to the objectives given in section 36E of the Act; or other land areas mapped under Council's Asset Custodian Model to be managed as a Natural Area.
Natural Areas Volunteers Group	An advisory group on all matters relating to the future directions of the Bushcare program and this policy, maintaining an active dialogue with the Bushcare community in accordance with the group's Terms of Reference.
Park	Public land classified as Community Land categorised as a Park in accordance with section 36G of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW), managed to the objectives given in section 36G of the Act; or other land areas mapped under Council's Asset Custodian Model to be managed as a Park.
Parkcare	The involvement of volunteers in the management of Park areas, as defined above. The term Parkcare does not include volunteer involvement or management of land located in or around roads, such as that done by 'Adopt a Road' groups, except for the areas of unused roads where these are managed as parkland and are included in an approved Parkcare group action plan. The term Parkcare does not include maintaining any sports equipment/areas in a Park.
Parkcare Coordinator	An appropriately qualified council staff member who is employed to coordinate the Shoalhaven Parkcare Program.
Parkcare Group	A formal group of volunteers undertaking Parkcare as per the above definition.
Parkcare Group Action Plan	A plan developed jointly between the Council and the Parkcare Group which clearly outlines the Group's aims and objectives for the Parkcare site.

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

Term	Meaning
Site Risk Assessment	An assessment of the Work, Health and Safety hazards and risks associated with each Bushcare/Parkcare Group's site and the control measures to be implemented to reduce the risk associated with the identified hazards.
WHS	Work, Health and Safety
Volunteer	A person who is approved to work with Bushcare/Parkcare for no remuneration.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. Provisions

The mutual aims of the Bushcare and Parkcare programs are:

1. Achievement of ecologically sustainable management of the natural bushland areas, parks and reserves within the LGA through active engagement with the community.
2. Community use of parks and Natural Areas that provide enhanced positive experiences.
3. The capacity of the community to engage in the management of their local parks and Natural Areas is enhanced and maintained.
4. Recognition and protection of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage of parks and Natural Areas are accepted by the community.

Further to these mutual aims, the specific aims for Bushcare are:

1. Conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecosystem function in respect of land categorised as Natural Areas.
2. The restoration and regeneration of Natural Areas in accordance with accepted best practice bush regeneration techniques.
3. Public awareness, appreciation and shared vigilance of the values of Natural Areas as public land is demonstrated by community support and measurable improvement in their condition.

Bushcare/Parkcare Objectives:

1. The biodiversity, ecosystem function and connectivity, water quality and resilience, of Bushcare/Parkcare sites across the LGA are maintained, protected and regenerated using local native plants.
2. The conservation of threatened biodiversity and locally endemic flora and fauna species is to be prioritised.
3. Adopted Plans of Management for Community Land will be implemented in partnership between Council, the Natural Area Volunteers Group for Bushcare, and individual Bushcare/Parkcare groups.

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

4. Aboriginal cultural heritage is respected, protected and maintained in consultation with Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and traditional elders and in accordance with due diligence provisions for Aboriginal Places and Aboriginal Objects.
5. The cultural, social and aesthetic values of the community are respected.
6. The understanding of the natural and cultural values of local environments and the benefits of the Bushcare and Parkcare Programs are fostered and enhanced by the community.
7. The Bushcare and Parkcare programs are continuously improved to be equitable, apolitical and inclusive, with a high level of collaboration between stakeholders (e.g., Council, Natural Area Volunteers Group and volunteers).
8. The health and wellbeing of all volunteers, staff, contractors and the public are maintained in accordance with the *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW).
9. The awareness of the Bushcare and Parkcare programs throughout the community is increased, and the recruitment and retention of volunteers is prioritised.
10. There is high level of awareness, collaboration and cooperation with resource management and community organisations, and other environmental volunteer groups within the Shoalhaven LGA such as Landcare and Shoalhaven Riverwatch.
11. The management of the Bushcare and Parkcare programs is conducted in an effective, efficient and accountable manner.

Bushcare/Parkcare Group Action Plans

Council will promote and implement the aims and objectives of this policy through the establishment of Bushcare and Parkcare groups, in accordance with Council requirements, including approved Bushcare and Parkcare Group Action Plans.

Bushcare/Parkcare Group Action Plans outline the goals of each Bushcare/Parkcare group, the location of work sites and the required activities.

Bushcare and Parkcare volunteers will be involved in the development of group action plans. In the case of Bushcare Group Action Plans, these may be reviewed by the Natural Area Volunteers Group prior to approval by Council staff, where additional review is sought.

Work carried out by a Bushcare/Parkcare group must be carried out in accordance with a Bushcare/Parkcare Group Action Plan and the Bushcare/Parkcare Procedures unless written approval from the asset custodian is obtained, for a one-off project.

Bushcare/Parkcare Group Action Plans must not conflict with any other plans or strategies prepared for the site or surrounding areas including:

- Reserve plans of management;
- Coastal Management plans and Programs; and
- Generic policies and plans.

The action plans are a mechanism for delivering those components of generic or specific plans of management for reserves under S36 Local Government Act 1993, where they are

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

practical and safe for volunteers to implement and where there is willingness to do so. If there is any potential conflict between a Bushcare/Parkcare Action Plan and any other plan, Council's Bushcare Coordinator or Parkcare Coordinator must be notified immediately.

4.2. Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities apply for the key stakeholders involved in the Bushcare and Parkcare programs.

The Natural Area Volunteers Group:

This is an advisory group on all matters relating to the future directions of this policy, maintaining an active dialogue with the Bushcare community in accordance with the Terms of Reference for this advisory group.

Council:

The City Development Directorate has responsibility for implementation of the policy for the Bushcare program. The City Services Directorate has responsibility for the Parkcare program.

Council staff will be responsible for the overall management of the programs including program coordination, ensuring the management of work, health and safety hazards, training of staff and volunteers, providing operational support to volunteers, completion of group action plans, and insurance requirements are met.

Volunteers' Roles and Responsibilities

Bushcare/Parkcare volunteers must be registered and inducted as volunteers by Council and work in accordance with this policy and relevant Council procedures. Volunteers must work in accordance with safety and behavioural requirements described within Council's induction process.

Procedures

Procedures for the Bushcare and Parkcare programs are documented separately. Checklists will be developed as part of these procedures and used where possible to assist with implementation of this policy.

Procedures will include those for monitoring and evaluating the Bushcare and Parkcare programs. Results of monitoring and evaluation will be reported in relation to the programs' aims listed in Section 3. Indicators to be measured will include: the economic contribution of volunteers; the number of volunteers; and the area of land where management is assisted by the volunteers.

5. Related Legislation, Policies or Procedures

- Work, Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)
- Plan of Management – Generic Community Land – Parks – 2001 (SCC)

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

- Plan of Management – Generic Community Land - Natural Areas – 2016 (SCC)
- Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW)
- [Coastal Management Act 2016 \(NSW\)](#)
- Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW)
- Biosecurity Regulations 2017 (NSW)
- [Coastal Zone Management Plan for the Shoalhaven Coastline – 2018 \(SCC\)](#)
- [Coastal Management Program \(CMP\) for the Shoalhaven Open Coast and Jervis Bay – 2024 \(SCC\), and future Gazetted CMPs](#)
- Bushcare/Parkcare Procedures (SCC)
- [Foreshore Reserves Policy \(SCC\)](#)
- [National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974](#)
- [Crown Land Management Act 2016](#)
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6. Risk Assessment

The safety of volunteers is a key risk that must be managed. Bushcare/Parkcare Volunteers complete an online induction, which includes relevant WHS requirements. Each volunteer group, in consultation with Council staff complete a Site Safety Plan and Operation Risk Assessment before commencing any work, which is then also communicated at their working bees as part of their risk assessment. Implementation of this policy and the Bushcare/Parkcare Procedures provides management of cultural, social and political risks. These primarily relate to the implementation of unauthorised and/or inappropriate works by volunteers. The provision of adequate oversight and supervision by Council staff is also critical to [the risk management of these volunteer groups](#).

7. Data and Reporting

Bushcare/Parkcare Site Record Sheets are filled in by the volunteer Group Coordinators and returned to Council regularly. The data on of volunteer hours and activity is then recorded in the relevant volunteer program database. ~~This~~^{These} data ~~is~~^{are} used to help inform:

- the review of Bushcare/Parkcare Group Action Plans
- to report on the volunteer effort,
- the value of the Bushcare and Parkcare Programs to Council ~~annually~~, and
- Natural Areas Volunteers Group meetings.

Council's corporate reporting is completed quarterly, primarily [on the review of group action plans consisting of volunteer effort](#). ~~Other measures are maintained on a continuous basis and reported as required.~~

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy and related procedures will be reviewed within one year of the election of every new Council, or earlier if circumstances change to warrant a review.

9. Ownership and Approval

9.1. Public Policy

Bushcare / Parkcare Policy

Responsibility	Responsible Owner
Directorate	City Development – Environmental Services – Land Management, and City Services – Works and Services
Endorsement	Not applicable
Approval/Adoption	Council